

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT COMMUNICATION AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:
A FUNCTIONAL (DSC) MODEL FOR
FAGBO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

by

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A professional project submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Journalism
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

December, 1981

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Introduction

The concept of integrated rural development, since its inception has always been suffering from overexposure and underimplementation. All the many discussion papers and journal articles addressed to the subject, all the conferences, seminars and workshops held over the years seem so far to have yielded few carefully planned, systematically integrated programs which can be pointed to as successful examples to emulate. Yet most experts agree that the integrated approach is crucial to accelerating rural development.

The complaint often heard is that it appears to be far easier to integrate rural development in theory than in practice. The practitioners' suggestion for this reason is that they are left alone in translating the experts' theory into practice - and this, according to them, is too much burden. They accuse the experts who write the papers and conduct the workshops and seminars on integrated rural development of "playing intellectual games with them", of acting like doctors who are willing to diagnose the ailment but reluctant to participate in the treatment. But given a deeper thought, this is not the main cause of the failure of rural development projects. The fact is that both planners and practitioners alike often concentrate on physical and economic factors, while the human element is ignored. Indeed, it is not unusual for thought to be given to everything, but

not to the people who are to be involved in the project. The people often lack the information they need to cope with new situations - while the governments do not get the information they need on the people's need, priorities and possibilities.

The rural poor have had little or no participation in their own development. But in my opinion, I see development in terms of what Merrill Ewert calls "Humanization Development," where people are recognized as being capable of transforming their own reality; where motivation for change comes from the people's definition of their needs and out of their outline of options and priorities. For this realization to occur, according to Ewert, "the emphasis must be on the process of self realization....the result of people gaining increasing control over their environment and destiny...the starting point for development must be people themselves...their problems, their needs, their motivations and their aspirations."¹ I view development support communication as a tool to help the people achieve their perceived and conceived development goals and objectives.

It is my belief that the rural poor have their own knowledge based on concrete empirical experience in living with nature and society. This knowledge, however, tends to be static or at best slow-moving in the absence of a conceptual apparatus that can more readily respond to new situations and problems. At the same time, this empirical

knowledge of the poor contains elements capable of generating by scientific adaptation and development, more appropriate solutions to their problems than what formal science, alien from the people may offer independent of popular knowledge. Reorientation of science -- to bring science into organic fusion with participatory mobilization and organizations of the rural poor -- is therefore a critical necessity. Social scientists are needed to share their lives with the poor to analyze their social environment together with them; educationists are needed to develop with the rural poor concepts and methods of education more meaningful in terms of the real problems of their lives; natural scientists, engineers and doctors are needed to analyze with the people their empirical knowledge and technological ideas to see what is promising therein and help develop them scientifically; they are also needed to help assess the poor's resources and devise with them efficient economic and technological uses. And most importantly, development support communication experts are needed to cater to the real information needs of the people and governments, fostering a genuine two way flow of information. This would be a keystone in a democratic communication system, in which ordinary people would have much greater access to and opportunity to participate in communications; in which individuals and groups enjoyed "a right to communicate a right to be informed and a right to inform."

It is with this belief that I have strong confidence

that the DSC is an appropriate tool and solution to the stagnant situation of the rural development in Nigeria. Moreover, my belief and confidence are based on my practical experience as a Nigerian born in the rural area, grown up in the rural area, with my early education and teaching experience of twelve years of unbroken service in the rural area before obtaining my early university education in urban Lagos, Nigeria. And later I became a social development officer in the Federal Ministry of Social Development Youth Sports and Culture, whereby I have the privilege of being associated with the Nigerian DSC right from its inception. This explains why the statement of the problem of this project is from my practical experience and association with the consultant who planned the DSC for Nigeria.

In the preparation of this project, I intend to present a case for a Development Support Communication in Nigeria and then develop a function model of the DSC for Fagbo community - a rural group of villages in Ondo State of Nigeria where I once worked as a teacher and as a volunteer community organizer (VCO) during the special Cocoa development program sponsored by the World Bank (1962-1968)

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM VS. COMMUNICATION SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

Development Program in Nigeria

Nigeria like other developing countries benefitted from the worldwide development aid program aimed at "developing

the third world" during the last quarter of the century. And like her counterparts in the program, her projects only collapsed shortly after they took off.

One of the many economic development projects established in Nigeria was the Niger Agricultural Project initiated in 1949 based on the village of Mokwa in the then Niger province (now Niger state). The project had as its objective the development of vast areas in the relatively sparsely populated region of Nigeria known as "Middle Belt." The project took off in 1951, jointly run by both the Colonial Development Corporation and the Central Government of Nigeria, but only to be liquidated in 1954.

