

## MOBILISING THE RURAL COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGNS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The rural communities in Nigeria are bedeviled with an avalanche of challenges including infrastructural deficit ranging from poor road network, lack of potable drinking water, poor sanitary conditions, poverty and diseases. All these have attracted the attention of global agencies such as World Health Organizations (WHO), United Nation Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), National Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC) to initiate policies and programmes aimed at ameliorating the deplorable conditions. But unfortunately, noble as these efforts and initiatives may be, proper articulation of such challenges remain a burden and unfulfilled leaving the rural dwellers to languish under these walloping conditions. Thus, communications becomes essential in order to drive the development campaigns to the grassroots to enhance participatory communications and mutual understanding and cooperation. Integrated model of communication for social change was adopted as the theoretical anchor for the research. This is in line with integrated multi-media approach which is apt for the dissemination of messages in the rural communities. The study was a survey design and relied essentially on interview and focus group discussion (FBDS) to elicit opinions, views and perceptions being a qualitative research method. The research was situated in three senatorial districts, covering nine(9) Local Government Area in Cross River State. A critical analysis of selected development campaign programmes revealed that most development initiatives aimed at mobilizing the rural communities have failed largely because of inappropriate use of communications strategies – ignoring the traditional and interpersonal means of communications even without giving a thought to a multi-media integrated approach to rural community mobilization. Thus, the study recommends the planting of development campaigns on recognized existing community leadership pattern taking into consideration the socio-cultural norms and political structure of the people.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Mobilization, Sustainable Development, Rural Communities*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rural communities are bedeviled by a plethora of challenges ranging from health, education, politics, agriculture and other Sundry challenges that require cogent attention by government and other concerned development agencies such as World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nation Development Program (UNDO) National Centre for Disease control (NCDC), etc. Important and imperative as these challenges may be, they remained hidden and unraveled if the desired attention is not drawn to them. Thus, communication becomes essential to drive the development campaigns that would have proper focus to the issues at stake with a view to reducing the incidence of ignorance and oblivion to the burden besetting the ruralities. Moemeka (2002, p.115) lends credence to the view when he avers that a development communicator who is working, within the existing socio-cultural/political system

must gain the attention of the people and sees communication as the vehicle through which implementation of any development programme is actualized. Hence, realistic communication campaign strategies must be deployed to attract government (development agents) to the issue, elucidate or extricate the issue and eventually strategise on how to find solution to the problem at stake.

The essence of development campaigns and mobilising the rural communities should encourage the citizens to accept relevant information that would better their lots through appropriate interpersonal media based on socio-cultural experience. These channels should include, town-criers, traditional rulers, age-grades and other associations such as youth women group and other community based associations: thus, effective mobilisation campaigns should be targeted directly at people who are desirous of development - families, community leaders, traditional rulers and other segments of the community.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT/JUSTIFICATION:**

The rural communities, especially in Nigeria are bedeviled with and avalanche of development issues and communication remains central both as a problem and solution. Unfortunately, most development campaigns in the rural communities are concentrated in the urban centres thereby excluding the rural communities from the campaigns.

It is equally disturbing that mobilization campaigns planners, government and other development agents seem to rely solely on the mass media, with little or no regard to interpersonal, and group media so as to bring the campaigns to the doorstep of the target audience (the ruralites). The argument has been that the exclusive use of mass media strategy has been widely criticised by many development communication experts on grounds that it is exclusively elitist, alienating and urbanbased and excludes more than 70% of the rural populace from having access to development messages relevant to their development needs and aspirations. Unfortunately, development campaign mobilisers are not wary to the fact that interpersonal communication is more pertinent to generate attitudinal change in the citizenry in the rural areas.

The question remains: would it be that, wrong and inappropriate strategies have often been responsible for failure of development campaign messages? Can more cogent communication strategies be deployed to attain appreciable successful mobilization development campaigns? These and more shall occupy the attention of this research.

This research when accomplished would be of immense benefit to the rural communities, government and other development partners in the Developing countries as some of the impediments to development campaigns would have been unraveled and eventually settled. It would also serve as a reference point to development agents and provide a road map to concerned organizations and groups aspiring to bring development to the grassroots.

### **OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE STUDY:**

The purpose of this research was to achieve the following objectives:

- To ascertain the efficiency of selected development campaigns, both past and current with a view to determine their success or otherwise in the rural communities.
- To find out the reasons/factors responsible for failure of past development to campaigns in the rural communities.
- To sensitize and elicit commitment of the rural dwellers of the benefits of embracing development campaigns.

