

Journal of African films and Diaspora Studies (JAFDIS)
(Research on African Films, Diaspora Studies,
Performance Arts and Communication Studies)

ISSN: 2516-2705 (Print) ISSN: 2516-2713 (Online)

Indexed by SCOPUS, IBSS, EBSCO, ProQuest, COPERNICUS,
ERIH PLUS and Sabinet

Volume 5, Number 3, September 2022
pp 39-58

**Employing Communication Strategies as Tools for
Eradicating Open Defecation in Rural Areas in Southwest
Nigeria**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-2713/2022/5n3a3>

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Abstract

The consensus among health and development communication scholars is that various communication strategies and approaches can promote public health awareness. The scholars also argue that for attitudinal change to ensue, activities must be built around people's capacity to contribute and participate actively in the transformation process. With only Ifedayo local government area (LGA) of Osun State declared open defecation-free by UNICEF in Southwest Nigeria, it is crucial to interrogate the communication approach used to achieve this feat. A survey was conducted on 391 respondents in twelve wards of the LGA, and an interview conducted with the director of the LGA's Water and Environmental Sanitation department. Findings revealed that the state's radio station was used to create awareness on the dangers of open defecation and mobilize people to build toilet facilities. The agency also used dialogue and other forms of interpersonal communication strategies to educate and enforce compliance. The paper concluded that radio is a medium of awareness and knowledge in behavioral change communication-related issues. Such changes would only occur if interpersonal channels are combined to elicit change in the people. For effective communication strategies, stakeholders must be sincerely committed to the "Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet" campaign objectives. The findings of the study recommend that for an end to open defecation in southwest Nigeria, relevant agencies, particularly, Water and Environmental Sanitation departments, should adopt integrated communication strategies with more emphasis on dialogue than force.

Keywords: *Behavioral change, Communication, Open defecation, Radio jingles.*

Introduction

Open defecation in Nigeria is undoubtedly a source of concern as it constitutes a huge embarrassment to the country's image among the comity of nations. It is not uncommon to see men, children, and women defecating openly in fields, forests, bushes, water bodies, or other open spaces in urban and rural areas of low-income countries like Nigeria. To emphasize the enormity of open defecation and its dangers to the world, Galan, Kim, and Graham (2013) observed that about 1.1 billion people, representing 15% of the global population, indulge in it.

In 2019, Nigeria ranked second, after India, among countries that practice open defecation. With India making rapid progress in ending open defecation (UNICEF, 2020; Adepoju, 2019), Nigeria currently ranks first among countries practising open defecation globally (Wateraid, 2020). Available statistics from the 2018 Water Sanitation and Hygiene National Outcome Routine Mapping (WASHNORM) survey reveal that about 47 million people, which constitutes 24 percent of Nigeria's population, practise open defecation (The Punch, 2019). This implies that almost one in every four Nigerians defecates in open areas due to inadequate indoor toilets or outdoor community toilets, a situation which makes it nearly impossible for the Nigerian government-led campaign to end open defecation by 2025 to succeed (Onabolu, 2020).

Of the 47 million people who defecate in the open in Nigeria, nine million are from the Southwest (Johnson, 2019). Reports also show that only 27 LGAs are currently declared and certified open defecation-free by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), representing four percent of the 774 LGAs in Nigeria (Onabolu, 2020). Of the 27 LGAs in seven Nigerian states declared open defecation-free, Cross River, Jigawa, and Benue states have six each, five are in Katsina, two in Bauchi, and one in Osun and Akwa Ibom (Adelana, 2020). Of the six states in the southwest—Lagos, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Oyo and Ogun—only Osun is represented in the seven states declared open defecation-free. Even more worrisome is that only one LGA (Ifedayo LGA) of 154 LGAs in the region was declared open defecation-free. This represents a 0.6% result in the "Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet" campaign in the southwest.

Although the Nigerian government, through the Federal Ministry of Water Resources, is making concerted effort to ensure an open defecation-free Nigeria by 2025, the country can only account for a 4% success story as indicated by the 27 LGAs certified and declared open defecation-free by UNICEF. The near-failure of Nigeria to achieve an open defecation-free society is due to the unrelenting practice of open defecation in both urban

and rural areas (Ngwu, 2017). According to Ngwu (2017), the practice is worse in rural communities due to limited information on the health and environmental implications of the practice.

