Mass Media and Development Communication in India: Philosophy and Practice

Desmond Onyemechi Okocha

Abstract

This study examines the Indian perspective of development communication in rural development programmes. Development is a process of gradual change and planned inducement for progressive improvement, which entails the social transformation of a society and a culture of technical innovation. Development communication can be said to be an approach to communication which provides communities with information they can use in bettering their lives. It has two primary roles, i.e. Transforming role, as it steps social change in the direction of the hygiene taste of today's generation in this competitive market and a socializing role by seeking to maintain some of the established values of the society. Thus, this paper concludes with the assertion that if development is to succeed, it should involve the people of local communities. Such locally initiated and participatory approaches can only be made possible through development communication. In addition, the paper notes that there are tremendous opportunities awaiting India and other developing nations as they strive for more pragmatic approaches to implement development communication towards a more efficient rural development.

Keywords: Development Communication, Rural Development, India, Mass Media, Philosophy and Practice

Introduction

The world over, especially in democratic nations, mass communication and its practitioners are necessary partners in national development. Development communication is one potent tool in this endeavour. Development communication refers to the use of communication in its varying genres and forms to facilitate social development. Mefalopulos (2008) said that Development communication engages stakeholders and policy makers, establishes conducive environments, assesses risks and opportunities and promotes information exchanges to bring about positive social change via sustainable development. Development communication techniques include information dissemination and education, behavior change, social marketing, social mobilization, media advocacy, communication for social change and community participation.

Development communication has been labeled the "Fifth Theory of the Press," with "social transformation and development," and "the fulfillment of basic needs" as its primary purposes. (Flor, 2007).

Jamias (1975) articulated the philosophy of development communication which is anchored on three main ideas, namely: purposive, value-laden and pragmatic. Nora (2001) expanded the definition, calling it "the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater

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Desmond Onyemechi Okocha PhD,
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Mass Communication,
Bingham University, KM 26 Abuja-Keffi Expressway, Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential."(Jamias,1991) Melcote and Steeves (2001) saw it as "emancipation communication", aimed at combating injustice and oppression.

According to the World Bank (2006), development communication is the "integration of strategic communication in development projects" based on a clear understanding of indigenous realities. In addition, the UNICEF (2017) views it as: "...a two-way process for sharing ideas and knowledge using a range of communication tools and approaches that empower individuals and communities to take actions to improve their lives." Development communication is essentially participatory, because, according to Ascroft and Masilela (1994):

participation translates into individuals being active in development programmes and processes; they contribute ideas, take initiative and articulate their needs and their problems, while asserting their autonomy.

To fully appreciate the importance of development communication, it is essential to know who development communicators are and the necessary qualities they do possess. Nora (2012) gave a succinct characterization:

1. They understand the process of development, the process of communication, and the environment in which the two processes interact.

2. They are knowledgeable in communication skills and techniques as well as proficient in subject matter to be communicated.

3. They have internalized the values inherent in equity and the unfolding of individual potential.

4. They have firsthand knowledge of the several kinds of end-users of development communication.

5. They have a sense of commitment, the acceptance of individual responsibility for advancing human development.

Meanwhile, Thusong Service Center (October 2000) outlines the characteristics of a new 'village level worker' or development communication practitioner as:

1. community needs at heart commitment to let.

2. communities lead: "I will follow"

3. responsive: "I want to make a difference"

4. multi-skilled and adaptable

5. knowledgeable on many areas of government, structures, programmes, policies - well read (but not an expert on everything rather a referral specialist)

6. good facilitation skills

7. strong knowledge of the district in which I work - history, people, language, economic base, structures, gate keepers, institutions, contact details

8. creative: strong knowledge of the creative methods of development communication

9. knows and accepts own limitations: "I know when I should pass on to the departmental expert so as to offer my main client - the citizen - the best service"

Research Aims

The aims of the study are:

1. To investigate the link between development communication and rural development

2. To find out whether development communication has been effective in stimulating and aiding rural development in India.

Research Objectives

The study is conducted on the basis of two objectives i.e., to find out the importance of development communication in achieving a nation's rural development policies and to find out the best approach to implementing development communication initiatives for effective rural development.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research questions and hypotheses of the study are as follows.