- To determine the rural audience preference in terms of strategies in development campaigns.
- To recommend most appropriate strategies in the rural communities for sustainable development campaigns.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Many views have been expressed about appropriate strategies to be adopted in social mobilization programmes. It is widely believed that the success or failure of information campaigns for sustainable development campaigns depends on the strategies employed by change agents to change the attitudes and behaviours of the target audience.

In order to give proper focus and establish a solid foundation for the research, some key concepts need to be understood.

### **Development**

Development in human society in multi-facets and encompasses both individual and collective levels. Citing Rodney(1974) in his book, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, Opubor (1985, p.155) says at the individual level, development implies increased skill, and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Dudley Sears the British economist is also reported by Opubor as saying that development involves the creation of opportunities for the realisation of human potentials. This implies that development plan should include efforts geared toward the reduction of poverty, unemployment, diseases and equality etc. Development connotes any efforts geared toward improvement in the well-being of the populace in all ramifications Development efforts should aim at effecting the fundamental change in the lives of different segments of the society so that it would have beneficial impact on the greatest majority of the people.

### **Sustainable Development**

Shaw(2002, p.4) cited the Brunland commission (1987) as defining sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Issues of sustainable development range from human environment and other concerns such as health, education, politic, diseases, agriculture and other challenges confronting the human society that call for urgent attention.

### **Rural Communities**

The term 'rural' connotes absence or near absence of indices of development - lack of essentials of life such as electricity, good network, potable pipe borne water, illiteracy, poverty, prevalent of diseases. Other induces is rural communities include, lack of opportunities for self actualization, lack of self esteem and confidence. Moemeka (2000, p.133) shares a similar view when he avers that:

These segment suffer from most of the problems that affect rural communities - poverty, hunger, illiteracy, death of social amenities, poor sanitation, diseases, poor health and fatalism.

Above all, in the obvious fact that the ruralities feel the naked impact of socio-economic deprivation in contract with their counterparts in the urban areas.

### **Participatory Communication**

This involves activities or a process of dialogue and interaction in which communities and other stakeholders increase their understanding of each other's knowledge and priorities and work to identify mutually acceptable approaches and solutions to identified problems.

### **Strategies for Sustainable Development Campaigns**

To mobilise the rural communities for development, development agents – information disseminators and agents involved in social mobilisation should understand and have a thorough knowledge of the complex socio-economic, political, religious, educational and cultural environments of the people to be mobilised. Also, necessary is that to mobilise for development, the vast illiterate masses of the rural areas, extensive change in knowledge and attitudes are needed.

In view of Kelmin (1961) cited by Opubor (1985, p.167), certain guidelines are suggested that maybe employed to effect sustainable development campaigns as follows:

- If you want immediate or short term change, create a situation in which people have no option in choices, and ensure that they retain the new behaviours or ideas through adequate threats of punishment, and constant monitoring of their behaviour.
- If you want people to adopt a new idea or practice and to hold on to it for sometime, attempt to tie the new ideas to the ideas or wishes of a respected public figure or charismatic leader with whom people would like to identify. As long as this figure enjoys popularity the ideas which have received his blessing should remain popular and enjoy support.
- If you want people to retain new ideas or practice for a long time, you should attempt to explain very clearly to them the nature of the desired changes, its implication, its value to them and the society, and the necessity for change. Make sure that they understand your explanations and they are willing to accept them.

He further avers that in order to achieve results, it should be possible to employ these three approaches separately or in combination in the pursuit of many social change programmes. In this connection, Opubor (1955) is of the view that collaboration rather than manipulation is the best approach to social communication. He equated Kelmin's third approach, attitude change through internalisation as being consistent with collaborative communication which occurs in situations where initiatives are shared based on interpersonal and inter-group trust. This approach is similar to participatory communication which requires prolonged contact with the people and willingness to understand and even accept, their point of view. In the view of Opubor, to enable them internalise, it may be necessary to involve a willingness to let them provide some leadership in defining the situation; in analysing their problems, and in providing possible solutions.

Sustainable development campaigns calls for a development strategy that does not compromise the welfare of future generations Christopher (2007).

Different strategies/approaches have been employed to effect development communication campaigns in Nigeria and beyond. Eteng (1993, p. 34) reports that Czplick, an expert in the field of rural development has identified four major communication approaches to development generally and rural development specifically. He identified two variants of diffusionism – Roger – Shoemakers diffusionist approach and Daniel Lerner diffusionist variant, the social marketing

approach and educative/participatory or social mobilisation approach.