The media plays a crucial role in transmitting health communication campaigns that target attitudinal and behavioral change (Talabi, Oloyede, Fadeyi, Talabi, Nnanyelugo, Gever, and Ikechukwu-Ilomuanya, 2021). While studies have attested that these health communication campaigns, transmitted through various media platforms, including radio, television and social media platforms, influence attitude and behavioral change to an extent (e.g., Nwokolo & Nwokolo, 2021; Talabi, Oyedeji, Adelabu, Sanusi, Adaja, Talabi, Bello, Lamidi & Alade 2022), open defecation remains a societal and uneradicated problem. To initiate transformational development that translates into behavioral change among rural and urban dwellers, a multi-dimensional approach that transcends traditional media platforms is needed to communicate an open defecation-free society campaign to the populace.

Health communication campaigns are not limited to creating awareness and influencing attitudinal and behavioral change. They also serve as a springboard for interpersonal communication among community members regarding behavioral change (Kauppi, 2015). However, this aspect of health communication campaigns, though important, has been sparsely researched. A multi-communication approach enables change agents to reach different segments of the target audience. The communication strategies and radio jingle adopted by Ifedayo LGA's Water and Environmental Sanitation Department to prevent open defecation presents an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of a multi-communication approach to preventing open defecation.

The adoption rate of new health-related behaviours can be accelerated in any segment of the population through more intensive and appropriate communication and outreach that goes beyond the deployment of traditional media platforms (Green et al., 1991; Dearing, 1991). It is for this reason that this study is situated within the framework of the diffusion of innovation theory which explains how an innovation or new idea (preventive measures on open defecation in this instance) is communicated through certain communication channels to achieve desired behavioral changes over time. The diffusion of innovation theory posits that individuals go through five stages in the adoption of a new idea: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Ngwu, 2017). The diffusion of innovation theory is based on the fact that the media, including mass and social media, community-based media and

interpersonal communication channels, can be used to create awareness among the target audience (USAID, 2017). Since the adoption rate of people within the same system differs, there is a need to involve every member within the system to participate in the diffusion of the message using a multi-communication approach at different levels and stages of diffusion (<https://www.communicationtheory.org>). In light of the diffusion of innovation inclination, therefore, the study objectives are:

- i) To find out the communication strategies used in the campaign against open defecation in Ifedayo local government.
- ii) To find out the influence of communication strategies on the practice of open defecation among Ifedayo LGA residents.

Review of Literature

Open Defecation in Southwest-Nigeria: Situation Report

In November 2018, the Nigerian president declared a state of emergency in the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector. In November 2019, he launched a national campaign tagged “Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet” to kickstart the nation’s struggle towards eradicating open defecation and becoming Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2025. By declaring a state of emergency and launching the national campaign, the Nigerian government created a path for the 36 states of the federation to follow.

The progress report in the southwest is, however, disheartening. In a statement at the Global Citizen Festival, New York, in 2019, the Lagos state governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, pledged \$100million (N36billion) to improve water access, sanitation, and the eradication of open defecation in Lagos by 2025 (Okon, 2020). However, despite his pledge, open defecation continues on highways, major markets, and parks in the state. Okon (2020) reports that the worst-hit areas in the state are Badagary, Ijora, Iganmu flyover near the National Theatre, Orile to Mile 2, Alakija bridge, Trade Fair bridge, Abule-Ado, Iyan-Iba, MazaMaza, and Agboju.

Despite an outright ban on open defecation in Ondo state, the number of people who continue to defecate openly, according to the state governor, is 1.4 million. As part of efforts to eradicate open defecation along major roads, the state governor, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu ordered every filling station on the state's highways to place a functional and accessible public convenience within their facilities for public use (Johnson, 2019). Similarly, UNICEF reported that 1.4 million residents in Ekiti state

still defecate outside (Pulse, 2019). The progress report in Ogun state, Oyo state, and other parts of Osun state were not different.

Reports on open defecation in Osun state show that it is a common practice among the people. To put an end to open defecation, the state government launched a statewide campaign in line with the “*Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet*” in 2019 with traditional rulers, religious leaders, market women, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, landlords, community association, local government chairmen and other stakeholders in attendance. The state also proposed to ban open defecation by 2024 (Oyegbade, 2019). As part of moves to curb it, the state government established a policy under the state Public Health Law that stated that whoever indulges in open defecation is committing a crime and liable to a N50,000 fine. In addition to that, the policy also stated that defaulters would be compelled to build a toilet in their house (Oyegbade, 2019). Taking into cognizance the success of the open defecation campaign in Ifedayo LGA, this study hypothesizes that perhaps the integrated approach of the communication campaign and the commitment of the different stakeholders in the state led to the LGA being the only one in southwest Nigeria certified open defecation-free by UNICEF. Hence, this study identified the communication strategies used in the campaign against open defecation in Ifedayo LGA and examined the influence of the communication strategies on the knowledge and practice of open defecation among Ifedayo LGA residents.

