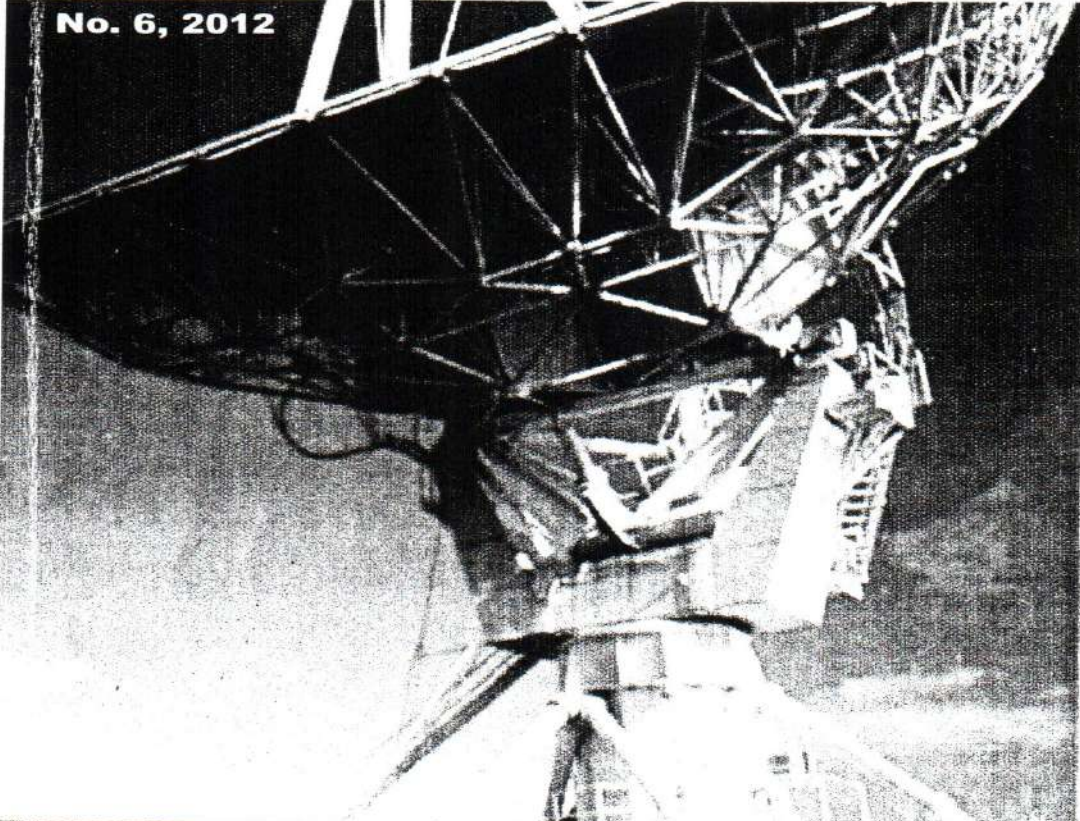


*Benin*  
**MEDIA COM**  
**JOURNAL**

For Critical Media Research, Evaluation, & Analysis

**No. 6, 2012**



**ISSN: 2276-9994**



**Benin Mediacom Journal** A journal for critical media and communication research, evaluation and analysis.

**Published by:**

The forum for Communication and Media Research, Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City.

Benin Mediacom invites media researchers to contribute scientific articles, reviews, and debates. Submission of original articles is open to all researchers in the field of media and communication globally, irrespective of discipline and institutional allocation. All articles are vetted by tested professionals.

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Benin Mediacom journal provides a major platform for media and communication researchers globally. The semiannual journal is addressed to the international scholarly community. It publishes the best media and communication research, as well as theoretical works in all its diversity; in an intellectual and academic environment. It also seeks to facilitate dialogue between scholars and academics in the field of media and communication. As an interdisciplinary journal, Benin Mediacom Journal welcomes contributions from the best of scholarship in relevant areas, and encourages contributions from senior researchers as well as younger scholars.

Benin Mediacom Journal is a scholarly journal published by the forum for communication and media research. Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication, University of Benin, Benin City-Nigeria.

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Subscription to Mediacom Journal can be made in hand copy or in pdf-format for the following subscription fee.