Another approach to effective rural communication is social mobilisation. This strategy is directly opposed to the top-bottom, urban-rural, mass media diffusionist communication model. It stresses strong horizontal, interpersonal and group channels of communication. It advocates the use of oramedia as well as modern mass media-radio, television, schools, viewing centres, etc. for mass audience. The social mobilisation approach is aimed at winning the support of the people (target audience) in order to facilitate mutual understanding and participation.

Speaking on the process of development communication, Okunna (2002, p. 245) avers that mobilization is at the centre of development communication. Specifically she states that:

Mobilization for development is concerned with rallying people together and motivating them to achieve the goals that have been set in a development project. This is mainly what development communication is all about communicating with people to achieve development.

She further explains that effective development communication has to do with creating awareness and providing knowledge about a development project as well as winning the acceptance of the people whom the project is meant for (the target audience) in terms of getting them to accept and support the things being done in the development agency to solve their problems. She provided the basic requirements for the change agent in development communication campaign project and these include:

- Start with pre-project research;
- Design relevant messages;
- Carry out an information campaign;
- Market the projects through advocacy;
- Elicit popular participation;
- Achieve attitude and behaviour change.

In a workshop in addressing exclusive breastfeeding in Bauchi State, ACADA model was employed as a framework for communication intervention. The acronym, ACADA was explained to mean, assessment, communication, analysis, design and action.

### **Assessment**

Refers critical evaluation of the situation on ground that necessitated a change in the desired direction. This is similar to what Okunna (2009) calls pre-project baseline or pre-project data. This requires that before any development or programme is started, as much information as possible should be gathered about the target audience and their environment. The target audience or host community comprises the people for whom a development programme is being carried out, their environment includes their cultural, religious, political and other characteristics. Assessment or pre-project research is also referred to as need assessment survey.

### **Communication Analysis**

Refers to problem analysis which, include appropriate channels to the employed. These include the mass media and interpersonal (indigenous media) such as group media/channels discussions, seminars, workshops, age-grades, community leaders, other face-to-face communication situations. In this vein, Okunna (2002, p. 295) emphasised the need for the use of appropriate channels or media of communication. Accordingly, for channel selection to be effective:

The change agent needs to know the strengths and weaknesses of the various channels or media of communication whether mass media, interpersonal media, or small personal media.

### **Design**

In the ACADA model is what Okunna (2003) refers to as designing and disseminating relevant messages. She explains that communication for development demands that development messages should be designed in such a way as to make them relevant to the target audience, otherwise the messages are “empty” as far as that audience is concerned. Also, message relevance can be enhanced if information is packaged in a language which the audience fully understands. Pertinent in this regard is information campaign which is concerned with providing relevant information aimed at creating awareness and educating a target audience to make it knowledgeable about a development issue or programme. It should be noted that the success of any information campaign is dependent on the knowledge of the target audience. This will determine the designing of appropriate messages and the selection of suitable channels/media of communication.

### **The Plan of Action**

In the ACADA model is equated with Okunna (2003) attitude and behaviour change perception. For attitude and behaviour change to endure the target audience must be mobilised to change any negative attitudes and behaviours that might constitute a barrier to positive change in the desired direction. The target audience can only take the necessary action and comply in the desired direction if they are sufficiently mobilised, which also depends on their conviction about the development campaigns. The implication is that development communication campaign should emphasise the benefits to be attracted by the development project so as to attract maximum support from stakeholders.

### **Communication Media for Rural Community Mobilisation**

In the early stage of development different communication media operated in the rural communities and each medium or channel had its objectives to satisfy the needs of its particular audience for information, entertainment and culture. Communication remains an essential ingredient for survival.

Communication media can be classified into two broad categories:

- Indigenous/interpersonal media
- Mass communication media, simply called the mass media.

Other communication media do not belong to the core realm of the mass media or indigenous media, but occupy the middle position. They are often called machine -assisted interpersonal communication (medio communication). This category combines characteristics of both the interpersonal and mass communication. Dominick (1990. p.11) explains that:

In this setting one or more people are communicating by means of a mechanical device (or devices) with one or more receivers... only).

The important characteristics of machine-assisted interpersonal communication is that it allows the source and receiver to be separated by time and space.

