# COMMUNITY BROADCASTING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE JIGAWA STATE EXPERIENCE

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**Abstract**

Community broadcasting is, no doubt, a sine qua nonfor effective rural development in every typical rural set up. This stems from the fact that the mass media are a major contributor to every positive development in every society. The sorry state of rural communities in Africa has continually begged for an urgent and transforming attention. This is the case with poor rural people in Jigawa State, where this study was based. To this end, this paper strongly advocatesmassive introduction and efficient utilization of community broadcasting to effectively engender the much desired development of the rural communities. The use of Descriptive and Observational methods put the researchers in the position to draw conclusion that community radio is very effective for rural development in Jigawa State and any other part of Nigeria. The paper further affirms that community broadcasting is the most suitable for the current African village set up, and hence it (community broadcasting) is a veritable tool for the promotion of popular communication and the creation of opportunities for programme participation by theruralities.

**Key Words: Community Broadcasting.Rural Development.Jigawa State.**

## Introduction

Communication experts have argued that how developed or underdeveloped a society is, is largely determined by the degree of contribution made by the mass media in thatsociety

To make for easy delivery and comprehension, this paper is divided into four major sections. The first one is an introduction that gives us a platform to discuss the subject matter. The second is a definition of the major terms in the topic, and the third is the main issue at stake - community broadcasting and rural development; the fourth which emanates from the second and third sections is the conclusion .and recommendations.According to Udoakah (1998:28)

> Once the word rural is mentioned in Africa, certain images will be conjured in our minds. These images centre around acute underdevelopment and poverty, and

> they manifest themselves in the forms of bad roads, lack of water supply, poor housing, diseases, poor sanitation, lack of electricity, malnutrition, high rate of morality, hunger and, ultimately, illiteracy.

Stretched a bit further, the word "rural" brings to mind geographical locations in Africa and some parts of Asia with populations of hunger, wretched looking people and stunted, kwashiorkor-riddled children. This location, also, conjures the image of a people who suffer in the farms from morning to night, but whose harvest is not commensurate with the effort, resources and time put in; it conjures the image of a people who are uncertain of one miserable meal a day, at best (Udoakah, p.49).

As we all know, core rural areas (taking note of semi rural areas) have as their principal means of transportation to be their God-given legs, at best, bicycles. Mostof them carrytheir farm produce on their heads and trek long distances to the markets or their homes. Theydo not have adequate clothing and, so, they go about half-naked at home in a bid to save the dress they have for use to the church, mosque, village meeting and market.

In the face of thesedegrading and sub-human treatments meted out on these poor people who are vulnerable and in darkness, the obvious question is: what has the government done to help them out of these sub-human arrangements? What have the media people done through the instrumentality of community broadcasting, to save the day? Since the media especially the broadcast media are believed to be very strong, strong enough to move people out of their darkness and mental infirmities, what role has community broadcasting played in the development of the rural areas whose pictures were painted above?

The above questions concerning the role community broadcasting has played in rural development shall form the only reason for the third section of this work; but first, let's proceed to look at the major words in this paper by obeying the advice of Cicero (106 -43 BC). Who said that the first step in handling a subject isto define it, so that everybody will understand what the subject is all about.

**What isCommunity Broadcasting and Rural Development?**

In line with the above statement of Cicero Sage, we ask ourselves what is Community Broadcasting? What is Rural Development? What role does community broadcasting play in rural development? And what kind of community broadcasting can bring about the desired rural development?

**Community Broadcasting**

Broadcasting traditionally has to do with the transmission of messages to a largeaudience throughthe air waves. According to Owuamalam (2007:1), broadcasting:

> deals with the transmission of messages from a station to aheterogeneous audience scattered across a reasonable sphere ofcoverage. The audience receives the messages simultaneously, irrespective of where they are in time and place, provided that they are within the effective range of coverage.

It is the electronic medium of mass communication that uses simple language in getting it's messages across to everyone simultaneously.

Having seen what broadcasting is, the next question that begs for an answer is what the term community broadcasting means. The term community broadcasting is defined variously depending on one's location, scope and context. Communities are complex entities and so what constitutes a 'community' in community broadcasting is often in contention and thickly debated, and will vary from country to country. Traditionally in sociology, a 'community' is seen as a group of interacting people living in a common location. Therefore, community broadcasting is often built around concepts of access

and participation, and, so, the term community may be thought of as often referring to geographical areaswithin the possible reach of a given community radio or television's signals. Community broadcasting here may also often be replaced by a range of terms like 'alternative', 'radical', 'people' or citizen broadcasting.

From whatever angle one sees it, one thing stands tall- community broadcasting (CB)is a system of broadcast media ownership and operation that is owned and operated by the members of a given community where such a station is sited. Production and dissemination here is done by the people and received by the same people on their terms. It is like the Abaraham Lincoln's definition of democracy-broadcasting of the people, by the people and for the people. Here, everything about the type of programmes, operation and funding is determined by the people of such community. (Ekwe and Umeh, 2009:19).