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## The Use Of Rural Newspaper For Rural Development

Benjamin Kayode Ogundeji\*  
Dr. Asekun-Olarinmoye\*\*  
&  
Felix Olajide Talabi\*\*\*

### Abstract

This paper presents an understanding of the contribution and role played by the rural newspapers toward the growth of rural community in which majority of citizen live. As there are potentials for the rural community to strife, there is need for rural based newspaper that will speak the language of the rural people for rapid development in the area of infrastructure, social, economic and cultural development. The paper also describes the various sources of news available to rural journalists along the responsibilities of rural newspapers for the growth of rural dwellers. There is need for the rural newspaper to focus attention and publish special feature on various aspect of life that will educate the rural community for the betterment of their life. So also, rural newspaper shall lead a campaign in their locations to inform and create awareness among the rural dwellers to develop their community by not depending on the government. Among other things the paper recommends that government should encourage the individuals, corporate organizations to propagate polices that will allow community rural newspaper to strife and that financial regulation should be minimal and affordable to the intending publishers.

**Key words:** Rural Newspaper, Rural News, Rural Community, and Rural Development

### Introduction

Majority of the world's poorest citizens live in the rural areas of the country and they are unequally dependent on the natural resources endowed them by God. The resources they have around them is their source of livelihoods that is, farmlands, wildlife, forestry, fisheries and others. The sustainability of managing these resources is very essential for improving their standard of living on a daily basis while also ensuring that future generations also benefit from such resources.

In other for them to maintain, keep watch and know the benefit and ideal ways of amassing the resources very well, there must be a way of educating

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informing and creating awareness among the rural dwellers, especially through a medium that is more acceptable to them since not all of them have access to conventional media. It becomes imperative to use a medium of communication that will reach the people in their own vernacular and impress it on them the need to change their ways of life. Therefore, rural Newspaper has become phenomena that the world can't do without. They are essential parts of what communication experts refer to as communication responding to the yearnings of the rural people.

Whitney (1975) Observes "Mass Communication especially Newspaper, informs, it keeps one up-to-date, it educates, broadens and deepens one's perspective, it persuades, it sells goods and services and candidates and opinions, it entertains, it creates laughter, it fills the void, it costs money and it takes money". Hence, it is through communication that the life of the rural dwellers can be enhanced.

In other to foster development in the rural area the paper will look at various ways the rural newspaper can be used to achieve rural development and stimulate the people into participating in the process.

#### **Methodology**

This study is concerned mainly with the use of rural newspaper for rural development (in a rural community). Thus the method for this study is basically secondary research often called desk research and involves gathering information from already published sources, books, journals, papers, libraries internet and interaction with the stakeholders.

#### **Rural Newspaper at a Glance**

What is a newspaper rural?- a publication that appears regularly and frequently, and carries news about a wide variety of current events. Organizations such as trade unions, religious groups, corporations or clubs may have their own newspapers, but the term is more commonly used to refer to daily or weekly publications that bring news of general interest to large portions of the public in a specific geographic area. Rural Newspapers are newspapers established mainly to disseminate information about local issues, it may be a bilingual newspaper that will focus on specific issues, such as political struggle, opinion of rural dwellers which may be for or against the government and their polices or even to express their views about the local heads.

Rural newspaper covers news and events that are of local content which normally will be of interest to those in the urban settlement or national or of international scope. Looking back to the early days of political struggle and agitation, local newspaper were used to disseminate information like news items on rural issues to lend opinion against colonial lords in the local language of such rural communities; example of which is "Iwe Iroyin fun awon Egba at Yoruba" which was established in 1859 by Rev Henry Townsend in Abeokuta.

For effectiveness, the rural newspapers should come in the local language of such rural community because it performs an important informative disseminating role and can be used as tool for information dissemination at the

rural communities which urban and national or international newspaper may not create space for.

However, the rural newspaper provides a wider variety of news information to rural dwellers than the other media and they present far more details than radio and television. They cover diverse subjects, such as politics, business, entertainment, crime, art, society, sports, culture, education and farming. Hynds (1972) states that newspaper stimulates, motivates, inspires, interprets, builds, preserves, excites, satisfies and sometimes disappoints. It archives yesterday, chronicles today and periscopes the possibility of a brighter tomorrow. By the submission above, it indicates that rural newspapers have a lot of roles to play in the rural development of any state or country. Daramola (2003) also corroborates that newspapers and magazines are living media of mass communication.

#### **Functions of Rural Newspaper**

Rankin (1986) posits that newspaper functions as a unique and vital force in the daily lives of people. They provide facts and analysis, help individuals take responsible decisions, not only in coping with the complexities of modern living, but also in protecting the right and liberties of a free society. The rural newspaper performs other functions like informing the public (rural people), facts, opinions, statistics, photos and illustrations providing a record of man's activities and events in the society. It also provides contents capable of shaping people's opinions and feelings on issues in the society, educating by going beyond the basic facts to in-depth analysis in opinion places, feature stories, columns and editorials. Entertaining the rural people with humours, columns leisure features, comic and puzzles. It provides a free market place for advertisers and prospective customers in the rural communities.