RQ1: What is the link between development communication and rural development?

RQ2: What is the best approach to implementing development communication to achieve rural development objectives?

H1: Development communication is important in rural development policy implementation.

H2: There are best practices required for development communication to be effective in aiding rural development.

Research Instrument

This research paper relied on ethnographic data, Phenomenological analysis and secondary data.

Development Communication and Rural Development in India

Organized development communication in India began with rural radio broadcasts in 1940s. Broadcasts adopted indigenous languages to reach larger audiences.

Organized efforts in India started with community development projects in the 1950s. The government, guided by socialist ideals and politicians, started many development programmes. Field publicity was employed for person-to-person communication. Radio played an important role in reaching the mass because literacy was low. Educational institutions – especially agricultural universities, through their extension networks – and international organizations under the United Nations umbrella experimented with development communication.

Communication from the government was more generic and unidirectional. So-called Public Information Campaigns were government-sponsored public fairs in remote areas that presented entertainment along with information on social and developmental schemes. Villagers engaged in competitions to attract attendees. Public and private organizations sponsored stalls in the main exhibition area. Development agencies and service/goods providers also attended such programmes. Some state governments employed this model.

NGOs and educational institutions created local stations to broadcast information, advisories and messages on development through Community radio, in Rural India. Local participation was encouraged at various levels of its function. It provided a platform for villagers to publicize local issues, offering the potential to elicit action from local officials. Besides Community radio, the widespread adoption of mobile telephony in India created new channels for reaching the masses. (Doron, 2013).

The Concept of Rural Development

India since the advent of independence has been in the move to develop the rural areas of the country. Moseley (2003) defines rural development as the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas.

Ward and Brown (2009) noted that rural development has traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, changes in global production networks and increased urbanization have changed the character of rural areas. Increasingly tourism, niche manufacturers, and recreation have replaced resource extraction and agriculture as dominant economic drivers. Rural development is also characterized by its emphasis on locally produced economic development strategies. (Moseley, 2003)

In contrast to urban regions, which have many similarities, Van & Hornidge (2015) observe that rural areas are highly distinctive from one another. For this reason, there are a large variety of rural development approaches used globally. Rural development is a comprehensive term. It essentially focuses on action for the development of areas outside the mainstream urban economic system.

Inclusive rural development is more specific concept than the concept of rural development. Neha (2015) an India scholar, added that in broader terms, inclusive rural development is about improving the quality of life of all members of rural society. More specifically, Neha went on to point

out that, inclusive rural development covers three different but interrelated dimensions: Economic dimension, Social dimension and Political dimension.

Economic dimension encompasses providing both capacity and opportunities for the poor and low-income households in particular III benefit from the economic growth. Social dimension supports social development of poor and low-Income households, promotes gender equality and women empowerment and provides social safety nets for vulnerable groups.

Political dimension improves the opportunities for the poor and low-Income people in rural areas to effectively and equally participate III the political processes at the village level.

The notion of rural development has been looked at and viewed in several ways by experts, ranging from seeing of it as a set of goals and programmes to a well-knit strategy, approach or even an ideology. There is a widely shared view that its essence should be poverty alleviation and distributive justice oriented economic transformation. (Neha, 2015)

National Institution Charged with Rural Development in India

Ministry of Rural Development is the official agency of the Government of India charged with matters of rural development. The Ministry has two departments namely: Department of Rural Development and Department of Land Resource.

Being the nodal Ministry for most of the development and welfare activities in the rural areas, the Ministry of Rural Development plays a pivotal role in the overall development strategy of the country. The vision and mission of the Ministry is sustainable and inclusive growth of rural India through a multipronged strategy for eradication of poverty by increasing livelihoods opportu-

nities, providing social safety net and developing infrastructure for growth.

Broadly, the aims of the Ministry of Rural Development are:

1. Providing livelihood opportunities to those in need including women and other vulnerable sections with focus on Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.

2. Providing for the enhancement of livelihood security of households in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household demanding it.

3. Provision of all-weather rural connectivity to unconnected rural habitations and upgradation of existing roads to provide market access.