Among other reasons Baldwin suggests for the failure of the project are:²

- a) Initial planning
- b) Inadequacy of local knowledge
- c) Use of machinery
- d) Nature of innovation
- e) Human problems

Two of the above reasons are of interest to Communication experts in development. First, with respect to local knowledge, Baldwin admits that the firm did its best to obtain information especially at the higher level. But at the lower level, it would appear that little attempt was made to utilize the local farmers' knowledge, especially in connection with the customary sizes of local farms, crops grown and yields obtained, the labor unit and amount of work performed.

Second, on the factor of innovation itself, he argues that "undue haste---gave the farmers no time to satisfy themselves that the new methods were better than their own."³ This lack of adequate communication with the target group was the measure of the failure to activate the perpetual commitment of the people to the goals of the program.

A similar project established in Fagbo Village of then Ondo province (now Ondo state), failed within five years of its "take-off." The Fagbo Cocoa Development project was established to increase cocoa production by introducing new quality "Amazon" hybrid cocoa, fertilizer and insecticide for use by local farmers. But due to the inadequate information on these new ideas and materials, the project equally failed and the farmers, instead of improving their condition, have become more backward in production due to the time "wasted" learning to adopt new ideas which didn't succeed. There also are so many development projects locally organized -- either initiated by the governments (state or local) or by the community members themselves. These projects have always enjoyed initial propaganda at the inception or official opening. Similarly they all died off after the initial enthusiasm of the local people had exhausted. The cause of this situation has been that the government of Nigeria has not created a channel through which the enthusiasm of the people will be permanently sustained or reinforced. The result of this is that it becomes very difficult to win the

response of the people when another set of innovations is thought of and brought to them. The unfortunate point to note is that Nigeria has invested very heavily on her system of mass communication in recent years, and yet no thought is given to communication support for development programs, as will be reflected in the country's communication system discussed below.

Communication System in Nigeria

Nigeria is currently witnessing a proliferation of mass media institutions as a result of the increase in the social, economic and political power of the country. The Federal Radio Corporation has established state stations in each of the nineteen states of the Federation, in addition to the already existing stations previously owned by the former regions of the country. Every state has also established its own radio station. A national Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), has been established and is operating in color. The NTA has now acquired all the television stations formerly owned by state governments. There are at present nineteen TV stations in the country. A decision to use a tethered balloon system for the network service has reached an implementation stage. Telephone services are planned to take advantage of this infrastructure. Also in use is a geo-stationary satellite broadcasting system for the West African region. Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Information has set up public enlightenment centers in each

of the states and is planning to establish "information banks" to assist media gatekeepers in their jobs. There are sixteen surviving national dailies, thirty-two weekly papers and twenty-eight monthly magazines.⁴

The current communication explosion in Nigeria in the tempo of increasing economic activity would seem to support the view that the size of the communication activity reflects the economic development of a society. A high level information executive in one of Nigeria's states once remarked that the development of the mass media in Nigeria was standing in reciprocal relationship to its economic development.⁵ Nigerian mass media and the economy seem to support and boost each other. Estimated advertizing expenditures for all agencies operating in Nigeria rose from N19,197 million (\$28,795.5 million) in 1974 to N24,599 million (\$36,890.5 million) in 1975,⁶ an increase of 20% for additional information.

But what does the increase in mass communication mean to the average Nigerian? The media system itself has been found to be geared to the interests and tastes of the higher-status segments. Wedel and Pillsworth have noted the tendency of media-set ownership to be concentrated among the urban middle and upper classes.⁷ In trying to bridge the gap in knowledge through the communication of development issues, Nigerian mass media people have resorted to an increasing use of the local languages. Broadcasting seems to use the

local languages more than the print media. But even then communication in English seems to dominate the broadcasting scene. The categories of information of Nigeria mass media are: News, sports, general entertainment, religion, education, public service announcements, general public information, personal/social engagement and commercial advertising.⁸

It can be observed that as a tool for spurring the development process the Nigerian mass communication system has not proven very effective. In fact, development and communication are out of gear. On the one hand, we have communication used without development purpose - on the other we have development action without communication support. Yet in an ideal situation, the two would work hand in hand. The "Operation Feed the Nation" initiated by the last military regime which has since been renamed Green Revolution Program by the succeeding civilian regime had the initial clamorous mass media support but soon died down because the program lacked a way of diffusing the ideas to the masses in the rural area. It was "fun in high places" when the then Nigerian Head of State, General Obasanjo and his top men, under the coverage of television cameras, were planting maize at the back of the Dodan Barracks which served as the state house then and eventually became the present state house, while the farmers in the rural areas of the country did not even have the idea of what was going on

in Lagos about the program.

It is little surprise today then to see that the program is better known in files of its officers in Lagos than among the rural farmers. It is also little wonder then that Nigeria, who once exported palm oil and rice, is now importing the same palm oil, rice and other agricultural food items.

What is lacking is the useful, imaginative, groundbreaking strategies for mass communicating the necessary innovations, reliably, efficiently and equitably to the rural peasantry. This lack is made all the more shameful because the technologies of mass communication are just as available to Nigeria as the innovations.