Cassata and Asante (1976, p. 10) explains that:

Medio communication lies in the interface between face-to-face and mass communication. It is distinguished by the use of technology, takes place under special conditions, and involves identifiable participants.

Unlike in mass communication, the message receivers are few in number and are known to the communicator (source). Medio communication includes, motorized campaign made possible by the use of mechanical or technical devices attached to vehicles during personal promotion of products or services, telephone, teletype, surveillance communication, microphone, teaching machines, etc.

It may be necessary to state that machine-assisted or medio communication can be an aid to both interpersonal communication and mass communication and should be encouraged when necessary during rural community mobilisation because it would fill the gap created by both mass communication and interpersonal communication.

### **Indigenous/Traditional/Interpersonal Communication Media**

Traditional/indigenous/interpersonal or oramedia one based on indigenous culture produced and consumed by members of a group. Wilson (1997, p.60) contends that:

Oramedia is the concept which describes traditional or indigenous media of communication in Africa. It is multi-channel communication system which is employed in most rural areas (villages, clans, towns, wards) as well as in rural-urban settings... this process is also referred to as traditional communication.

Ineji, (2019, p.40) explains that indigenous media system is all all-embracing concept which incorporates the entire existence of the people. This is because indigenous communication cannot be isolated from social conventions and practices of the people. It includes, the people's history, religion, politics and cultural practices of the people. Generally, indigenous media are methods and means of communication which have been used for centuries in rural areas.

It is possible to identify specific traditional or indigenous channels of communication that can be used to mobilise the rural communicates for sustainable development campaigns:

### **Festivals**

There are numerous festivals and ceremonies in the African continent which can be easily harnessed for the dissemination of development information. For instance, social gatherings such as New Yam Festivals, marriages, burial ceremonies, child-naming ceremonies, victory parties, etc can be gainfully employed to mobilize the ruralites for development campaigns. Although the main function of such ceremonies is to eat, drink, dance and make merry, such occasions are conveniently used for the dissemination of a wide range of information and ideas on several issues that are crucial for the development and survival of the rural communities. The issues can be health, agriculture, politics, etc.



**Age-Grade**

Age-grade is composed of people of the same age bracket. Age-grades are veritable channels through which mobilisation and dissemination of development related messages are conveyed. Also, critical and important information is passed through age-grade members across to family members and fellow community members. The message may border on child vaccines, sanitation, open defecation, agriculture or electoral matters, etc.

**Traditional Rulers**

Traditional rulers are regarded as the custodians of traditions of the people and symbols of governmental authorities and exercise enormous powers in the enforcement of law in their communities. As agents of government, they can assist to mobilise people toward any development programmes or activities such as health (vaccinations) and enforcement of government policies and programmes. Traditional rulers are highly respected and their decisions are followed by sanctions.

**Town-Crier**

The town-crier is variously called the village gong-man, the village announcer, the chief's messenger or palace liaison officer. He is also regarded as the information officer. The town-crier is one of the most pervasive of the traditional channels in African traditional settings. He occupies a unique position and he is readily accessible to the village chief for routine information diffusion.

**Market Places**

Market places constitute very important channels of information diffusion, social interactions and exchange. They serve several purposes for the African rural communities namely, economic, social, politics, cultural, education, etc. As news centres, they attract a large number of people for public information on educational, political and cultural affairs, health services such as vaccination of children and public enlightenment, voters registration, village meetings etc.

**Village Meeting**

Village meetings constitute channels of institutional communication in Africa. It is essentially used in traditional African setting for mobilizing the community toward development activities and other community concerns. This medium offer opportunity to discuss problems and remedy to perceived problems. All shades of opinion are usually represented in village meetings because they are a congregation of the entire community irrespective of age, gender, educational and socio-political status.

**Village Square**

The village square in the African traditional setting is a congregation centre where important meetings and activities of the rural communities are held to discuss important issues that affect the rural communities. It is believed that the ancestral spirits of the community reside in the village square and deliberations in the arena are guided by the ancestral spirits, hence, the need to solicit their cooperation during such meetings. People can meet, chat on a wide range of issues, and a great deal of interaction and exchange occurs, and information is generated and solutions reached in the course of deliberations in the village square. Ineji (2019, p.95).



## **Music**

Music plays a key role in the traditional African setting and can be used to convey different messages. Because its special attraction and appeal, music can be used for public enlightenment on development concerns such as health, agriculture, politics, etc. it can be used to sensitise and mobilise the rural communities for development programmes.