#### **Rural Development**

Rural development is a term used in general to denote the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-urban neighbourhoods, country side and remote villages. These communities can be exemplified with a low ratio of inhabitants to an open space. Rural development seeks to enable individuals and communities to grow and change according to their own needs and priorities and at their own pace, provided such does not oppress other groups and communities or damages the environment.

The first priority of the rural development process is the empowering and enabling of those who are traditionally deprived of power and control over their common affairs. It claims as important the ability of people to act together to influence the social, economic political and environmental issues which affect them. Rural development aims to encourage sharing and to create structures which give genuine participation and involvement.

Rural development is about developing the power, skills, knowledge and experience of people as individuals and in groups, thus enabling them to undertake initiatives of their own to combat social, economic, political and environmental problems and enabling them to fully participate in a truly

democratic process. Rural development is essential because it ensures good living for all the inhabitants of the rural areas because they are part of the country. Therefore they (rural dwellers) should also benefit from what other people in the urban areas are enjoying.

A strong rural area economy built on improved agricultural productivity and right policies put in place by the government of the day will boost national economic growth and reduce poverty. In most countries, government provides some facilities that can bring about rural development or factors that can facilitate rural development in such rural communities. There are programmes put in place to boost the standard of living of the rural communities and at the same time boost the economy of the country. For instance, if the government provides advance agricultural technology to offer great increase in farm productivity, and to establish centre in a rural community, it promotes community driven, small scale rural infrastructural development within such communities; infrastructural support at the community level provides market access and generate employment opportunities. Apart from these, it also aids; Food security (food aid to poor rural communities), Income generation for rural areas (sales of cash crops and other farm product) and Safeguarding the rural areas with the introduction of development plans, veterinary plans, veterinary infrastructure, skilled staff to build capacity for early detection and control of livestock and crop diseases especially those that can be transmitted from animals to humans.

#### **Rural Journalism**

Rural journalism can be defined as professional news coverage of rural communities, individual, suburbs or small towns, news coverage on city, neighbours rather than metropolitan state, national or world news or events. Rural journalism is rural oriented news and features that could be channel to the audience through local print media. Rural communities also have equal rights with those in the urban areas but due to lack of some basic amenities the rural dwellers may not benefit as much as their urban counterpart. Apart from the function of rural journalism that makes the voice of the rural dwellers to be heard, rural journalism also brings the government to the grassroots level. The task of these enormous functions lies with the rural journalist. Rural journalist are typically trained professional reporters and editors. They are given specialized training programmes at undergraduate and graduate journalism level to make them fixed into the rural community they find themselves as journalists. Rural journalists utilize all they gather during their search for news within their community and ensure they use such to promote their rural community, to balance the development of the rural community and also use such news to ensure true patriotism, cultural integration, self-reliance, unity within and outside the community and to create better life for all rural dwellers.

Rural news are news coverage of events in a local context which would normally not be of interest to those of other localities, city or urban dwellers or any other use, be of national or international scope. They are news that urban or larger news media houses will never wait to cover during their search for news.

Rural news cover issues that affect the community life of the rural dwellers; such news may be student on the honour roll at local primary school or high school, inter-house sport, crimes such as vandalism, zoning issues, political rallies, village meetings, burial events, community project like; construction of roads, building of towns halls, chieftaincy title, unusual birth of twins, house warming, festivals like Odun Egungun, Odun Ijesu (new Yams) tribal wars or coronation of Oba or Chiefs etc.

Rural news, inform, educate and enlighten the urban elites and the government of the day about the needs, aspirations, problems, successes, joys, values and general life pattern of the rural dwellers. Rural news educates rural community about government policies, activities, programme, philosophies materials ideas and other things that the rural communities will benefit for their survival or that can improve their standard of living in their community.

Rural newspaper sought for news from within and surrounding environment of the rural communities and such sources include the following:

- Market places: Market heads (women and men), market square etc.
- Palm wine joints- Those who came to drink, relax and enjoy after the day's work.
- Game centre – People who come to play *Ayo Olopon*, draft and other games played for entertainment and relaxation
- From local politician, local government chairmen, politicians sensitive to local areas.
- Community development centres.
- Churches and Mosques
- Herbalist house, shrine and festival periods

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The concept of rural newspaper is enunciated in some communication theories. For the purpose of this paper we shall take into consideration the development media theory. It was formulated to meet the peculiarities and characteristic of the developing countries in order to ensure communication for development. The development media theory was propounded by Dennis McQuail. The theory is of the view that the media in developing countries should attend to their most pressing needs, which media have a positive role to play in stimulating social and economic development. The principles of the theory are:

- Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with established national policy.
- Freedom of media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society.
- Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and languages.
- Media should give priority in news and information to links with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally and politically.

