

Effective Reporting of Rural Africa: Towards Improved Strategies and Practices

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ABSTRACT

This article makes a case for improved news coverage of the rural areas of Africa as a vital component of African nations' rural and national development efforts. It offers a contextual definition of rural news reporting in Africa, and provides a theoretical and philosophical framework that should guide the African rural reporter on the job.

The article went further to critically examine the dominant strategies for rural reporting, rural news gathering strategies and sources, some specialized techniques for packaging rural news reports, and the general and specific channels for transmitting rural news reports.

In addition to the universalistic news packaging approaches which should be contextually modified and applied by African rural news reports who should live in the rural areas with the ruralites, this articles also recommended the Screw Model and the Promo-News forms of rural news presentation and systematically explained how these can be applied.

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**Vers une amélioration des stratégies et des pratiques
relatives à une information efficace sur les zones rurales en
Afrique**

RESUME

Dans cet article l'auteur fait de l'amélioration de la couverture informationnelle des zones rurales d'Afrique un élément vital des efforts des développement de nations africaines. Il offre une définition contextuelle de la couverture des zones rurales et donne un cadre théorique et philosophique qui devrait servir de guide au reporter africain.

L'article fait un examen critique des stratégies dominantes de reportage rural, des sources des stratégies de collectes de l'information sur les zones rurales, de quelque techniques spécialisées de confection des nouvelles du monde rural et enfin des canaux généraux et spécifiques de transmission de ces informations.

Les méthodes de rédaction universalistes de nouvelles sur le monde rural doivent être contextuellement modifiées et appliquées par les journalistes africains qui devraient vivre dans le zones rurales avec les populations; l'article recommande aussi le méthode Screw et les formes de Promo-Information et explique systématiquement comment elles peuvent être appliquées à la présentation des informations rurales.

Introduction

Most countries of Africa now have rural development as the focus of their national socio-economic and technological development programmes. The place of communication in all this is recognized but often under-emphasized, given lip-service or not given adequate attention by governments officials and other change agents. The mass media are not less guilty in this regard.¹ For technical reasons, negative-attitudes, wrong perception of their professional roles and for similar reasons ², they tend to neglect, under-report or misrepresent (misreport) the rural areas.

This inadequate attention by government agents and the mass media should stop. The urban-rural dichotomy in news reporting and writing which is skewed against the rural areas must discontinue. These changes must take place before we can hope to achieve the much-desired mobilization of the rural people and resources for development of the rural areas and the nation of Africa. These changes need to take place too before we can achieve any reasonable balance in the national and international information flow patterns, which we have been clamouring for.³

This paper focuses on news reporting of and writing for the rural areas. It is aimed at examining the philosophy, sociology, and strategies for effective rural news gathering and news writing that all help to ensure people's participation in development communication in Africa.

Defining Rural News Reporting

Rural news reporting is seen here as a specialized type of reporting that requires specialized treatments and specialized skills. But the fact that it shares many other areas of commonness with other types of news reporting and writing should not be lost sight of.

It involves mainly reporting and writing news with a rural focus or emphases. Rural news is news written and reported from rural perspective. It is news and other related materials gathered and packaged mainly in the rural areas as opposed to the so-called rural news written for ruralites in urban areas, by urban dwellers and with urban biases.

Rural news is news that informs, educates urbanites or urban elites and governments about the needs, aspirations, problems, successes, joys, values and general life of the rural dwellers, and informs and educates rural dwellers about government policies, activities, programmes, philosophies, materials, ideas and such other factors they might need for survival, progress or improved living standards. Rural reporting provide the news and other related material that constitute the vital information and communication component of the much-publicized and recommended integrated approach to rural development, which is defined as a consciously-formulated, planned, and executed systematic and multi-sectoral programme, aimed at integrating the marginalized people of the rural areas into the mainstream of better living, as opposed to mere existence or subsistence.⁴

Sociology of Rural News Reporting

All types of news reporting are increasingly being studied and better understood as sociological processes while the news and other materials that come out from these processes are increasingly being received as the organizations products of the media and other societal organizations involved in producing them.⁵ This is essentially an application or organizational and general socio-logical theories in the study of news reporting. It can also be seen as the study of the sociology of news as an off-shoot of the general sociology of knowledge.

In fact, one of the modern adaptors of this approach, Bernard Roshco, equated news to knowledge and divided news into "acquaintance with: news and :knowledge about: news. According to him, "acquaintance with:" types of news stories refer to straight and some superficial news coverage, while :knowledge about: news types refer to indepth or interpretative reporting of events".⁶ Roshco's two types and description of news are also similar to Todd Hunt's "event-

centres" and "process-centre": news types which he developed in his criticisms of the reportorial process.⁷ Here again, :event-centred: news is more of straight news reporting, while "process-centres; news refers to indepth coverage of events.

