ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Interpersonal Communication Tools for Community Development of Iwaya Community in Lagos State

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Abstract

This research work examined interpersonal communication tools for promoting community development of Iwaya community in Lagos State. The main objective of this study was to identify ways interpersonal communication has influenced community development in Iwaya community. The study employed Development theory and Interpretative/Interaction theories. The method of research adopted for this study was survey method. The population consisted of both men and women in the rural community of Iwaya. A sample of 400 men and women was used for the study. Data collected were subjected to quantitative analysis. The study revealed that interpersonal communication would lead to active participation of members in community development. It was also revealed that when community groups are closely involved in interpersonal communication strategy, it helps them take right steps towards development initiative rather than seeing themselves as beneficiaries of development. Based on the findings, it was recommended that community leaders as well as community development agents should engage in clear communication so as to enlist the participation of community members in development issues.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication; Community, Development, Community Development, Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

Every social development project involves communication: communication between members of a community and the group; communication between development workers and the people among whom they work; communication between funding agencies and field workers and so on. Communication involves the sharing of ideas - information of emotions, of hopes and fears - and is part of every human activity (Boyden, 1985, p.156).

Communication is a key component of sustainable development. Mobilizing community members for community development purpose is important but members of communities can only be mobilized when communication is effective. Adequate community communication leads to effective collaborative efforts in issues of development. Communication helps to engage citizens in development. To bring about social change among the marginalized and vulnerable population groups, participation must be fostered through communication; as such this will lead to the transformation of the community. This is to say that communication is a central or the mediating factor facilitating and contributing to collective change process (Sarvaes & Liu, 2007). Effective communication will help in the move of people from individual centred deficit model of learning, behaviour development and change to a collective and community-focused model of participation, appreciation and equity.

From the rural development perspective, communication is seen as a social process designed to bring together every community member in a two-way process where people are both senders and receivers of information and creators of knowledge. Through communication, an individual is able to structure and organize his environment; besides, it is an interaction process through which persons or group of people related to each other can share information experience and culture (Jaraweera, 1991, p.17).

Interpersonal communication is a form of communication that involves face to face interaction. It is through interpersonal communication that one shares experience. It is the

exchange of ideas and information between two people. Interpersonal communication also occurs between a person and his or her community members. In this case persons do not keep their ideas to themselves, they share them with someone else, and it could be by telephone or face to face.

Community is precipitated on the fact that daily interaction of citizens is essential to collective action and that effective communication serves to stimulate and direct such interactions. When mention is made of communication in relation to community/rural development, it means an interactive process in which information, knowledge and skills relevant for development are exchanged between community members and information providers either personally or through media such as radio, print, telephones and cybernetics. The aim of effective rural communication is to put rural people in a position to have the necessary information for decision making and the relevant skills to improve their livelihood.

In communication for development, rural people are at the centre of any given development initiative and so communication is used in this sense for people's participation and community mobilization, decision making and action, confidence building for raising awareness, sharing knowledge and changing attitudes, behaviour and lifestyles (FAO, 2006).

Communication for community development means moving from a focus of informing and persuading people to changing their behaviour or attitudes to a focus of facilitating exchanges to solve a common identified problem. This in essence would lead to a common development initiative to experiment with people and to identify what is needed to support the initiative in terms of partnerships, knowledge and material conditions.

In the process of community development therefore, communication is important as it involves the study of people relating to themselves and to one another in groups, societies, influencing one another and being influenced, informing one another and being informed, teaching and being taught, loving and being loved, entertaining and being entertained (Adepoju, 2000).

Communication from the aforementioned can be said to be an educative process and one which leads to effective community development process.