There was a time in Nigeria that the mass media was conceived as one of the most crucial factors impelling rural transformation through accelerated diffusion of productivity-increasing innovations. Media facilities were made available for development purposes in the form of radio programs, mobile cinemas, posters, handbills, brochures on health, agricultural development and literacy campaigns. Demonstration centers were created a-1 over the country for the World Bank and World Health Organization sponsored development programs, where extension and front line workers demonstrated with all sorts of communication materials on health, agriculture and adult education projects with the masses in the rural area. At this time, one saw the promising role of mass media as a wonderful vehicle of innovation

in the process of rural social change.

Regretably, the optimism concerning the potentially powerful role of mass media in the development of rural communities in Nigeria soon started to die off. The reason being that the leaders of the newly independent country were preoccupied with the distribution of political and economic power, so much so that the government controlled communication channels were diverted to partisan political propaganda exercises -- just as Roling et al., (1976) put it rightly in their article. (Diffusion of Innovations and the Issues of Equity in Rural Development), "New preoccupations emerged centering on the peasant's limited access to resources necessary to make the adoption of innovations possible."⁹ For example, the farmers' agricultural loan scheme was later stopped, government subsidies on the fertilizers and other farm crops chemicals were cut off, literacy campaign and classes became things of the past; mass media health programs on preventive and environmental sanitation were off the air -- all these continued to change in accordance with the changes in the people that occupied political positions at different times. The observation of Bordenave (1976) in his article (Communication of Agricultural Innovation in Latin America), is just relevant to the situation when he remarks, "The limitation of peasants' access to resources of innovation were often based on inequitable distributions of political and economic power in society."¹⁰

The result of these problems in the rural area was that after the initial publicity gimmick, the optimism and enthusiasm aroused in the peasants were killed by the lack of continuous supportive process of the mass media. Hitherto, the rural communities of Nigeria continue to remain underdeveloped with all the concomitants of ruralness.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND THE NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT
COMMUNICATION (DSC) SERVICES IN NIGERIA

The Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth Sports and Culture, realizing the immense value and importance of communication to its country-wide development projects, expressed the need for establishing a medium-sized printing outfit at the Social Development Directorate, Lagos as part of a DSC Unit and sought UNICEF assistance.

This Federal DSC Unit later formed a part of the UNICEF commitments to Nigeria during 1979/1980 and was covered by BAL/G.9 with supporting documentation.¹¹ It was agreed to carry out the implementation in two phases:

- 1) Establishment of the Printing Outfit and the training of personnel
- 2) Establishment of the Audio-Visual/Broadcasting components and appropriate training of personnel¹²

With this development, it was considered necessary to seek the advice and technical expertise of a communications

programmer/planner to help government in a comprehensive survey of the DSC needs. And at the request of UNICEF, Joe Ascroft, an Associate Professor, School of Journalism, University of Iowa, was invited as the consultant to develop the plan for the project. The consultant then decided to undertake a tour of some selected rural areas to be able to have first hand information and knowledge from and about the people, for which the DSC was being designed.

The consultant accompanied by Michael Oyedele, the information officer for UNICEF, and I, representing the Federal Government, visited a number of village communities to determine not only the nature and number of social development activities taking place in them but also the various bottlenecks constraining the extent and rate of such development. Our objective was to assess the need for DSC services as a vehicle both for encouraging the activities and for overcoming the bottlenecks which may be constraining them. These visits have left two salient impressions upon us.

1. We were struck by the obvious self-sacrificing determination of villagers to bring about, to the extent possible, development of their communities through their own self-help activities. Much of this self-help is presently channelled into construction of such infrastructural facilities as civic centres, town halls, maternity homes, health clinics, postal agencies, primary and secondary schools, market places, feeder roads, boreholes and pit latrines. Prodigious

amounts of money are collected by way of community imposed levies upon its members. For example, one community in Rivers State has generated sufficient funds over the past five years to have various construction projects underway valued at over ₦500,000.

2. But we were also struck by the almost total lack of informational, motivational or instructional material of any kind to be found anywhere in the villages to support, complement and help impel these self-help activities. The walls and bulletin boards of the schools, dispensaries and maternity homes were devoid of any posters, wall charts or picture displays urging better ways of farming, child care, health nutrition or environmental sanitation. The desk tops and book shelves of front line officers and workers were innocent of any booklets, foldouts, brochures or guides providing instructions, for example, of how to make use of fertilizer, raise poultry or rabbits or farm fish in small ponds for extra protein or cash, or how to prepare balanced diets or clean drinking water or how to knit or sew or make simple furniture or how to treat common human or animal ailments. The town halls or civic centres had never been the venues of inspiring slide and filmstrip shows, or consciousness-raising video and movie docudramas demonstrating possibilities of life-enhancing alternatives as yet undreamed of in rural communities. "There simply was virtually no reading or viewing material, save perhaps bibles and prayerbooks

either observed by us or reported to be present in the villages visited. It is the absence of such materials in the rural and even the urban areas which must constrain social and economic development in crucial ways that provides an arguable case for the need to establish PSC services in the country."