Integrated Approach to Behavioural Change

When there is an identified unpalatable situation in a society, the desire for change often arises. That is, the need to transform or transit to new practices or acceptable behaviour expected of a civilized nation. Mefalopulos (2008) identified four phases in the approach to communication intervention. According to him, each phase builds on the previous one but maintains its specific scope, methods, and tools. The phases are communication-based assessment (CBA), communication strategy design, implementation of the activities, monitoring the process, and evaluating the communication intervention's impact. While communication-based assessment addresses comprehensive research, communication strategy focuses on defining strategy and related action plans, including the budget, communication approaches needed for the programme, the time required, relevant media, and the message identified for each category of audiences in the area. The third and fourth stages

ensure that activities mapped out at the strategy stage are put into action. At this stage, the people involved are trained, media campaigns are conceptualized and produced, and information about the programme is disseminated among other activities, and formative and summative evaluation are conducted, respectively.

This paper revolves around the second phase of communication intervention: communication strategy design or strategic communication design. The strategic design, according to Ramon (2001), cited in O'Sullivan, Yonkler, Morgan, and Merritt (2003), is characterized by the use of a multichannel, diversity of stakeholders, increased attention to evaluation and evidence-based programming, and a communication process in which participants both create and share. Thus integrated communication recognizes that:

- There is a need to use multiple communication channels in behavioral change communication;
- Mass media, billboards, traditional communication modes, and interpersonal channels can be integrated strategically to reinforce the message to achieve optimal results;
- The communication strategy should adopt a dialogical approach through which everyone can participate meaningfully;
- Decision power must be decentralized, and emphasis should shift to local government areas or local development centres as the case in Nigeria;
- Every stakeholder's participation at every step in the strategic communication process is vital to the success of the programme;
- There is a need to segment the audience to develop messages that will be relevant to each segment;
- The use of community leaders, opinion leaders, religious leaders, households, and associations (such as landlords' associations) is vital in successfully transiting to new practices; and
- Evaluation is vital at every stage of communication intervention.

Why Radio?

The radio is a medium of sound and a channel of communication. The radio transcends the boundaries of space and time. It is a veritable medium that provides messages to educate the audience (Sanusi, Talabi, Adelabu, & Alade, (2021). Asemah (2011, p. 19) describes the radio as "the emission of rays or waves which bear signals called programmes." The fact that the radio lends itself to audio signals alone gives it certain advantages over

other media like television, newspapers, and magazines. For instance, with the radio, illiteracy is not a barrier as the literate, semi-literate, and the illiterate can easily comprehend its message since it appeals to the sense of hearing. Similarly, messages can be designed and conveyed in local languages.

The radio also lends itself to immediacy. Messages, events or breaking news are heard first on it. While we may be lucky to read bits of the story in the evening newspaper, we would have to wait for a more comprehensive report of the same event in the daily newspapers the following day. In terms of availability, Dominick (2002, p. 182) says, "radio is universal. Virtually every household has at least one functional radio."

As a medium of mass communication, the radio can stimulate emotions and allow one-on-one connection and interaction between the presenter of a programme and its audience. This is why, while writing on the effects of radio in behavioral change campaigns, Bhatia (2017) asserted that the radio can have direct and indirect effects on the target audience. According to Bhatia (2017), targeted radio campaigns influence individual recipients directly by inviting cognitive or emotional responses. The purpose, according to Bhatia, is to influence decision-making processes at the individual level. On the other hand, when the effect is indirect, the aim is to set an agenda for interpersonal discussion, frequency, depth, or both on a particular health issue within an individual's social network, which may be reinforced in conjunction with personal exposure to messages.

Thus, there is a need to understand the target community for developmental programmes to succeed in any community. Understanding the community means understanding the people, the culture, political and social life, occupation, and belief system, particularly related to the proposed programmes. Understanding the people gives an insight into how to execute the programme, the appropriate channels of communication to adopt, the models to use in the campaign, risks, design objectives, time of transmission, as well as the communication intervention strategy to use.