4. Providing basic housing and homestead to BPL household in rural areas.

5. Providing social assistance to the elderly, widow and disabled persons.

6. Providing urban amenities in rural areas for improvement of quality of rural life.

7. Capacity development and training of rural development functionaries.

8. Promoting involvement of voluntary agencies and individuals for rural development.

9. Restoring lost or depleted productivity of the land. This is done through watershed development programmes and initiating effective land reform measures for providing land to the landless rural poor.

Path Behind

In October 1974, the Department of Rural Development came into existence as a part of Ministry of Food and Agriculture. On 18th August 1979, the Department of Rural Development was elevated to the status of a new Ministry of Rural Reconstruction. It was renamed as Ministry of Rural Development on 23rd January 1982. In January 1985, the Ministry of Rural Development was again converted into a Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development which was later rechristened as Ministry of Agriculture in September 1985. On July 5, 1991 the Department was upgraded as Ministry of Rural Development. Another Department viz. Department of Wasteland Development was created under this Ministry on 2nd July 1992. In March 1995, the Ministry was renamed as the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment with three departments namely Department of Rural Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Rural Development and Wasteland Development.

Again, in 1999 Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment was renamed as Ministry of Rural Development. This Ministry has been acting as a catalyst effecting the change in rural areas through the implementation of wide spectrum of programmes which are aimed at poverty alleviation, employment generation, infrastructure development and social security. Over the years, with the experience gained, in the implementation of the programmes and in response to the felt needs of the poor, several programmes have been modified and new programmes have been introduced. The Ministry's main objective is to alleviate rural poverty and ensure improved quality of life for the rural population especially those below the poverty line. These objectives are achieved through formulation, development and implementation of programmes relating to

various spheres of rural life and activities, from income generation to environmental replenishment.

In order to ensure that the fruits of economic reform are shared by all sections of societies five elements of social and economic infrastructure, critical to the quality of life in rural areas, were identified. These are health, education, drinking water, housing and roads. To impart greater momentum to the efforts in these sectors the Government launched the Pradhan Mantri Gramodoya Yojana (PMGY) and the Ministry of Rural Development was entrusted with the responsibility of implementing drinking water, housing and rural roads component of PMGY.

Budget

Budget outlay of Rs. 86000 crores have been provided under the Plan head to the Department of Rural Development for the financial year 2016-17. An additional amount of Rs. 9000 crores have been allocated at the RE stage to the department thereby augmenting the provision to Rs. 95000 crores. Budget outlay of Rs. 105447.88 crores have been allocated to the department of Rural Development for the year 2017-18. (Ministry of Rural Development, 2017)

Examples of Development Communication Initiatives Around the World

1. Farm Radio Forums in Canada. From 1941 to 1965 farmers met weekly to listen to radio programs, supplemented by printed materials and prepared questions to encourage discussion. At first this was a response to the Great Depression and the need for increased food production in World War II. Later the Forums dealt with social and economic issues.

2. Radyo DZLB, the community broadcasting station of UPLB College of Development Communication. It was a forerunner of the school-on-air (SOA) concept that provided informal education for farmers. DZLB hosted SOAs on nutrition, pest management and cooperatives. (Flor and Ongkiko, 2006).

3. Instructional television was used in El Salvador during the 1970s to improve primary education. One problem was a lack of trained teachers. Teaching materials were improved to make them more relevant. More children attended school and graduation rates increased.

4. In the 1970s in Korea, the Planned Parenthood Federation succeed in lowering birth rates and improving life in villages such as Oryu Li. It mainly used interpersonal communication in women's clubs. Oryu Li's success did not recur in all villages.

5. A social marketing project in Bolivia in the 1980s tried to get women in the Cochabamba Valley to use soybeans in their cooking. This was an attempt to deal with chronic malnourishment among children. The project used cooking demonstrations, posters and broadcasts on local commercial radio stations.

6. In 1999 the US and DC Comics planned to distribute 600,000 comic books to children affected by the Kosovo War. The books were in Albanian and featured Superman and Wonder Woman. The aim was to teach children what to do when they find an unexploded land mine left over from Kosovo's civil war. The comic books instruct children not to touch and not to move, but instead to call an adult for help.

7. Since 2002, Journalists for Human Rights, a Canadian NGO, has operated projects in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. JHR works directly with journalists, providing monthly workshops, student sessions, on the job training and additional programs on a country by country basis.