From what we have seen, the only PSC service presently available in the areas visited is the State or Local government frontline development worker. Apparently, there are not nearly enough of them to cover more than a small percentage of the village communities in the nation. Chronic transport problems are evident everywhere we went, further limiting the number of villages frontline workers are able to contact as well as the number of times each village can be visited. The fortunate few chosen for attention tend to be the ones which are self-motivating. Into these communities, the workers venture armed with nothing but their mouths.

They would like to be better equipped than this. They would like, so they say, to take along with them audio-visual aids and printed materials, some of which would be used to enrich their interactions with village people and others of which would be left behind as aide memoirs of the messages they sought to transmit. Knowing that they cannot visit more than a few villages in their zones, they hope for the next best thing, that the people they talk to will pass the

materials left behind with them to friends and relatives of other villages, thereby extending the workers' radius of influence beyond their present capability. There is a need to provide these materials.

They would like to be able to take along with them, or cause to be brought into those villages which are not self-starters, motivational material to create awareness of possibilities to emulate. At the present, such materials, if they were indeed available to them, are likely only to be those channelled through international and bilateral aid agencies such as UNICEF and U.S.A.I.D. These materials often depict people of alien cultures prospering in foreign settings. They are hardly the stuff to arouse community effort. There are no materials known to be readily available showing how local communities in familiar settings have gone about the business of helping themselves. Yet such materials are likely to inspire emulation more powerfully. There is a need to provide them.

They would like to participate in national campaigns abounding with timely follow-up materials. Some we talked to have been involved in the national functional literacy campaign (now taken over by the Federal Ministry of Education). But no further material besides the original primers have been forthcoming. A thirst to read has been created which requires a constant supply of new materials to keep it quenched. This observation further underscores the dearth of reading

material of any kind to be found in rural areas so that even children are in danger of losing their hard-earned literacy once leaving the school, except they migrate to the cities. There is need to provide appropriate follow-up materials for national campaigns.

We ourselves observed that in the case of the International Year of the Child campaign, the only promotional or support materials produced appear to be two posters, one depicting a healthy looking baby and the other warning against drug abuse. Neither of these posters were seen within the villages visited though some were displayed in State and local government headquarters. The point is that a poster is at best a headline drawing attention to the presence of more detailed information telling of how babies are to be maintained in good health or what ravages to personal and family life can be caused through drug abuse. Unsupported in this way, posters can have only very limited impact. There is need for campaign support materials to be produced.

We visited a couple of institutions where frontline workers were being trained. They lacked printed curricula and brochures describing the services they render. There were no training manuals available to put in the hands of frontline workers for them to keep when they returned to the field. Instructional aids such as overhead, slide and filmstrip projectors and epidiascopes were found idle and mouldy with disuse. The slides, films and transparencies

which originally justified their acquisition had long since worn out or gone astray. On the shelves of libraries were displayed handicraft pamphlets and magazines from foreign countries but none from Nigeria. There is a need to produce audio-visual aids and printed materials to replenish and restock the training institutions.

At almost every level of government, but more especially in the lower most echelons, little is known about what is going on in the realm of social development, youth and culture outside of the narrow orbit circumscribed by the boundaries of their zones of work. Yet there may be much that they can learn from each other. One way to foster exchange of ideas and information and perhaps to encourage a community spirit across the nation among workers engaged in the same area of endeavour is through the publication of a newsletter which keeps them regularly informed of developments around the country and also publishes their contributions. One may even look down the road a little and envisage on the one hand a monthly magazine addressed to rural folk and through which they could give voice to their needs and aspirations, and on the other, a somewhat loftier quarterly review on social development to excite exchanges among practitioners, policy makers and academicians. There is need for the production of such wide circulation journals.

It is suspected by many at the bottom that people at the top, the decision and policy makers, those who control

the flow of funds, are not really in touch with conditions or do not truly appreciate the institutional and developmental bottlenecks and constraints which so powerfully sap the human spirit of the motivation and enthusiasm to work hard. If people at the top make no effort to solicit timely and regular feedback from below, then sooner or later they will wind up with violent kickback from that quarter. There is need to capture on film and tape the sight and sounds of rural development work in all its ramifications in action; perhaps to air those issues deemed important on radio and television where they can be raised to national prominence.

There is, in summary, the need, beyond a shadow of a doubt, for a well organized, dynamic service providing regular up-to-date PSC materials along the lines exemplified in the foregoing paragraphs. These potential uses of such a service so far described are by no means exhaustive of all possible uses. Still others could be described to buttress the case for the establishment of a PSC service which, if it comes into being, will itself identify further avenues to pursue as it grows and develops.