Every community development initiative as a social development project requires effective communication among various groups of people who are involved in such development project in the participating communities. Aruma (1998) asserts that community development projects require effective communication in order to be very successful in the participating communities. It is therefore; appropriate to keep communication channels open among project participants in order to keep them abreast of the community development projects. Pratt and Boyden (1985. p.156) rightly note that:

> Every social development project involves communication: Communication between members of a community and a group; communication between development workers and the people among whom they work; communication between funding agencies and field workers and so on. Communication involves the sharing of ideas - information, of emotions, of hopes and fears - and is part of every human activity.

The implication of this is that communication is very vital for the success of community development in order to provide adequate information to project participants in the communication in community development focuses on enhancing the interaction between the people promoting change that will impact positively on improving the living conditions of members of the participating communities and the people with whom they work to actualize their dream. It is imperative to keep communication channels open among all project participants and organizations involved in community development initiatives in the participating communities. In the views of Fasel (2000), communication is imperative to make ventures to be easy in order to ensure that all will participate in the society. Communication certainly

elicits collective action of project participants in community development project in the participating communities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Community development, as the onus of this research, can be achieved through the collective effort of people from varying backgrounds and social orientations, with a wilful purpose, aimed at reaching a common objective. In every community, all effort begins with the initiation of communication spurred by the stimulus of purpose in order to mobilize the people.

In Iwaya Community, it can be observed that the predominant medium of modern mass communication is the radio service. Owing to this, the influence and popularity of opinion leaders has grown over the years due to the community's status as rural settlement. This makes the community a near perfect locale for this research. It is on this premise that this study becomes highly necessary in order to find out the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in community development of Iwaya community area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Ascertain if using interpersonal communication as an instrument advances the community development goals of Iwaya community.
2. Determine the effectiveness of interpersonal communication as a community development tool.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. To what extent does interpersonal communication promote the attainment of community development goals in Iwaya community?
2. How effective is the impact of interpersonal communication on the development of Iwaya Community?

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

The concept of communication can simply be defined as a process by which people exchange information, express their thoughts, feelings, ideas and views in discussion with other people using verbal or nonverbal expressions, signs and writing to convey message among themselves in the society. Okwor (2009) simply defines communication as a process and the activity of passing information from an individual to another person in the society. Fasel (2000) defines communication as the on-going interchange among people of thoughts, ideas, opinions, impressions, information and data by speech, writing or signs. Interestingly, communication is an on-going interchange process which involves expression of thoughts, views, ideas, opinions, information and data in human environment in order to influence people's action for an improved living condition in the society. The concept of communication can also be viewed as an exchange of information between the sender and the receiver in the society. Communication is very critical to community development in the participating communities in the society. Schramm (1983) states that communication is a transaction where the communicator and receiver are active and information is exchanged. The sharing of information is inevitable in communication for effective service delivery in community development.

Communication is very critical to community development in the participating communities in the society. Communication is, indeed, central to every human activity in community development process. In the views of Okwor (2009), communication is very central because the person involved must endeavour to share his or her experience with target audience to explain the entire exercise. Without communication no information will be provided to relevant stakeholders as a guide for effective promotion of community development. This is why Salomon (1981) rightly notes that communication in more elaborate terms is a process whereby people influence each other, create and maintain a basis of shared information and ideas which they use as a guide. Certainly, communication will always provide people with information, ideas, experiences and data that will guide them in their community development drive in the participating communities.

Communication is defined as the process of exchange of information, conversation, ideas or messages with other people using words, signs, and writings, verbal or non-verbal means of communication. The information, idea or message in the communication process originates from the sender who encodes or sends the information to a receiver who decodes the message to understand it for appropriate interpretation and application. Onah (2015) states while quoting Weihrich and Koontz that communication is viewed as the transfer of information from a sender to a receiver who must understand the information being received. The implication of this is that information originates from somebody and it is received by another person who has to understand information being received in order to ensure that communication is complete in human environment.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION DEFINED