Selected Development Communication Initiatives in India

1. National Foundation for India is an independent grant making and fundraising foundation, with a core mandate to strengthen philanthropy in India for public welfare and social transformation.

a. NFI offers annual fellowships to print and photo journalists from different parts of the country, to publish a series of articles on a range of development issues. Fellowships may also be offered to cover specific issues of current concern. The value of the National Media Fellowship is Rs.1 lakh each.

b. Community media projects: NFI assists NGOs in field projects that enable community participation in media forms that serve local development needs and help build local development perspectives.

c. Research: NFI supports research on the manner in which the media covers development issues, the impact of such coverage, and safe online case on measures to enhance the quality of development journalism.

d. Forums for dialogue: NFI brings together journalists, NGOs, and academicians to deliberate on the role of the media in development.

2. The Ministry of Rural Development on a regular basis interacts with the Press mainly through the Press Information Bureau (PIB). Review press conference, press tours and workshops are organized through PIB, with the financial assistance from the Ministry, so as to sensitize press persons about Rural Development Program.

3. All India Radio has been the forerunner in the process of implementing communication strategy adopted by the government. The Radio Rural Forum experiment of 1956 covered 156 villages. It contained a 30-minute duration program, two days a week on different issues like agriculture and varied subjects that could promote rural development.

4. Launched in June 2000, e-Choupal which is a unique web-based initiative of ITC Limited [a large multi business conglomerate in India] offering farmers required information, products and services they need to enhance farm productivity improve farm-gate price realizations and cut transaction costs, has already become the largest private sector initiative among all Internet-based interventions in rural India. e-Choupal services today reach out to more than 40 lakh farmers growing a range of crops-soyabean, Coffee, wheat, rice pulses, shrimp- in over 40,000 villages through 6450 kiosks across 8 states [M.P., Karanataka, A.P., Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu]. It has future plans to cover 100,000 villages or one sixth of rural India, within a decade.

5. The journey of television in India took a new turn with the launch of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment in 1975-76. It was a one-year pilot-project using the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's ATS-6 satellite to broadcast educational messages through satellite to 2400 villages in the six states of Andhra

Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. It was done with the help of NASA, UNDP, ITU and UNESCO.

Instance of Communication Failure in India

Implementation of development communication has not been all rosy. There are instances of failure. India is not left out in this ugly scenario. Cornelio Lagerwey (1990) founder of Communication Foundation for Asia eloquently observed that for any true development to happen, there must be an inner change of people, for example from stagnation or opposition, to one of involvement and support. People cannot be manipulated or coerced to grow and develop. The impetus and desire for development must come from within themselves. When the process through which these programs have been developed and implemented is not democratic, not participatory in nature, it is bound to fail.

Cornelio (1990) states a case pf failure as follows:

A failure to understand this process and its concomitant instrument of development communication can be very costly, like in India at the end of the sixties. The government, in its efforts to control the population growth, received substantial assistance from AID and the World Bank. A team of consultants and technicians was sent to study the situation. Millions were spent. A program was recommended. The recommendations were reviewed, the project was set up and implemented. Health and family planning clinics were established throughout the country. More millions were spent. Just one problem: the women for whom the clinics were intended did not come in. The government had to entice them with, for example, transistorized radios. The program failed. Human rights were violated. Indira Gandhi lost the next elections. What was

wrong? The failure to get the involvement of the women through the process of development communication. The government wanted instant involvement. People, however, are not coffee!

From the point of view of the government or the NGO, an ineffective program is tantamount to budgetary loss. On the side of the low-level income groups to whom these programs are targeted, it means lost self-worth and dehumanization. Anyone who is keen enough can sense this feeling of the poor being displaced, of being at the mercy of political and economic forces. They perceive that they do not have a handle on what is happening to them. They do not feel that they are the subjects of the development programs. With their characteristic meekness in front of the affluent and the influential, it is not hasty to conclude that they paradoxically see themselves as objects of the programs geared towards their development. Cornelio (1990)

Stakeholder Analysis in Development Communication Implementation

The design and implementation of policies is becoming more complex, and the number and type of actors involved in policy implementation more diverse; (Mehrizi; Ghasemzadeh and Molas-Gallart, 2009). Hence, the policy process is evolving towards multi-actor and multi-goal situations. (Carlsson, 2000)

"Stakeholder" has been variously defined according to the goal of the analysis, the analytic approach or the policy area. Where several groups of stakeholders are involved in the policy process, a stakeholder analysis can provide a useful resource.