It also appears quite appropriate that such a service should be initiated under the patronage, in one form or another, of the Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth Sports and Culture. The generalist approach that such a Ministry must necessarily adopt enables it to cut a broad swath across family life, taking into account even aspects of

health, education and agriculture that fall within the domain of other more specialized ministries. Indeed, we see no contra-indication to the possibility of these other Ministries availing themselves in time of the services of a properly instituted PSC Unit.

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT COMMUNICATION: A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

During the DSC Consultancy Tour, Ascroft's team (earlier mentioned), discovered, among other things: 1) the self-sacrificing determination of the villagers to enhance the development of their villages through self-help activities, 2) the lack of motivational or supportive communicational materials to complement and encourage these self-help activities of the villagers. Hence, it was recorded in the team's report that "There simply was virtually no reading or viewing materials, save perhaps bibles and prayer books... in the villages visited." It is the absence of such materials in the rural and even urban areas which must constrain social and economic development in crucial ways that provides an arguable case for the need to establish PSC (Project Support Communication) services in the country."¹³

These are communities that had, out of self-help activities, built their feeder roads, primary schools, secondary schools, dispensaries, postal agencies, market places, etc. It is therefore pertinent that the solution to these problems lies in the useful imaginative and ground

breaking communicational strategies that will continually mobilize the villagers in the development of their community. In embarking on the solutions, consideration should be given to the main roles of the media as proposed by Rogers (1980). "(1) to provide technical information about development problems and possibilities and about appropriate innovations, in answer to local requests, and (2) to circulate information about self-development accomplishments of local groups so that other such groups may profit from their achievements."¹⁴

In that regard the following solutions could be applied in solving the problems:

(i) The training of extension/front line workers in development communication skills and the conduction and use of simple investigatory research. In this way, extension workers who work directly with the rural peasants will be in a position to investigate and know the basic problems of the people and inform their officers in the planning group. This will equip the planners with the appropriate knowledge of the needs of the people.

(ii) The social workers so assigned, will then of course, be better equipped with audio-visual aids and printed materials, some of which would be used to enrich their interactions with village people and others of which would be left behind as aide memoirs of the messages they sought to transmit.

(iii) The front line workers will be able to take along

with them motivational materials to create awareness of possibilities to emulate. This method had been applied in Oyo State whereby video-recorded tapes of self-help activities of one community were shown to another community for the purpose of encouragement and emulation. This will show other communities how local communities in familiar settings have gone about the business of helping themselves and such materials are very likely to inspire emulation more powerfully.

(iv) The thirst to read has been created years ago during the national functional literacy campaign which died shortly after it took off. This thirst requires a constant supply of new materials to keep it quenched. The front line workers may also involve the villagers in any other ongoing national campaigns abounding with timely follow-up materials. There is always a need to provide appropriate follow-up support materials for national campaigns.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

Considering the fact that the Nigerian rural communities had once experienced supportive communicational services (about two decades ago) but which was not long sustained, efforts should be made to avoid what the United Nations founders of Development Support Communications termed "clean sociological deficiencies" in the design, planning and implementation of development projects in many sectors

of the rural economy.¹⁵ Among the problems of sociological deficiencies identified, and which must be guarded against are the following:

(i) Lack of communication between the project planners and the target communities which results in designs that are top-down city-to-village inputs to be "transferred" to the communities. This type of planning probably explains why a television box was given to a community in Oyo State, even when the satellite had not been able to transmit programs from Ibadan Studio to Oyo. Hence the set was in a locked-up room in the town hall when the consultancy team headed by Professor Joe Ascroft (mentioned earlier) visited Oyo town in 1980.

(ii) The mass media professionals who planners call upon to design mass communication message and strategies are either foreign or foreign-trained with little or long-suppressed expertise in the indigenous communication system. Such professionals, whose training emphasized the mass media functions of entertainment and information usually do not perceived development support as part of their responsibilities.

(iii) Mass media resources and priorities are not distributed to favor the continuing day-to-day communication support that a project may require during its life. Thus, after an initial public-relations style blitz in the national media, no effort is made to use mass communication to sustain the momentum of a project. This may also explain why the

early rural development programs in rural communities of Nigeria failed--because they lacked the necessary continuous communications support.

This is further confirmed by Ascroft et al., (1981) in a paper presented to the 31st Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Minneapolis, May 1981 in which they stated, "The modern media in Africa is notorious for its penchant to quit providing support for a project after the initial propagadizing flurry. What goes over the air seldom seems connected in any direct way with the practical requirements of projects on the ground. The media do not work to get everyone pulling together, they do not point out when the project is losing momentum and they do not celebrate the accomplishments of small tasks well done."¹⁶

In view of all these observed deficiencies in the past programs and to be able to accomplish the desired goals and objectives of development support communication in Nigeria, I would like to suggest the following strategies:

- (i) In design, planning and implementation, a careful look should be taken at the traditional systems of mass communications already operating in the communities. This can be achieved by including the Baale (traditional heads) the counselors (the community's representative in the local government councils) and the identified opinion leaders in the communities in your committees.