According to Devito (2001,p.4), interpersonal communication is the process of sending and receiving messages between two responses, or among a small group of people with some effect and some immediate feedback. Mc. Quail (2001) says that the best way in describing communication is by answering the questions Who says, What, which Channel, to Whom, with what effect? Effendi (2006) says that communication consists of personal communication, group communication, mass communication, and media communication. The interpersonal communication itself consists of intrapersonal communication and interpersonal communication. Intrapersonal communication is also often mentioned as interpersonal communication or communication between two persons. Interpersonal communication happens between two persons (communicator and communicant), its nature takes place in dialogic reciprocity (two way traffic communications) which reserve the current (its feedback). The communicators directly can obtain the communicant's reaction at the same time. According to Mulyana (2007), interpersonal communication is communication between people face-to-face, allowing each person to capture the reactions of others directly either in a verbal or non-verbal form. Barnlund (2001) says that interpersonal communication which is always connected with the meeting between two, three or maybe four people happens spontaneously and is not structured while Rogers (2004) defines interpersonal communication as communication by word of mouth occurring in face-to-face interaction between individuals. Tan (2002) expresses that face-to-face communications is between two or more people. According to Rakhmat (2004), interpersonal communication has three features namely credibility, attractiveness and power.

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Community development is the process of helping a community to strengthen itself and develop towards its full potential. Community development involves the coming together of a group of people in a community planning and acting together to bring about the satisfaction of their needs with a view to bringing about desirable change in the lives of the people through their cooperative efforts and by actively taking part in measures designed to improve their conditions of living (Adedokun, 2008).

In communication for development, rural people are at the centre of any given development initiative and so communication is used in this sense for people's participation and community mobilization, decision making and action, confidence building for raising awareness, sharing knowledge and changing attitudes, behaviour and lifestyles (FAO, 2006). Communication for development is defined as the planned and systematic use of communication through interpersonal channels, ICTs, audio-visuals and mass media.

Communication is to be used to collect and exchange information among all those concerned in planning a development initiative with the aim of reaching an agreement on the problems facing development issue and seeking options for their solutions.

- to mobilize people for development action and to assist in solving problems and misunderstandings that may arise during development plan.

- to enhance the pedagogical and communication skills of development agents so as to have effective dialogue with their audience (http:// www/newchalinitiative. net).

From the rural development perspective, interpersonal communication is seen as a social process designed to bring together every community member in a two-way process where people are both senders and receivers of information and creators of knowledge.

Communication for development focuses on two areas namely: information dissemination and motivation training of field workers and rural members. Full potential for development can only be realized if knowledge and technologies are shared effectively and rural people involved in the process are motivated to achieve success. Interpersonal Communication is important for rural development in the face of various challenges facing rural development. Such challenges are characterized by

1. A dearth of information,
2. Conflicting messages (difficulty in knowing what is relevant/correct information)
3. A lack of well-developed Information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructure and low levels of ICT skills. (www.fao.org/sk/knl_en.htm).

When talking of communication for rural development, it should be noted that in reality, the electronic media are largely available in institutions and companies, the contents of which are in languages that rural populace do not use or communicate in, such have little relevance to their needs and their use require training. However, it is assumed that the availability of new information technologies and media like the Internet, rural radio, mobile phones and TV open more channels for communication and give the chance for wide access to information and to a limited extent to interactive communication. For electronic communication to be effectively used in rural development, the issue of connectivity, content and context must be addressed and assured to realize the potential of information technologies (Thussu, 2000). Adedokun (2008) sees development as the power of people to solve their own problems with their own wisdom, experience and resources with a view to eliminating poverty, pestilence and starvation. Akinpelu (2002) sees the target of development as being human beings and not the material accumulation surrounding them or of the economic growth of the nation. He views development as the process of enhancing man's knowledge, skills, attitudes, boosting his self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-pride to face the world. For all these to come about, there is need for effective communication.

Therefore, communication for community development means moving from a focus of informing and persuading people to changing their behaviour or attitudes to a focus of facilitating exchanges to solve a common identified problem. This in essence would lead to a common development initiative to experiment with people and to identify what is needed to support the initiative in terms of partnerships, knowledge and material conditions.