For instance, Mehrizi; Ghasemzadeh and Molas-Gallart (2009) note that Brugha and

Varvasovszky defined stakeholder as "individuals, groups, and organizations who have an interest (stake) and the potential to influence the actions and aims of an organization, project, or policy direction." Besides, according to Flor (1991) a stakeholder analysis of communication policy would reveal the interplay of the following sectors:

Government – Being the highest body in the country ought to be in the forefront as far as development communication is concern. The government enacts all communication policies, making it the most powerful stakeholder. When there is political will from the government, it becomes easy for all other stakeholders to join the move.

Education sector – Universities and research centres play a great role in the field. They set the empirical and epistemological bases for even the government policies. So, they ought to conduct research that underlies subsequent policies.

Communication industry – The media industry influences communication policies through agenda setting and news framing. So, they should cater for the rural areas in their broadcast and reportage.

Private sector – They should extend their corporate social responsibility to the rural areas of the country and initiate projects that will link the rural communities to the national mainstream yet maintaining the uniqueness of the area ecosystem.

Religious sector – It traditionally opposes policies that allow obscenity, violence and profanity to be distributed.

Foreign interests –International lending agencies may demand the end of monopolies—including state media entities—as a condition for financial aid.

Consumers – The are traditionally not consulted, but more recently claiming to protect the public interest.

The United Nations (2017) has recognized the importance of "the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to express their aspirations and concerns and participate in decisions...." Such two-way interactions can help expose local reality. (Khadka, 1997)

Different Paradigms of Development Communication:

According to Junaed (2009) there are three different types of paradigms-

Modernization is the oldest paradigm as it was the first approach that was invented, which started after the World War II. The concept or the idea of this was that Western Nations saw themselves as the defines of development and setter of the yardsticks for measuring same. So, they set out to "modernize" Underdeveloped countries by making them follow the footsteps of a richer stronger country. This paradigm almost totally ignored the uniqueness of the race, culture, economy and religion of developing countries. They tended to see all people as homogeneous. This approach led to a lot of conflicts. It never emphasis on their own culture. Dependency paradigm came in 1960, by opposing "Modernization Paradigm". This set out to remedy the deficiencies of the modernization paradigm. The drawback of the paradigm is that the fundamental concept also continued in the linear one-way model, except they had a little emphasized on the link between communication and culture. It was a top-down

approach. The target audience had little or no input in the conception and design of the process.

In order to make up the limitations noted in the first two paradigm, a new paradigm was initiated. The latest one is called Participation Paradigm and it still exists. It actually emerged when the "modernization and dependency" unsuccessful to give a successful model. The model started to work, with the participation of all the people. It gives value to the peoples cultural, social & political view. This paradigm recognizes the importance of the various stakeholders and gets them all involved so that all can have a sense of ownership of the systems, processes and programmes.

Conclusion

Rural development is a comprehensive term. It essentially focuses on action for the development of areas outside the mainstream urban economic system. The field of development communication holds much potency for the present and future fate of rural development in India and other developing countries around the globe. Despite the remarkable benefits inherent in this discipline, failure is inevitable in the outcome if a participatory approach is not consciously adopted in the system design, process construction, implementations and as well as in deciding the evaluation benchmarks. Besides, it must be a two-way process that has internal locus of control and encourages regular feedback that will be used in either modifying the whole process or aspects of it. The rural people must have a sense of ownership for development communication to be effective.

It is worth mentioning that the various stakeholders must recognize and appreciate their place and functions with the matrix of development communication. Once a player or actor in the process gets disconnected or dissuaded, the whole system will lose equilibrium and become dysfunctional.

In conclusion, rural development has no shortcut if it must be inclusive and sustainable. Development communication essentially the participatory paradigm is a tested, result-oriented and unavoidable vehicle that we can embrace to attain our nation's rural development policy.

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