- (ii) Making use of the local communication resources and channels in mobilizing the people: like the use of the gong and the drum: reaching them through the schools, i.e., their very strong Parents/Teachers Association that has done a lot of self-help projects in the past; making use of the market days and traditional festival days in disseminating news, messages and information.
- (iii) Structuring the various project committees on the existing three tier system in the communities, i.e., village, area, and community levels. In doing these one would once more arouse that inherent self-sacrificing capability of self development of the people of Nigerian rural communities.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT COMMUNICATION

It would be a mistake to feel that the use of support communications and motivational elements within projects will be a miracle to "cure" all a program's difficulties. Often times, however, these communication aspects are overlooked as are the behavioral and socio/psychological aspects. By using the process of developing support communication, it is hoped that these aspects can be given equal weight as to all other programming issues. The mistake often made by those who claim to have adopted the development support communication, is their placing it under information unit of

their organizations and treating it as public relations unit of their supposed projects. This is not so. Development support communication is a series of substeps and tasks within the programming cycle aimed at maintaining or changing behaviors of target groups. In this regard it should be placed in the policy making body of organizations so that it could be planned along with the project programming.

TASKS OF THE DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT COMMUNICATION

The first task of the development support communication or motivational communication is to assist in analyzing all objectives, to identify exactly what members of each target group should be doing (what their behaviors should be) for a project to meet its objectives.

The next task is to design activities which will lead people to do those things, to maintain or change a targeted behavior. It goes without saying that target groups should always be included in the designing and testing of these activities. Quite probably these activities will need a range of media to support them. Another function of the support communication will be to work with target groups and other "experts" in the designing, testing and use of these media.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE DSC OFFICER

Eight Fundamental Issues

The Development Support Communication Officer should .

be aware of the following important issues in programming for support communication by way of general background. These are:

1. That an intervention project planned together with a target group in response to a need stated by them will have a much better chance of being adopted than one planned by experts for target groups. It is essential to meet and dialogue with groups to identify their needs and to get their inputs into their projects which will help to solve the problem.
2. That all research must be done first about a target group. Once the characteristics are known, activities, media and messages can be adjusted to suit languages, customs, location, communication behavior and patterns, which members of the group are already using the intervention, etc.
3. That pretesting of all activities, media and messages should be done with members of the target group. This will clear up misunderstanding, prevent cultural "faux pas," and reflect the tastes of the target group.
4. That appropriate media/indigenous media - at any rate, media the target group feels comfortable with and is not distracted by - should be used. Members of the target group should be consulted as to what media they would prefer to have used.
5. That local influentials need to be identified, enlisted

and trained as advisers, implementers, motivators before communication inputs begin. Further, special face-to-face motivation should be planned specifically for these influentials before mass media inputs begin.

6. That all necessary members of a government bureaucracy be informed about innovative programmes before they begin. Officials should be consulted at all stages of planning and thoroughly trained and (hopefully) motivated in methods for carrying out the programmes, as well.
7. That all supplies must be in place before your messages begin; or all resources mentioned in your messages must be easily available locally. If not, the credibility of your project and your organization is jeopardized.
8. That the functions of the mass media are limited for the majority of the population. That is mass media (generally) do three things: (1) create awareness, (2) create a climate for change, (3) give information. The media themselves rarely are instrumental in changing firmly held attitudes and traditional behaviours, except among a small percentage of the population.

In changing firmly held attitudes and traditional behaviours, it is best to use face-to-face communication either through the use of:

- a) well motivated field workers and extension agents (health, agriculture, family planning, community development), or,
- b) "satisfied acceptors": members of a target group who have adopted a new intervention, are happy with it; are convinced that it is worthwhile and who are willing to speak to their friends and neighbors about it.
- c) small group meetings and training sessions in which community members participate actively in identifying problems and seeking solutions.

These eight fundamental issues, if put into consideration, will result in a series of well-treated and integrated activities and media, working in concert, whose function will be to change or maintain behaviours of target groups. Properly designed and coordinated with other development efforts, communication support can inform people of new ideas and techniques, help to change attitudes and stimulate popular participation and self-help more rapidly and effectively than conventional approaches.

DEVELOPING A FUNCTIONAL MODEL OF DSC FOR FAGBO COMMUNITY

The Fagbo community in Ondo State, Nigeria comprises about twenty villages scattered over an area of about 100 square miles with Fabgo as the central village and traditional headquarters. All the villages making up the community have their different names but Fabgo, being the first village founded by Chief Fagbo and from where all others grew, is generally accepted as their general community name.