CONCEPT OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

To Braimoh (1988), effective communication is an essential tool for the establishment and maintenance of a good social and working relationship. It involves constant change of ideas and interactions among people for the solution of their problems and they see effective communication as essential prerequisite for every aspect of group functioning. With all these facts, effective communication cannot be brushed aside if rural development is to be accomplished because to Anyanwu (1999), community development depends on the effectiveness of communication as it helps in sharing of ideas and opinions and diffusion of good ideas while irrelevant ideas are thrown out. Effective communication enhances participation of every community member towards the achievement of the goals of community/rural development. It makes people participate actively in matters of development. Communication is a powerful trend to facilitate participating development. It is about

encouraging community participation with development initiatives through a strategic utilization of various communication strategies.

Community development involves strengthening the capacity of individuals within the community to accomplish the community's set goals. Communication process brings together all stakeholders in community development in a dialogue of ideas on development needs, objectives and actions (Manyozo, 2006). This is to say that as an agent with a community or as a development practitioner or as a leader in the community, you are first a communication actor and so the way you approach the local community, the attitude you adopt in interacting with community members, the way you understand and discuss issues, the way you collect and share information, all involve ways of establishing communication with people. The way communication is established and nurtured will affect how involved people will feel about the issues raised and how they will participate or not in the development initiative (Quebral, 1973).

Effective communication is a two-way communication; it should not be a one way dissemination of information, nor should it consist of telling people what they should or should not do. It should not be viewed as a way to motivate people to participate in activities in which they did not have input. Communication is expected to be used to facilitate community participation in a development initiative. When communication is used for community development purpose, it is based on the one hand on participating process and on the other hand on media and interpersonal communication which facilitates a dialogue among different stakeholders around a common development goal, with the objective of developing and implementing a set of activities to contribute to its solution, or its realization and which supports and accompanies this initiative.

The above can be linked to communication as described by Udoakah (1998). To him, communication is a process through which needs, emotions, desires, goals and sentiments are expressed among human beings using codes, symbols and languages understood by the parties involved in the process.

THE ROLES OF COMMUNICATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The roles of communication in community development are very enormous in the participating communities. Roles of communication in community development according to Aruma (2009) are as follows:

1. **Conscientization of Members of Participating Communities**

   Communication has the potential to stimulate conscientization of members of the participating communities in community development initiatives. Communication, indeed, has great potential to conscientize members of the participating communities to really understand that they have the capabilities to identify their problems, community needs and prioritise them appropriately. This awareness creation among members of the participating communities in community development initiatives owes much to the work of the famous Brazilian educationist, Paulo Freire; who was the originator of the concept of conscientization in the society. Freire (1985) refers to awareness creation as conscientization in his critical thinking of stimulating consciousness among members of participating communities in order to enable people to understand and respond appropriately to prevailing situations in any social setting in the society. Aruma (2009) rightly notes that conscientization is employed to conscientize human minds in various communities to understand the urgent need to engage in meaningful community development projects in the society.

2. **Provision of Relevant Information**

The provision of relevant information is another role of communication in community development in the participating communities. Without provision of relevant information in communication, people will not be stimulated to take action in community development that

will improve the living conditions of members of the participating communities in the society. Pratt and Boyden (1985) rightly assert that the purpose of providing information is, indeed, to enable people to take certain actions.

3. Provision of Opportunities for Dialogue and Discussion

Additionally, the provision of opportunities for dialogue and discussion with relevant stakeholders in community development is an important role of communication in community development process. Communication can be used in community development in dialogue and discussion session, especially during community consultations, community engagements and meetings to conscientize members of participating communities to understand the realities of the problems in their localities. It is usually observed that communication in dialogue and discussion is guided by disposition of the audience in the meeting. Through the process of discussion, new ideas and opinions are, indeed, highlighted in order to entrench the new ideas and opinions or sometimes to change views and attitudes in the meeting (Okwor, 2009). The development partners, corporate organizations and funding agencies engaged in community development process usually employ dialogue and discussions during community engagements as means of reaching the project participants at local community level to resolve issues which hinder community development in the concerned communities.