- Journalist and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks and in the interest of development hence, the state has a right to intervene in or restrict media operation and devices and direct control can be justified.

The principles of development media theory come to play in rural newspaper. The focus of the rural community newspaper is the development of the rural community through the provision of information that will bring development to the people of the rural area. Thus, the development media theory advocates mass media support for the development of the community. The theory is of the view that governments in developing nations should make the media work in various areas, in this sense using rural newspapers for rural development (Barany and Davis (2009:123).

#### **Usefulness of Rural Newspapers for Rural Development**

1. **For Education:** The rural newspaper helps to educate the rural community through the dissemination of news both local and foreign. It helps to bring new ideas that have been beneficial to other communities to the awareness of its rural community. The rural newspaper can also, when necessary draw attention of the government to areas in the educational set up of rural community that needs attention. For example the flood disaster in Lokoja, Bayelsa, Enugu which claims many lives wouldn't have been, if rural newspaper in those areas have been fully utilized to create awareness of the impending danger of climate change on a daily and on a weekly basis.
2. **Health Matters:** The rural newspaper helps create awareness on health matters in its rural community. It designate information on health hazards, outbreak of epidemics, how to live healthy (health tips) and when required, raising a campaign for the establishment of health institutions in the rural community and often partners with health organizations to propagate health programmes and information.
3. **Rural Infrastructure:** It is an established fact that most governments neglect rural community when it comes to the provision of infrastructural facilities. The rural newspaper can help in bringing infrastructural development to the rural area by not only drawing the attention of the local/state government to the infrastructural needs of the rural area through publication of articles, editorials, cartoons, special features of such community but also appealing to the wealthy individuals, religious organizations, social groups, foundations and companies to help develop the rural community infrastructures.
4. **Agriculture:** The major occupation in the rural community is agriculture. The rural newspaper can help develop the rural area agriculturally through the dissemination of information on new farming techniques, methods and procedures, new varieties of seeds and crops, how to effectively fight against crop diseases and pests. Such as the current problem encountered

by cocoa farmers in Nigeria in which fake cocoa vaccine were imported from Ghana to Nigeria which resulted into drowning of cocoa tress in farms. The rural newspaper can alert the farmers and government by publishing special edition in rural language that will create awareness for the farmers. The issue of mechanization and fertilizer can also be treated by the rural newspaper to educate farmers.

5. **Population Control:** The rural newspaper can also help control the population of rural community through sensitizing the local populace on the implications of under- population and over population and the benefits of adequate family planning and various family planning methods available. This helps to maintain a level of equilibrium in population figure which in turn helps the government with stable data for economic planning and development of the rural community.
6. **Environmental Development:** The rural newspaper can be used to develop the people by educating the populace on environment issues like afforestation, the negative implications of unregulated felling of trees, indiscriminate bush burning, clogging of waterways and drainage with debris and refuse. Others are erosion and even when necessary lead campaigns against emissions of poisonous gases e.g carbon monoxide. Rural newspaper can be used to draw attentions of the government and prospective investors to areas that can be developed into tourist attractive centres such as Bitumen Centre in Odigbo, Ondo State, Ikogosi Water Fall in Ekiti State and Idanre Hill etc. It can also be used to lead campaigns against other environmental degradations like oil spillage, indiscriminate mining and floods.
7. **Employment:** The rural newspaper helps develop the rural area through the provision of employment, not only within its organizations but also through adverts on its pages of employment opportunities available within the rural communities or outside.
8. **Sport:** The rural newspaper brings the excitement and politics of sport into homes in the rural community thereby fostering an enabling environment and love for the sports at a level almost at par with the urban areas thereby bringing out talents in various discipline of sport who otherwise would not have shown interest in sports. Such helps in reducing youth restiveness and delinquencies and fosters communal unity in rural areas.

#### **Conclusion**

The economic, health, agricultural and ethical imperatives for rural communities and education of the masses should be a burden for the stakeholders' especially rural newspaper whose statutory responsibility of vigilance, surveillance on the environment and provision of reliable and useful information is its responsibility. The rural newspaper outfits should work harder

by educating members of the community on the needs for teaching social, economic, political and social wellbeing of the present and future generations.

### **Recommendations**

There is need for government to encourage the individuals, corporate organizations to propagate policies that will allow community rural newspaper to thrive; therefore, financial regulation should be minimal and affordable to the intending publishers.

The stakeholders in rural newspaper should endeavour to publish stories, articles, features that will be beneficial to rural dwellers. The language used in the publication of rural newspaper should be more community oriented language for effective understanding of the rural dwellers who will in turn educate their family members.

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