Chief Fagbo founded the place with the permission of the Oba (King) of Ondo land, and Chief Fagbo in turn gave out part of the land to his adherent who later built up the surrounding villages making up the Fagbo area community. The title of the head of the community is "the Baale" who is usually nominated out of the descendants of Chief Fagbo by the whole community. His nomination is then ratified by the Oba (King) of Ondo land. The Baale is the traditional link between the Oba (King) and the members of the community. The 1963 Nigerian census put the population of Fagbo community at 1,200. It is now estimated at 3,000 people.

SOCIAL SYSTEM/SERVICES (Local)

The Fabgo community is one of the main cocoa growing areas in Ondo State. This has attracted people from different parts of the State and nearby States to settle there, and this has made the area to continue growing in population.

There are six primary schools built in the principal villages of the community, and one secondary school built in the Fagbo main village through self-help efforts. There is also a dispensary, a postal agency, and a central market in the Fagbo center, all built through self-help efforts by the community members.

The community is divided into five village groups (areas) each comprising an average of 4-5 villages geographically close to each other. Each village has a committee which comprises all the household heads; the village heads and two other elders of each village from the area committee; while all the village heads and heads of interest groups, opinion leaders (e.g., teachers, the counselors) form the community's council at Fagbo center. One significant aspect of the community's social organization is the fact that no woman is included in all the committees and council. The reason is that women are wives of the men in the community and as wives, their interests are normally (assumably) represented by their husbands. However, the women do come together occasionally during self-help projects like market building, school building, road construction, etc., to aid the men in fetching water for construction and cooking food for men at work.

Minor disputes involving people of the same village are settled by the village heads while those involving people from two different villages are settled by the area committees;

and likewise, disputes between people from different village areas are settled by the Baale. Cases in which parties are not satisfied can be taken to court, but the courts usually ask the extent to which such cases have been tried by the Baale. This illustrates the recognition which the central local government gives to the Baale.

COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (Local)

Before the advent of schools that brought in teachers, the local government which produced local counselor, the transistor radio, and newspapers, the main channel of communication/information from and to the community was the Baale. The Oba (King) of Ondo land would send his commands through his emissaries to the Baale who would then summon the meeting of the community council to discuss such messages or merely send his page to announce the message on the market days. The page usually carried a gong or a big drum, beat it in a particular way understood by the people to obtain their attention, and then announced the message.

But the channels of information have since increased in the community in addition to the Baale's channel. Other channels by which the people obtain information are: the counselor who represents them in the local government council, the teachers who go to town every Friday and come back on Monday with newspapers, the transistor radio, the market women, who discuss with women-traders from the town, the motor drivers that ply the villages daily and the churches that are

being visited by pastors every Sunday. However, it is to be noted that, in most cases, the people depend so much on two channels; the Baale and their counselor. Whatever news they hear from the radio, and the newspapers, they usually go back to these two people to ask for confirmation. It is this aspect of communication relationship that makes the local government rely on the Baale for the annual collection of the peoples' taxes.

IDENTIFIABLE PROBLEMS

Fagbo community is relatively a rural area and therefore has most, if not all, the problems associated with rural areas all over; drinking water is still being obtained from the surface springs and shallow wells; there are no pit latrines, rather, there are surface ones in bushes around the villages; environmental sanitation is lacking, and general personal cleanliness is not practiced out of hygienic ignorance; immunization against communicable diseases are ignored if not feared; there is still very strong adherence to the traditional or native way of healing - even childbirth (natal and antinatal services). The agricultural practice is still at the very low traditional level; the use of fertilizer is not effectively applied and the adult literacy campaign/operation, started when the authorities earlier cared, has lost its trace in the community. Nevertheless the villagers had, in the past, made self-sacrificing efforts to develop their community through self-help activities. These self-

help efforts have been channeled into the construction of primary and secondary schools, market places, dispensary, postal agency and feeder roads. Large amounts of money are collected by way of community imposed levies upon members, and the members do a lot of manual construction by themselves.

But unfortunately, there is almost a total lack of informational, motivational, or instructional material of any kind in the villages to support, complement and help impel these self-help activities. Communicational materials like posters, wall charts or picture displays urging better ways of farming, child care, health, nutrition and environmental sanitation are absent in the community.

The only local government front line worker located to cover the area has no aid material to back up his assignment, so much so that his duties have been reduced only to traditional dance and story telling under the disguise of festival of arts practice. There is, in his possession, the absence of aid materials like booklets, foldouts, brochures or guides providing instructions, for example, of how to make use of the fertilizer and chemical sprays for better farm products; how to raise poultry or farm fish in small ponds for additional protein in the family diet or cash, how to prepare balanced diet or clean drinking water, to knit, sew, or make simple furniture or how to treat common human or animal ailments.