4. Provision of Opportunities for Sharing Information and Ideas

The provision of an opportunity for sharing information and ideas among people of various communities remains an important role of communication which people receive to facilitate people-oriented community development projects. Indeed, community development depends greatly on communication, especially in sharing relevant information and ideas necessary enough to enhance community development activities in the participating communities. Community development consists of a transaction between the community development practitioners or change agents and project participants in the participating communities. Peters (2002) in Garrison (1989) sees communication as a process of shared experience which is undertaken voluntarily. Communication provides people with opportunities to share information and experience relating to community development activities such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA), explanation of community development process; community needs identification and prioritization, community development planning, implementation, management and evaluation.

5. Communication as an Indispensable Tool in all Stages of Community Development

Communication as an indispensable tool for human existence in human environment applies to all stages of community development starting from conscientization for awareness creation to community needs assessment, identification of community needs and prioritization, community development planning, implementation of community development projects and programmes, management of community development projects and programmes, project monitoring and evaluation. Communication therefore, provides a conducive environment for promotion of community development in human environment. Onah (2012) states that communication tries to create an enabling environment for a development programme and project in the society, communication is very critical for promotion of community development in the society. Communication is, indeed, an indispensable tool in community development in the society. There will be no community development without communication in various communities in human environment.

6. Communication as a Unifying Factor in Community Development Activities

Communication is an important unifying factor in community development activities in various communities in human environment. Communication is a unifier of community development activities in various communities in the society. While commenting on a similar subject, Onah (2015) views the function of communication as a unifier of organizational activities. There is no community development without communication in human environment.

7. Communication as an Important Factor for Successful Community Development Projects

Good communication is very vital for successful community development projects in various participating communities in human environment. Without good communication in community development, it will be difficult to achieve good results in such human development initiatives to improve people's living conditions in the society. Batchelor (2010) asserts that effective communication as a basis for promotion of good working relationships and resolving conflicts is very important for stimulating productive team working in the society. The implication of this is that communication provides an opportunity for people to resolve conflicts amicably and engage in promotion of good relationships that stimulate group action which usually leads to productive community development initiatives that help to improve people's living conditions. Successful community development project is about good communication in human environment.

8. Communication Motivates the Target Audience to Promote Community Development

The objectives of communication help to generate ideas, information, suggestions, or solutions that will enable people to address specific human concerns in order to improve people's living conditions in human environment. Onah (2012) further notes that, the objective of communication help to create demands for specific services in the society. A good objective of communication must, indeed, motivate the target audience to identify, assess, prioritize, accept, act and choose a desired approach to address prevailing issues of common concern for the ultimate purpose of improving people's living conditions in various participating communities in human environment. Communication, indeed, applies to all areas of human interaction in development process. The Industrial Society (1993) clearly states that communication promotes common undertakings and group commitment. Communication applies to all areas of human understandings or endeavour in human environment. Essentially, the function of communication is highly indispensable in human environment.

METHODOLOGY

A research design is the set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analysing measures of the variables specified in the problem research. The design of a study defines the study type (descriptive, correlation, semi-experimental, experimental, review, meta-analytic) and sub-type (e.g., descriptive-longitudinal case study), research problem, independent and dependent variables, experimental design, and, if applicable, data collection methods and a statistical analysis plan. A research design is a framework that has been created to find answers to research questions.