## **Traditional Leaders**

Typified by the Nigerian village communities of today. Ekong (1988, p.41) identifies two broad categories of leaders in the rural setting. These are traditional leaders whose leadership position are either based on or defined by past traditions of the people and the modern leaders - those whose leadership positions are based on the present cosmopolitan or non-traditional values.

Traditional community leaders include local association leaders such as age-grade leaders, women leaders, youth leaders etc. these groups are respected because they are perceived as having expert power, coercive power and reward power. Because they exert influence in the spiritual, emotional, social and health problems of the entire community and social control, they can be conveniently employed to mobilize the rural communities for community development projects and programmes.

Beside traditional leaders are modern leaders, which constitute another broad category of community leaders for facilitating community development programmes and policies. Among modern leaders are chairmen and secretaries of local government. Other sources of modern leaders are government officials including councilors and village school teachers. The chairmen, secretaries and councilors exert a lot of influence on administrative matters affecting the entire local government area.

Politicians and retired elite, ex-governments officials who are more or less regarded as opinion leaders have personal characteristics, interpersonal contact, organisational influence. They may serve as linkage of the local community with the larger society for rural development purposes.

The corollary is that traditional and interpersonal means of communication can play very significant roles in mobilisation of the rural communities for community development. They have helped in mobilisation of the villagers in contributing their quota to the building of schools, clinics, town halls, market projects and even in health, educational, political, agricultural campaigns.

## **Integrated Multi-media Approach**

The integrated multi-media approach as means of disseminating and executing development programmes in the rural areas should be seen as the best option. The integrated multi-media approach is the fusion of various media-traditional/interpersonal media, the modern mass and machine-assisted interpersonal communication devices for mobilizing the rural communities for sustainable development campaigns.

Traditional media is not just one system but incorporate a network of complex communication channels at various levels. Lending credence to this view, Jefkins and Ugboajah (1956 p.93) opine that planners of development campaigns should think of integrated communications rather than about the use of specific media. What is paramount is that the target audience must be located and reached wherever they are found-in market places, in village squares, entertainment centres, in schools or even in the workshop centers, in festival and ceremonial places etc.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is a survey which lends itself to in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGDs). The choice of these data gathering instruments was deemed necessary in that it would elicit opinions, views and perceptions of the people concerning community development project in the area.

The study covered the entire rural communities in the eighteen Local Governments Areas in Cross River State with deliberate selection of the remote communities that lack the basic indices of development such as electricity, potable water, health facilities etc. However, for proper coverage and in-depth analysis of the subject matter, nine out of the eighteen local government areas were selected for investigation.

Three of the Local Government Areas were selected from each of the senatorial districts of the state: (Ogoja, Yala and Bekwarra from the Northern Zone, Ikom, Boki and Yakurr from the Central and Akpabuyo, Odukpani and Biase from the Southern Senatorial zone). The choice of these Local Government Areas was based on the poor infrastructural facilities and absence of social amenities.

The Focus Group Discussion were segmented into adult (male) and adult (female) and the youths (mixed). The essence was to allow free expression of views among the various segmented groups. Their experiences with community mobilisation toward rural development would be area of attention and focus. The researcher is not oblivious of the post COVID-19 era. To this end, the COVID-19 protocols in respect of social distancing were observed.

In-depth interview were reserved for prominent leaders in the community. This included, traditional rulers/village heads, youth leaders and women leaders, church leaders Also, opinion leaders who are knowledgeable and respected in the communities because of their elite status constituted the interviewees.

In order to cover the selected areas adequately, research assistants were trained to collect data from participants in the focus group discussions. This exercise took one day each in the selected Local Government Areas. The researcher moderated the Focus Group Discussion in a relatively guided discussion on the subject matter under study. The FGDs comprised of ten (10) participants in each group.

Data from the FGD notes were transcribed under themes: relationships were examined and results integrated into a coherent explanation of the subject matter. In order to ease in the interpretation and analysis of the data collected from the FGDs, the information was classified into categories based on the objectives of the research.

## RESULTS/FINDINGS

The main objective of this research was to mobilize the rural communities for sustainable development campaigns in Cross River State. The study unraveled impediments to development campaigns in the rural communities in Cross River State, thus paving way for a smooth and hitch-free campaigns which had hitherto hindered development programmes and policies in the rural areas.

This study has successfully resolved the challenges that have militated against rural community mobilization towards development programmes in the rural areas of Cross River State thus, this study has enhanced participatory development as against one-way downward direction of imposition of decision on the rural dwellers. It is obvious that the study has erased ignorance of the rural dwellers towards development programmes and policies.