Ironically, Fagbo was once one of the information centers created by the old Western Region of Nigeria, when, with all

good intentions, the idea was conceived of the mass media as one of the most crucial factors impelling rural transformation through accelerated diffusion of productivity-increasing innovations. Media facilities were then made available in the form of radio programs, mobile cinemas, posters, handbills, brochures on health, agricultural development and literacy campaigns. Fagbo was then one of the demonstration centers for the World Bank sponsored special cocoa development program, where extension/front line workers demonstrated the use of the fertilizer and other crop chemicals for better yield. At this time, one saw the promising role of mass media as a wonderful vehicle of innovation in the process of rural social change.

Unfortunately, the optimism concerning the potentially powerful role of the mass media in the development of Fagbo area community in Nigeria soon started to die off. The reason being that the leaders of the newly independent country were preoccupied with the distribution of both political and economic power so much so, that the government controlled communication channels were diverted to partisan political propaganda exercises - just as Rolining et al. (1976) put it in their article (Diffusion of Innovations and the Issue of Equity in Rural Development), "New preoccupations emerged centering on the peasants' limited access to resources necessary to make the adoption of innovations possible."¹⁵

For an example, the Farmers' Agricultural Loan Scheme was later stopped, government subsidies on the fertilizers and other farm crop chemicals were cut off -- all these were changing in accordance with the changes in the people that occupied political positions. The observation of Bordenave (1976) in his article (Communication of Agricultural Innovations in Latin America), is also relevant to the situation in question when he remarked, "the limitation of peasants' access to resources of innovation were often based on inequitable distributions of political and economic power in society."¹⁶

The result of this problem in Fagbo community was that after the initial publicity gimmick, the optimism and enthusiasm aroused in the villagers was killed by the lack of continuous supportive process of the mass media. Hitherto, the Fagbo community continues to remain a rural area with all the concomitants of ruralness.

A FUNCTIONAL (DSC) MODEL FOR FAGBO COCOA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

THE PRINCIPLES

THE OBJECTIVES

Cocoa Development Program:
Increased Productivity
Through:

1. Experimentation
 - a) Operational Feasibility
 - b) Institutional Feasibility
 - c) Administrative Feasibility
 - d) Resource Feasibility
2. Replicability

Developing blue prints and prototypes of successfully tested strategies for wide-scale reproduction for the whole country - Nigeria.
3. Using Existing Resources

Utilizing additional resources only to meet extra experimental need, scaled down progressively to available on-going resources during subsequent replication.
4. Research & Evaluation

Baseline information gathering research before; progress monitoring during; and effects evaluation after implementation.

1. IMMEDIATE:

a) Behavioral Objective

To influence change (through communication techniques) in the behavior of Fagbo farmers so as to adopt the planting of Amazon hybrid cocoa seeds.

b) Operational Objective

To give Fagbo farmers the necessary information and knowledge required for the adoption.

2. ULTIMATE:

a) Project objective

To increase Fagbo farmers' productivity in cocoa.

b) Latent Objective

To raise the status of Fagbo farmers socially, economically and politically.

STRATEGIES

Task 1 Baseline information collection and analysis: Local communication systems; Channels for new ideas into community; media habits; attitudes toward the existing agricultural services; important values and living patterns of community, etc.

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Task 2 Setting Objectives - Immediate and Ultimate: Behavioral and Operational; Project and latent objectives.

↓

Task 3 Identifying target groups: Village heads, family heads opinion leaders, councillors, teachers and other influentials of the community.

↓

Task 4 Budgetting: Radio...#? Video...#? Print...#? Seminar workshops, and demonstrations...#? Other equipment and services...#?

↓

Task 5 Designing Activities to achieve behavioral objectives: Seminars, workshops, expert talks, etc.

↓

Task 6 Designing Media to support activities: Overhead projector film strips, posters, film show, radio slogans, video tape recordings, etc.

↓

Task 7 Pretesting the media products and giving amendments where necessary. Pretest with farmers themselves.

↓

Task 8 Implementation: Back up all your activities with relevant media or communicational materials.

↓

Task 9 Evaluate by conducting another fact finding research (post hoc) to determine degree of success.

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CF-RAI-USAA-PD-GEN-2007-000259

Expanded Number **CF-RAI-USAA-PD-GEN-2007-000259**

External ID

Title

"Development Support Communication and Rural Development in Nigeria" by Anthony Ifeolu Agboola, Masters thesis, Univ of Iowa, December 1981

Date Created / From Date

Date Registered

Date Closed / To Date

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Notes

39 pp. Anthony Ifeolu Agboola was Social Development Officer, Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth, Sports and Culture, Lagos.

The thesis articulates the discrepancy between many well-meaning, well spoken seminars and papers on the one hand, and shortage of effective implementation on the ground on the other. The Fagbo Cocoa Development project in Nigeria serves as a case study and example. The need for PSC and suggestions for its implementation are outlined.

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