This study adopted the survey design. The reason for this is that whenever the major source of primary data for a study is the views of members of the public or any particular group, a survey is better called for. The aim of survey is to provide empirical data collected from a population of respondents on which valid conclusions can be made. Therefore, research designs simply imply a comprehensive plan or blue print showing how the research will be used to solve the already identified problems. The population consisted of both men and women in the

rural community of Iwaya. A sample of 400 men and women chosen through random sampling was used for the study. The questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. Data collected were subjected to quantitative analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1. Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	190	47.50%
Female	210	52.50%
Total	400	100%

The above shows that a total number of 190 respondents out of the entire population were male, while 210 respondents represent 48% of the entire population were female. Thus this shows that a reasonable number of male and female were duly represented in the study.

Table 2. Do you think interpersonal communication (exchange of information among member of your community) can help achieve community development goals?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	295	73.75%
No	85	21.25%
Maybe	20	5%
Total	400	100%

Data collected for the above question indicates that 73.75% of the sample agreed that interpersonal communication is a powerful tool to achieving community development goals while 21.25% disagreed that interpersonal communication can help achieve community goals and 5% others were unsure.

The table presents the results on how effectively interpersonal communication impacts on the community development. Four options were provided. 30% of the respondents believed interpersonal communication to be very effective in community development. 32.75% equally agreed that interpersonal communication is effective in improving the state of their community. 23.25% dissented that the information discussed via interpersonal communication is not make effective impact on the community development, while 14% dissented that the information discussed has never impacted on the community development.

Table 3. How effectively does interpersonal communication impact on your community development?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Very effectively	120	30%
Effectively	131	32.75%
Ineffectively	93	23.25%
Never	56	14%
Total	400	100%

CONCLUSION

The paper shows that interpersonal communication is of great importance in community development and plays a large role in disseminating necessary information in the community. It was also revealed that effective communication has a great impact on members' participation in community development and the effect of interpersonal communication in the development of communities cannot be underestimated when one realizes that there is need for collaborative actions among community members. For this collaboration to be effective there is need for effective communication because there is bound to be social interactions among community members and this portrays the effectiveness of interpersonal communication in disseminating information to the nook and cranny of the community. This view is supported by Adepoju (2000) who asserts that an organized society exists only as the flux of understanding maintained by communication between individuals and groups. He reiterates that every single act of social behaviour involves communication of ideas and emotions in either an explicit or an implicit manner. It is observed that when community groups are more closely involved in communication strategy, it helps them take ownership of the initiative of

development rather than see themselves as beneficiaries of development. The study also revealed that interpersonal communication aids in the process of community development. This is because community development is a social action process in which people of a community organize themselves for planning and action.

Furthermore, the work also revealed that community development process provides the opportunity of involving and motivating people of the community to define, identify, analyse and solve problems that they feel are important. This is predicated on good interpersonal communication. Alamgir (1989) is of the view that participation facilitates shared decision-making to find sound and feasible solutions to local problems and so there is need for effective communication in the community and among community members to bring the needed development to their community. The study revealed that daily interaction among community members is a factor for development and this means that in all the community members do to exchange ideas and opinions, there is need for use of words and so words must be put to use in such a way that everybody in the community would come to a proper understanding of what to do to bring about community development.

The work also found that the residents of Iwaya community make use of the information available to them regardless of the source of message. To this end, any information that facilitates community and self-development is easily welcomed. Since there is presently no establishment of community media, the people solely rely on interpersonal communication garnered from one person to the other.

In conclusion, this study was carried out in Iwaya community, Lagos State and the data collected were subjected to percentage analysis. The study revealed that for communities to be developed there is need for effective interpersonal communication. With effective communication, people will have the power to solve their own problems. The study also revealed that with effective interpersonal communication, mobilization of community members would be easy as they would be made to understand the reasons for their being mobilized and this will subsequently lead to active citizen participation in the programmes of community development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the discussion on the influence of interpersonal communication in community development:

1. Interpersonal communication should be explored appropriately to reach the various segments of participating communities for adequate development. This will lead to emergence of new ideas, opinions and information that will ultimately stimulate promotion of people-oriented developmental projects.
2. Dialogue and discussions with relevant stakeholders should be explored extensively in promoting meaningful community development.

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