For effective coverage as the three Senatorial Districts, nine FGDs(Focus Group Discussions) were conducted three each in the three Senatorial Districts indicating that every local government area located from the zone had one FRD matting a total of nine. In order to ensure effective representation of the various demographic groups, each of the groups had a heterogeneous composition comprising males and females, young and old community leaders (youth women, age grades) etc. This was to ensure adequate representation of views among the different segments of the community.

Findings indicated that the presence of development campaigns on projects was well established in all the Local Government Areas selected for study in the state. This position was overwhelming indicating that it was obvious that government and other development agents were consistent in drawing the attention of the people on the rural areas to development projects in the state.

It was however observed that there were divided opinion as to whether the campaign messages designed were appropriate and well received While majority of opinion held that there was no deliberate effort on the part of government or development agent to present the messages in clear and appropriate manner for easy understanding of members of the community especially in terms of language. This position was maintained by this educated segment of the FGDs.

The implication was that most participants were not satisfied with the way and manner the messages were disseminated which called for a change of strategy

Some of the development projects/programmes mentioned by participants includes the application of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers herbicides, manure and health related messages such as vaccines, COVID -19 protocols, immunization, exclusive breastfeeding, antenatal care, sanitary talks such as campaign against open defecation and the need for at least the provision of pit toilets. In politics, issues enumerated included voter registration, National Identification Number Registration (NIN) re-validation of voter registration, National population pre-enumeration exercise, etc.

Participants agreed that campaigns on some development projects were in the offing. They included COVID - 19 protocols, voter registration, national population pre-enumeration exercise, etc

As to whether the messages or information concerning the projects achieved their objectives, majority of the participants opined that they were not successful and attributed the failure to inadequate research in the target audience to ascertain their profile in terms of culture, beliefs and prejudices. Other factors that were perceived as constituting bottlenecks to successful realization of the goals of development projects were attributed to poor planning by development agents, centralized and one way downward directional communication pattern, poor knowledge of development agents in communication skills (either in terms of wrong and inappropriate language), over centralization of campaigns on Urban centres/and sometimes complete neglect of rural areas.

Problems for research include, poor programme conceptualization, poor planning misallocation of project resources and inappropriate the of communication techniques.

Other challenges associated with development communication are poor informed development agents and lack of consultation of development agents with the benefiting communities. All these bottlenecks tantamount to poor or their participation in development projects.

From the foregoing, further questions were asked to elicit answers as to what would be done to motivate the community to embrace or participate enthusiastically in development projects. Majority of the participants held the view that the best approach was to devise means and ways of soliciting unalloyed support and cooperation from the beneficiary community (the target of development projects). To achieve this, participants canvassed the view that proper consultation with members of the benefitting community was the answer. Their views align with development media theory which hinges that media should be used to help the government achieve the goals of development.

In other words the media should serve as partner with government or development agents to accomplish the task of development which is desirable of the Third World Nations.

There was overwhelming negation to the question whether the mass media or indigenous or interpersonal media system should be solely employed to disseminate messages on development projects. They argued that each system has its merits/strengths and weaknesses and that no one system is perfect. They further argued that each of the media systems will help strengthen the weaknesses of the other system. This view corroborates the view of Ineji (2019, 71) that:

The truth is that in one system is perfect. Each of them serves as a support, supplement or complement to the other. For example while the mass media are more effective you rapid dissemination of message to a large number of pressuring the indigenous media can be better deployed for enforcement of policies and programmes especially at the grassroots level.

Majority of participants opted for a combination of the mass media with the indigenous and interpersonal means of communication as the solution to effective message dissemination of development projects and programmes. This view aligns with Ineji (2019,p72) that:

It is obvious that a combination of the two systems indigenous or African media systems and the modern mass media is the answer to effective information dissemination. Media mix or media interface therefore will help solve some of the communication problems and inadequacies identified with each of the communication systems.

## **SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

A plethora of development challenges confront rural communities in the study area and the situation is compounded by the inability of government and development agencies to nip the problems in the bud. Some of the challenges range from poor research on the target audience, ignorance, inappropriate communication strategies, lack of consultation with the communities to engender massive participation and disregard for the socio-cultural norms and political/social structure in the rural communities. A total overview of the existing conditions will ameliorate the deplorable situation and attract overall benefits for the teeming rural population.

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