Understanding the people informed the decision of Ifedayo LGA's Water and Environmental Sanitation Department that the best medium to reach the people, who are mostly civil servants and farmers, is the radio. On the one hand, civil servants listen to the radio more than any medium early in the morning while getting ready for work. On the other hand, farmers are also more predisposed to radio in the morning and evening while working on the farm. According to Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik's (2010, p. 1261) that "the great promise of mass media campaigns lies in the

ability to disseminate well-defined behaviourally focused messages repeatedly to large audiences, over time, in an incidental manner, and at a low cost per head.” WHO (2017, p. 5) also affirmed this when it stated that factors to be considered when prioritizing communication channels include the "reach and how the channel supports audiences' ability to recall the message and impact;" and “exposure to the messages and repetitions are key to audience recall, increasing the likelihood that such audiences will act on the information provided.”

Materials and Method

The study adopted the mixed-method research design, specifically the exploratory sequential design which begins with the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the first phase, followed by a second phase where the researcher, building from the exploratory results, collects quantitative data to test the initial findings (Creswell, 2015). For this study, the researchers, through a content analysis of the open defecation campaign and an in-depth interview of the director of Water and Environmental Sanitation Department of the Ifedayo LGA in Osun state, Nigeria, collected qualitative data on the key areas of information focused on in the radio campaign and the communication strategies adopted by the department during the open-defecation radio campaign. Based on the data derived from the in-depth interview, the researchers designed a questionnaire administered to 391 residents (33 households per seven wards through convenient sampling, while five wards were given 32 each) in the 12 wards to capture respondents' demographics and the influence of communication strategies on the knowledge and practice of open defecation among residents of Ifedayo LGA in Osun state.

Participants

The sample ($n=391$) included more males ($n=292$, 74.7%) than females ($n=99$, 25.3%). The age range of the respondents was 18-48 years and above. Majority of the respondents were mature adults aged 38-47 years ($n=170$, 43.5%), followed by older adults aged 48 years and above ($n=104$, 26.6%), young adults aged 28-37 years ($n=83$, 21.2%), and younger adults aged 18-27 years ($n=34$, 8.7%). Majority of the respondents were married ($n=322$, 82.4%) and from the Yoruba ethnic group ($n=355$, 90.8%).

Measures

Influence of open defecation free radio campaign on respondents

For the influence of the radio campaign, respondents were requested to respond to five statements rated on a scale of one to five (with 1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree). Respondents responded to the statements: "Through the jingle, I became aware of the dangers of defecating in the open field," "I observe environmental hygiene as a result of the radio campaign on open defecation," "The warnings in the jingle forced me to stop open defecation," "I educate others on the dangers of open defecation because of the radio campaign," and "I ensure the environment is free from improper disposal of faeces."

Perceived influence of the communication strategies adopted by the agency on the practice of open defecation free

For the perceived influence of the communication strategies used, respondents were requested to respond to eight statements on a scale of one to five (with 1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree). These statements include: "Jingle via project vehicle assigned for campaign discouraged me from practicing open defecation," "Posters and handbills used in the open defecation campaign discouraged me from practicing open defecation," "Town crier and WASHCOMs community consultant influenced my practice of ensuring an open defecation free environment," and "My house now has a toilet as a result of Community Immediate Doable Action (CIDA) in the campaign."

Data Presentation

Message design campaign adopted by Ifedayo LGA

The radio jingle: The radio jingle adopted a monologic/one-way communication mode, also described as a vertical communication flow to disseminate information. The jingle addressed three key areas of information: environmental sanitation, personal hygiene, proper disposal of faeces, and construction of toilets.

A content analysis revealed that two types of appeal were used in designing the radio jingle. The first was a mass appeal in which community residents were asked to collectively embrace a clean environment, provide

toilets, and embrace personal hygiene after using the toilet to avoid infectious diseases. The second appeal used in the jingle is firm. The messages focused on the proposed visitation of sanitary inspectors from house to house on inspection compliance with the message. The firm appeal is laced with a threat, which is evident when the message clearly emphasized that all violators would face the wrath of the law.

In summary, the jingle set out to create an awareness of the dangers of defecating in open fields and the need to build toilet facilities in houses. The message was aired for 20 days on the Osun State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC Radio) twice a day: first at 6.45 am (before most of the residents leave home for work) and at 7.45 pm. The jingle, which was jointly sponsored by the Ifedayo LGA and UNICEF, was conveyed in Yoruba language.