However, ownership and operation of community broadcasting varies from country to country or from state to state. In the United States of America, community broadcast stations are established and managed by the community through communal efforts. That does not, however, mean that government does not support them from time to time. There, 85 percent of their C.B. staff are volunteers. The same is the case with Thailand which has 3,000 community radio stations. This is equally the case with United Kingdom and Sweden.

In Nigeria, the only known community radio stations are the ones found in JigawaState, though operating as FM booster stations. Jigawa State has nine community radio stations with their headquarters in Anadaza, a suburb of the state capital, Dutse. All the community radios operate on the same frequency (95.5 FM). Universities, polytechnics and colleges equally establish campus radio which can also be said to be community radio. In the case of Jigawa, the government of the State owns and run these radio stations. However, that cannot be said to be a complete community broadcasting outfit since Nigeria has refused to implement the official community broadcasting policy put up by President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011. In the ideal sense, community broadcast stations are funded by communities and private individuals from that particular community.

Despite these disparities, community broadcast stations have the following characteristics that are universal to all:

- Community broadcast stations, especially radios, are very inexpensive to establish,maintain, and operate. This is because in most communities like in Thailand, they areoperated from disused trucks and large containers. Experts believe that a low poweredcommunity radio like the one found in Brinin Kudu in Jigawa State, will cost between five hundred thousand naira (N500,000) to five million naira (N5,000,000). This is very cheap when compared witha conventional FM or AM stations which costs between twenty to thirty million naira.
- Community broadcast stations use low power transmitters and cover small size of the coverage area.
- Indigenous languages and dialects of the host communities are usually used. This is to say that the people's languages are used.
- Again, programme content is usually dominated by materials that are aimed at addressing cultural, economic and social needs of the host community. This is because; they are responsible for the origination and production of almost 91% of all the broadcast programmes.
- Staffing in the community broadcast stations is usually dominated by adhoc staff and volunteers. The staff are paid peanuts, although most of them have order businesses since they work on part-time basis.
- Advertisements in community broadcast stations are usually about a local shop or product of child naming ceremonies, marriage announcements, religious announcements, messages from traditional rulers, among others. The payments made in respect to these adverts are usually very cheap and considerate. (Ekwe and Umeh, p. 14).

**Rural Development**

Before we look at the term "rural development", let us first of all see what development in a broad sense is.

Development was seen in the past by economists and Breton Woods Institutions alongside their adherents as the attainments in the economic indices of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP) and Per Capita (PCI) as the case may be. "Thus any nation experiencing increase in economic indices was regarded as developed even if it does not translate to improvement of material and social life of its people. But this has long changed even though it is still common in the conception of its believers" (Jimoh, 2008: 104 & 105).

From the human development sphere, different disciplines define it on the basis of their orientation. To those in economics, development is associated with increased production and investment, GDP and PCI. Political scientists see it as the enhancement of political resources where power and related resources are equally allocated. Still, sociologists conceive development as the process achieved through structural differentiation, peace, order and social progress (Alanana, 2003). Other definitions of development flow from the various backgrounds and general outlook of the different orientations (Jimoh, p. 105).

Inayatullah (1967) defines development as the ability of man to have greater control over his environment and increased realization of its human values, its political destiny and self discipline. Here, he emphasizes human development indices as better management and control of the environment, including the need for good political system of governance which is acceptable to all. However, participation by the people for development programmes and policies is a major impetus for development. The people must participate and seen to be participating.

This has informed the redefinition of development by Rogers (1976:47) as cited in Adeyanyu, (2005) as:

> a widely participatory process of social change in society intended to bring both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining control over their environment.

To put the definition of development to rest so that we can understand what rural development is, let's take a rather simple but all encompassing definition of development as put up by the duo of Melkote and Sleeves (2001: 45). According to them, development is "the process by which societal conditions are improved. These human or societal conditions include both the social and physical conditions of life, including the environmental conditions." Having seen what the word development is, what then is ruraldevelopment?

According to Wikipedia, rural development in general is used to denote the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-urban neighborhoods, countryside, and remote villages.

Umulele (1977:7) writing for the World Bank, defines rural development as "improving living standards of the mass of the low-income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining." Rural development is something fairly elastic which accommodates not just advancement in the rural areas in terms of technology, physical progress and economic achievement, but a change in the rural community towards the attainment of new ideas and the people's control over their own affairs.

**Community Broadcasting and Rural Development**

From the above definitions, it is obvious that for a meaningful development to be achieved in rural areas all hands must be on deck. For many, the entire process of development should be left in the hands of government whether federal state or local. But the obvious question is, can government alone develop the rural areas? We believe the resounding answer to that is a big 'NO'.As we all know, rural areas in Nigeria are inhabited by the bulk of the nation's population, accounting for more than 80 percent of the entire population. They serve as the base for the production of food and fibre. They are also the major

sources of capital formation for the country, and a principal market for domestic manufactures (Olatunbosun, 1975:98).

Yet, despite the importance of rural areas to the Nigerian nation, they are not attractive to live in. It was once argued by Cable News Network (CNN) in 2001, that most slums, homes and huts found in Nigeria's rural areas are not healthy for animals let alone human beings. There is absence of infrastructure, which improves the quality of life. Usually there is the absence of potable water, electricity, school, healthcare, good feeder roads, and government presence, among others. The rural people have low purchasing power and standard of living.