These are two news reporting styles that should mean much to the rural news reporter. The key message of the newsmaking or sociology of news approach to the rural new reports is that a thorough knowledge of the process of making or "manufacturing: news will immensely increase his understanding of how much the final product of news, is created, its possible uses and abuses, its portends and limitations, and the various organizational, political and other societal factors that act as constraints in the mass media;s attempt to construct or destroy realities through the news.

The sociology of news approach will also enable the rural news reporter to understand and appreciate the role of rural sociology in community and rural development or rural life in general. It will help him to be familiar with rural social organizations, social relationships, roles and status structures, norms and values of the rural communities and indigenous associations, organizations, and institutions. This approach will also help the rural reporter to master and utilize the tractional communication processes and channels that include the opinion formation systems, channels of information sharing, instruments of expression, feedback mechanism, opinion leaders who are usually early learners, innovators, adoptors.⁸ and significant - others, and include "emirs", "obas" or "Igwes", other community leaders or even some common people that play leading roles in the opinion process.

Philosophy of the Rural Reporter

To be effective in this specialized area of journalism and mass communication, the rural reporter or anyone engaged in rural news reporting must be continually guided by a well-defined and contextually-adjusted rural-oriented journalistic or communication philosophy. We take philosophy here to mean a basic theoretical and pragmatic body of thought that should guide a person, group or professional practice and which should be determined by such factors as national or

community values or ideas, cultural realities, systems-survivalist and developmental imperatives.

We propose that, that philosophy be called the Ruralism Concentric Circle philosophy (RCCP). ⁹ This is a journalistic or communication model that emphasizes among other things the utilization of communication for the promotion of rural community ideals that include balances development, cultural integrity, self-reliance, unity, patriotism, conscientization and generally better life for the ruralites. It is also a pragmatic, developmentalist or utilitarian philosophy of communication that places first the rural communities and their development and integration to the developed areas. It is at the same time village-centric and nation-centric, because even though its focus is on the development of the rural areas, its ultimate goal or result is overall balanced development of the nation through systematized, conscious and equilibrated integration of the rural and urban areas.

The above RCCP philosophy is in line with what seems to be emerging national philosophy in most African countries which is based on self-reliance and social justice, and in which socio-economic planning is carried out through the appropriate authorities in the development district, local government areas, states and at the national level.¹⁰ It is also in line with the "Ruralism: philosophy recommended by Abangwu Arapa which, according to him, is a value system, an ideology for mass mobilization that transcended all ethnic and parochial identities .. and a socio-political shuttle mechanism that enables development and planning to flow from down up to the upper echelons of socio-economic activities.¹¹ As he further pointed out, Ruralism is firmly based on the bio-economics of our cultural roots and is predicated on ten principles that include self-reliant integrated development from grass root that minimizes the drift to urban centres, self actualization through balances technological development and employment for urbanites and ruralites alike, guaranteed socio-economic and political equilibrium and freedom, and sustained loyalty, discipline and patriotism.¹²

A rural reporter that is guided by all these ideals has started on the right path. These ideals will help him to constantly question the presently Western-dominated definitions of

news and news values 13 with a view to developing new or more appropriate ones for his special brand of reporting and contextually applying those that need no change.

General Strategies for Rural Reporting

Many strategies have been applied and are still being applied in many places for reporting the rural areas. The contemporary rural reporter should be familiar enough with them to be able to advise on them and utilize the best possible ones.

First, there is what can be aptly described as the "touch-and-go" approach to rural reporting which is similar to what Bernard Cohen called "the bushfire reporting syndrome".¹⁴ in the realm of international news reporting. This kind of rural reporting comes in forms that include rushing to cover a rural area only when a major calamity has befallen that community or a major event like a highly entertaining festival is taking place. It also includes giving a particular rural community intensive coverage for a short period in order to highlight its problems, people and issues, and then moving off to another rural community. These kinds of "touch-and-go" journalism do not make for effective, balanced and sustained coverage of the rural areas and are not in line with the philosophy of rural reporting we discussed earlier. They should be discouraged.