The communication strategies adopted by Ifedayo LGA's Water and Environmental Sanitation Department

The in-depth interview with the director of Water and Environmental Sanitation Department of the Ifedayo LGA revealed that the agency adopted the dialogic mode of communication, a two-way communication for engagement and discovery to achieve behavioral change among residents of the LGA. This type of communication encourages participatory communication and creates a constructive environment where stakeholders can define problems and solutions. The following strategies were used by the agency:

- The production of an educative jingle and transmission on state-owned radio;
- The same jingle was also mounted on the project vehicle driven around the community while the jingle played;
- Use of posters and handbills;
- The use of town criers (to announce to enhance awareness further) and WASHCOMs community consultant;
- Interpersonal communication (e.g., holding meetings with residents, religious institution, Association, and community dialogue);
- Adoption of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and the use of Community Immediate Doable Action (CIDA);
- Households that had no toilets were encouraged, not forced, to build through CIDA.
- Construction of conveniences by the LGA in public places like markets and parks, among others; and

- The use of trained sanitation inspectors who were enjoined not to be too direct in their approach

Table 1: Influence of radio campaign on respondents

Items	Mean	S.D
Through the jingle, I became aware of the dangers of defecating in the open field.	3.69	1.49
I observe environmental hygiene as a result of the radio campaign on open defecation	4.40	1.16
The warnings in the jingle force me to stop open defecation	4.25	1.43
I educate others on the dangers of open defecation because of the radio campaign	4.41	1.15
I ensure the environment is free from improper disposal of faeces	4.32	1.14

Source: Researchers' field survey, 2020

As presented in Table 1, data revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that they became aware of the dangers of open defecation through the jingle ($M=3.69$, $S.D=1.49$), and warnings in the jingle forced them to stop open defecation ($M=4.25$, $S.D=1.43$). Also, majority of the respondents indicated that they observed environmental hygiene due to the radio campaign on open defecation ($M=4.40$, $S.D=1.16$) and always ensured that the environment was free from improper disposal of faeces ($M=4.32$, $S.D=1.14$). Majority of the respondents agreed that the radio campaign made them educate others on the dangers of open defecation ($M=4.41$, $S.D=1.15$).

Table 2: Influence of communication strategies adopted by the agency on the practice of open defecation free

Items	Mean	S.D
Jingle via project vehicle assigned for campaign discouraged me from practicing open defecation	4.23	1.17
Posters and handbills used in the open defecation campaign discouraged me from practicing open defecation	4.06	1.23
Town crier and WASHCOMs community consultant influenced my practice of ensuring an open defecation free environment	4.41	1.15
My house now has a toilet as a result of Community Immediate Doable Action (CIDA)	2.97	1.90

Source: Researchers' field survey, 2020

On the influence of the communication strategies adopted by the agency on respondents, the majority of the respondents agreed that the jingle played on the project vehicle assigned for the open-defecation free campaign in the community ($M=4.23$, $S.D=1.17$), posters, and handbills used in the campaign ($M=4.06$, $S.D=1.23$) and town criers and WASHCOMs community consultants ($M=4.41$, $S.D=1.15$) influenced them against open defecation. However, most respondents disagreed that their houses now have toilets due to the Community Immediate Doable Action ($M=2.97$, $S.D=1.90$), one of the strategies deployed during the campaign.

Discussion of Findings

The fact that communication strategies deployed in a campaign can influence behavioral change is further established in this study. Two types of effects were established: direct and indirect effects. The direct effect is evident when respondents indicated that they became aware of the dangers of open defecation through the jingle and that warnings in the jingle forced them to stop open defecation and keep their environment clean. This was further buttressed when the director, during the interview, affirmed that the radio jingle was "effective" and "one of the means" used in convincing the people to adopt the practice. The jingle's indirect effect is evidenced by respondents indicating that the radio campaign provided the information needed to educate others on the dangers of open defecation (Mean=4.41,

SD=1.15). This finding aligns with Bhatia's (2017) statement that the radio can, directly and indirectly, affect the target audience.

Furthermore, the radio jingle created awareness of what constitutes open defecation and the social and health dangers of defecating in open places. In addition to improving the peoples' knowledge about the issue, it sparked discussion by informing those who had not listened to the radio campaign. It is worth mentioning that the frequency of exposure and the length of the number of insertions (twice daily for twenty days) were also instrumental in the people adopting the practice of not defecating in open fields. The agency confirmed this when the director agreed that the radio jingle was "effective in creating awareness about the need to stop open defecation." This finding confirms the assertion by the WHO (2017, p. 5) that "exposure to messages and repetitions are key to audience recall, increasing the likelihood that audiences will act on the information provided."