Attempts at solving the rural problems had been the concern of the governments over the years, for example, Operation Feed the Nation (OPN); the National Accelerated Food Production Programmes (NAFPP); The Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and most recently, Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (LEEDS), While some of these programmes and others not mentioned here are still being implemented, the contention of the policy-makers is that rural infrastructure, if adequately provided, can enhance the quality of rural life. However, it appears that the rural peoplesince the first development plan of 1917 in Nigeria have benefited little from most rural development programmes.

Since government programmes on rural areas have not done much to salvage the situation, partly because of the insincerity to develop these areas, what then are our options? Development communication experts have argued that it is one thing for government to map out programmes for the rural people, and another thing for them (rural people) to accept these programmes. We have seen cases in Niger Delta and some Northern Nigerian States where rural communities out-rightly reject government programmes. In Ughelli community of Delta State, for instance, angry youths recently, attacked government workers who came for the sole aim of building a power plant which will in turn provide electricity for them. In Jigawa and Borno States, health workers who were administering Polio Vaccines were turned down by the rural people in those states on the ground that the polio vaccine was a Western idea of wiping out their populations. Medical doctors were attacked at killed at their duty posts, epertriate road construction workers are kidnapped and often killed. In 2006, when Nigeria made a genuine attempt to know its population so that it could provide for its citizenry, census workers were rejected and attacked in some rural communities. They attacked and fought against attempts made to count them on the ground that such exercise would cause untimely death. That was just a belief borne out of a primitive traditionalsystem coloured by superstitions propagated by the ignorant and illiterates. These few examples were just mentioned to demonstrate the sorry state of rural communities wallowing in ignorance at this time.

Researchers are unanimous that communication is a veritable instrument of social change whether it is accidental or designed. As professor Onuorah Nwuneli would put it, "many African nations have been aware of the possible role mass media could play in the transformation of their rural communities but these nations have lacked a well designed strategy for using the media to effect the desired social change" (Nwuneli, 1985; 1). This is exactly where community broadcasting comes in.

Community broadcasting is designed to fulfil social, economic and cultural needs by allowing members of the community to decide their own destiny. A communication expert, Ikechukwu Nwosu of blessed memory, advocates a well packaged development news and features in community radio specifically designed to influence development in the rural areas; a total of what he called, "journalism with a human face" It is shocking to know that in the whole of West Africa today, it is only Nigeria-which is incidentally the biggest of all and the richest too-that has not implemented an official policy on community broadcasting. All the other West African countries have policies and not only policies; they have existing, robust and very well functioning community radio regimes. Here in Nigeria, there have been attempts by individuals and groups to convince the government to initiate and promulgate a policy on community broadcasting, but the impression usually created by government is that we already have a policy on that. However, a close look at the National Broadcasting Commissions (NBC) Policy will reveal that what they have is not a policy on community broadcasting per se considering the cost and other prohibitive requirements (Daily Trust Newspaper, 2008).

In Jigawa state, a pilot study was conducted by Major Media Concept, a media consultancy firm based in the state. Their major findings underscore certain development paradigms that suite our discourse here. These development paradigms are physical development, social development, political development, human development and economic development.

**Conclusion**

Let it be restated here that the preference for community broadcasting to commercial/private or government-owned ones, for rural communities stems from its suitability to the Nigerian set up. Considering the fact that this is a nation of more than 140 million people, divided intomore than 250 ethnic groups and spread across three major religions - Christianity, Islam and the Traditional, the need for community broadcasting can never be overemphasized. After all, community radios in Jigawa State and Legon in Ghana and other parts of the world are important instruments in the promotion of popular communication and creation of opportunities for participating adult education. Herein lies the crux of our contention, the implementation of which will have far-reaching positive effects involving Africans and, indeed, African rural communities in the development of selves and communities. This will, once more, delete the ugly pictures that come to mind when African is mentioned at the international community.

**Recommendations**

First, the Nigeria Government should as a matter of expediency design a true national communication policy founded on a national ideology or philosophy which will facilitatethe establishment of true community broadcast stations. This policy must be somethingquite different from the disagreeable section 39 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 and the National Broadcasting Commission Act. Section 39 (2) of the constitution and section 2 (1), (b) and (c) of the NBC Act effectively removed full and final regulatory powers from the NBC, turning it into a mere 'processing house'. Thefinal approval power vested in the hands of the President makes the licensing process tedious. It might be argued that President Goodluck has decentralized the process, but meanwhile that is on paper.

We, thus, request that the government through NBC considers issuing true communityradio frequencies/licences as a pilot step to at least 20 qualified rural communities, asguided by NBC rules, in each of the six zones, since Nigeria is a signatory to the AfricanCharter on Broadcasting. Government should also establish a different agency that willregulate activities of community broadcast stations. This will help the spread of community broadcasting and checkmate their activities.

Development experts and broadcast stations should see themedia as instruments of development and encourage organizations and well to do individuals to establish community broadcasting channels in their areas. This will ultimately encourage government to engender development in the rural areas.

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