There is also the second major approach of depending solely on government information offices to report and write news about the rural areas for the mass media and the government which is still used in many areas. The inadequacy of this approach is obvious. For one thing, government information officers posted to rural areas are usually not many or enough to effectively cover the rural areas. They are also generally ill-equipped and sometimes insufficiently trained and motivated to do good jobs. Injection of excessive government biases or perspectives into their stories can sometimes also reduce the potency of what would have been good rural news reports and analyses. so, we should not just depend on government information officers and their outputs or releases, even though we can use what they put out to supplement or expand the scope of our own media reportorial efforts.

Related to the above is a third approach which involves depending on rural agricultural, health and other change agents for the procurement of rural news reports. The problem with this approach is that these groups of change agents are not trained journalists, even though they may have taken crash-courses on communication. We should not therefore expect them to properly gather, write or package rural news stories in manners that will satisfy the aims and objectives of rural news reporting we had discussed earlier. At best, we should use these change agents and their products as useful additional sources of information for rural news reporting.

Some media organizations also depend entirely on news agencies' reports for their rural reports for their rural reportage.¹⁵ This might be alright if the news agencies concerned are so well-staffed and well-equipped that they can assure effective and sustained coverage of all rural communities and all sector of rural life that include agriculture, health, cultural activities like festivals, rites, rituals, fetishes and their significances or contributions to development.

But the best approach to effective coverage of the rural areas seems to be the establishment and sustenance of a well-trained, well-oriented and well-equipped rural press corps by every media organization on a permanent basis. Effective rural reporting requires that the reporters live with and understand the rural people and the rural environments, interactions, events, problems, and issues they will be reporting and writing about. This will be relatively more expensive than the other approaches, but its pay-off is definitely higher. We have to adopt and encourage it if we are serious about using rural reporting to promote rural development in Africa.

News Gathering Strategies and Sources for Rural Reporting

Initially, the rural reporter faces much more difficulties in the area of news gathering than most of his counter-parts in other sectors of the news business. But with time, if he shows enough interest in the ruralites and their problems or joys, makes and sustains the right contracts, stays in the

rural communities long enough and does much more, he finds the process of rural news gathering a lot easier than before.

His first task is to procure as much background about the ruralites, their lives and environments as possible, develop noticeable empathy for them, participate in their daily activities and so be seen as part of the community.¹⁶ Establishing rapport between him and the opinion leaders, local teachers and priests (including priests for the traditional religions), rulers, leading farmers, leaders in other areas of rural business, government officials and such people will help him very much in this direction. But his sources should not be restricted to these "significant-others", but should include all categories of ordinary rural dwellers whose views and activities are also important in rural news reporting which is largely humanist and people-oriented.

The rural reporter should also work closely with those that might be regarded as other occupational or professional specialists working in the rural areas because they are authentic and regular sources of news. They include health workers, development researchers, agricultural experts, other various rural scientists, technologists, engineers, teachers, archeologists, librarians, anthropologists and other such specialists that focus their efforts in the rural areas. The rural reporter should also not forget the many rites, rituals, festivals, funerals, age-grade and similar rural group activities which he should not only cover objectively but report and analyse their significances or relationships to development. Stories from such sources can inform, entertainment, educate and persuade people. Critical analyses of rituals and fetishes related to such negative and anti-development cultural traits like the 'OSU' caste system in Nigeria, ¹⁷ for instance, may not only educate people enough about it but may lead to policies and actions that may lead to its extinction.

To do well in rural news gathering, the reporter must have to respect and apply the five generally-accepted principles of best-reporting because rural reporting is really specialized kind of beat-reporting. The five principles are that the beat-reporter must be always prepare, alert, persistent, wary and must try to be there at his best when the news break to avoid depending on secondary sources or hear-say journalism"¹⁸. He must also form the habit of using documented, archival or

already published materials to place his rural news stories in proper perspectives and make them more useful to those that will read, view or listen to them.

It is also obvious that the rural reporter needs to use to the maximum the standard journalistic techniques of opinion and information or even panel interviewing. He should also apply the techniques of journalistic observation that include direct, unobtrusive and participant observation. The well known techniques of investigative journalism should also be applied by the rural reporter to procure the "facts behind the facts" or hidden pieces of information that are not easily available. This will help him to uncover criminal, anti-social, and evil practices that may be acting as cogs in the wheel of progress in the rural areas or disrupting peace and order in the rural areas.