Despite the radio's power to create awareness, the use of multiple communication channels in behavioral change intervention is often more effective than when a single channel is used. This is evident in the experience of Ifedayo LGA. The LGA adopted an integrated communication approach to stop open defecation in the community. As noted by the agency, the communication strategies adopted which led to the adoption of news practices within the LGA include mass media (radio, mobile campaign, handbills & posters), traditional channel (town crier and use of megaphone by the agency to sensitize the community and the placement of speakers on agency vehicles to relay the jingles) and the use of interactive, interpersonal communication (meetings with religious associations, households, landlords associations, house-to-house visitation by trained sanitation personnel, community dialogue community-led total sanitation, CLTS, and SDA).

Integrating different communication channels to achieve the agency's campaign objectives aligns with the ideals of diffusion of innovation, which encourages mass media and interpersonal communication channels (opinion leaders) in the diffusion process. Even though the radio jingle emphasized that defaulters will face the wrath of the law, the agency did not apply strict measures when punishing defaulters. Instead, the agency adopted an interpersonal communication channel to dialogue and encourage residents to construct and use toilet facilities at home as well as locate and use toilet facilities in public places. The communal lifestyle of the community enabled the agency to hold meetings with the people.

One basic finding of this study is the agency's ability to co-opt family heads and landlord/landlady associations in the community. The agency took note of the peculiarity of the social system in the community and used the different groups within the system. The agency targeted family heads (men) because they are the decision-makers and their family members look up to them for guidance. Incidentally, some members of the family heads also fall into the category of tenants, landlords, skilled professions such as local auto mechanics, motor park chairpersons, market men and women leaders, tailors and farmers, etc.). They were co-opted into the programme. The sense of being part of the programme from the beginning gave each family a sense of belonging. They were invited to meetings where they jointly make decisions with government representatives and that step was enough boost for the people.

The landlords' association also aided the success of the programme. In Nigeria, landlords' associations are a powerful group in every community and have the power to dialogue with tenants and ensure they comply with the tenets of a programme. Thus, when the agency involved them, they became aware of the need to construct toilet facilities for their tenants and ensure they kept a clean environment.

Conclusion

The consensus among health and development communication scholars is that the media alongside communication strategies can promote public awareness. However, most behaviour change campaigns have deployed only mass media platforms to communicate behaviour change messages neglecting other communication channels. However, scholars have argued that for attitudinal change to occur, activities must be built around people's capacity to contribute and participate actively in the transformation process (Ngwu, 2017). Development communicators suggest using the most accessible mass media and two-way communication between and among stakeholders to transmit new permanent practices. Hence, this study examined Ifedayo LGA Water and Environmental Sanitation Department's multi-communication approach to behaviour change regarding open defecation. From the findings, the study concludes that the multi-communication deployed by Ifedayo LGA Water and Environmental Sanitation Department, including mass media, traditional channel and interpersonal communication using religious and home owners' association, eliminated doubt, creating a forum for interaction and exchange of ideas which led to an open defecation-free society.

The agency took cognizance of community members using these communication channels and involved them at every stage of the programme and conducted interval inspection of house-to-house by trained sanitary inspectors, who were a sure reason the programme was successful. Thus, if the success story of the Ifedayo LGA is to be replicated in the 154 LGAs in the southwest region of Nigeria, the study recommends that:

- Each state government in the southwest region must be committed to the programme. This is because, as observed by the acting coordinator of the "*Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet*" campaign, Ms. Chizoma Opara, "the drive towards making Nigeria open defecation free by 2025 will be a reality only when all stakeholders demonstrate a strong commitment" (Adelana, 2020).
- The Water and Environmental Sanitation Departments in all the LGAs and other relevant agencies should adopt multi-communication strategies emphasizing dialogue with the target audience rather than using force to ensure compliance.
- The different strata (community leaders and, particularly, Landlords' associations) within the target society must be co-opted to facilitate the adoption of the innovation. This is because the different groups can influence acceptance among their groups.
- Each LGA must co-opt and dialogue with bus terminals chairmen, market women, and men associations. Different chairpersons of skilled works must be co-opted for programme objectives to be achieved. The co-opting and dialoguing with motor parks and market leaders may lead to these groups instituting vigilante groups which will monitor and ensure that people within their areas do not defecate openly at any time of the day.
- Meetings involving heads of schools and teaching staff must be organized at interval to co-opt them into the programme.
- That participation is critical in campaigns targeted at behavioural change

Declaration of conflicting interest: We the authors declare that there is no conflicting interest whatsoever.

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