The rural news reporter should also learn how to apply the techniques of precision news gathering that involves using social scientific methods to generate secondary or primary data that can be used to make rural news stories more authoritative, reliable, quantitative and verifiable.¹⁹

The above-discussed news gathering techniques should however be seen as merely suggestive because much really depends on the rural reporter's initiative, ability and dedication to duty. These qualities will help him to create his own original techniques and make necessary situational adjustments that may be needed in using the above techniques. For example, a rural reporter may succeed in employing the services of some village teachers, priests and others who are educated enough to produce initial write-ups or reports from which he will prepare his final report. By applying the now popular Three Cs Model of News Gathering 20 - Comb, Call and Cultivate, the rural reporter can assure regular flow of information into his 'news-chest' which he will use as raw materials for writing thorough and effective rural reports that will enable him to be recognised as an authority in this specialised area of news reporting. If he adopts this model, even mundane rural places such as a local palm wine bar can provide him with regular sources of news.

Packaging Strategies for Rural News Reports

It will be assumed in this paper that the rural reporter has already acquired the rudiments of general news writing before

attempting to go into the specialised area of rural news reporting. So, we shall offer in this section only those tips of techniques we consider the rural reporter should add to his news writing arsenal and always bear in mind when he is trying to package for readership, viewership or listenership, the many facts and opinions he had gathered by applying the methods we examined in the previous section of this paper.

It is important for the rural reporter to try hard to write his news mostly from human angles because most of the time rural news events and issues have to do with rural people and their environments. Even when rural news is directly related to things, rather than people, it should still be written as much as possible from a human angle that will bring out how that thing or object relates to people. Rural news audiences are more likely to expose themselves to such stories and relate more to them and such stories tend to be more persuasive or effective.

Furthermore, the rural news writer should be familiar with alternative models of news writing or packaging. This is because he needs a variety of writing approaches to satisfactorily explain the rural world to his audiences. He also needs varieties of approaches not only to reach his variegated audiences, but also to lend sufficient appeal to the multifaceted stories of rural, human and national development that he will be reporting to his rural and urban audiences on a regular basis.

What are these alternative models? In addition to the popular and conventional inverted-pyramid models of news writing, the rural reporter should also use the pyramid or triangle model of news presentation. This is a direct opposite of the inverted pyramid model with the climax or most important part of the story being written in the last paragraph.

The pyramid or triangle form of news presentation may not be very effective for the day-to-day fare of quick "event-centred" news stories that are most common in popular journalism, but it will be most useful for "progress-centred" and unfolding stories of the rural setting or rural development that do not always fit into fast journalistic writing²¹. It also has the added advantage of being closer in form to the story telling format in most African villages or rural settings which begins with "Once upon a time" and ends with a befitting

climax. This will help the rural audiences of rural news to relate to it better.

The rectangular or chronological order of news writing is another form of news presentation that will be quite useful for the packaging of most process-centred rural news stories. Here, the events and facts of the story are presented sequentially or logically, more in their order or occurrence than their order of importance. This model of news writing also enjoys the advantage of resembling the African tradition or format of story-telling popular in our villages.

There is also the Screw Model of news writing which will be very useful for presenting rural news stories. It rejects the inverted-pyramid model idea that the facts or points of every news story is readily rankable in importance, and does not see this as always possible in practice. The Screw Model adopts the top portion of the inverted-pyramid model, but then levels off the other points of the story, thus making room for points or information that are of equal weight. It also makes room for the inclusion of minor details that are clearly identifiable as minor details. These details appear at the tail or sharp point of the screw that stands for the last paragraphs of the story.²²

We also have the literary news writing form as another alternative model of news presentation that the rural reporter should utilise from time to time. It has been around for three centuries, but came to the limelight in the late 1960s and early 1970s during the New Journalism era. It is growing popular currently in many parts of the world.

It has been described as the "objective re-creation of experience realised through subjective means"²³ It combines the techniques of depth reporting and literary writing in trying to paint a picture of reality in a news report. It uses such literary techniques as narration, scene, drama summary, process, point of view, idioms, proverbs, rhythm, irony and other figures of speech, extended dialogue and imagery to make a rural news story alive and appealing to its audiences who can easily relate to it.

Other Forms of Presenting Rural Reports

All we have examined so far in this section refer to the conventional or straight news form of rural reporting. But the

rural reporter should also use other forms for packaging his rural reports for greater effectiveness. These other forms of news packaging allow for greater flexibility and provide more room for creativity. But the form to be used largely depends of the reporter's or editor's purpose or what they want to achieve with a particular news story.

It also depends on such things as suitability of the facts or nature of the story, the anticipated audience, the emphasis and effects desired. For example, if a story has to do with many complex factors, multiple sources, different moods and interpretation of the same facts by sources, the conventional straight news form may not be suitable because such stories usually go beyond mere inventorial presentation of facts to include explanations, consequences, correlation of facts or opinions, analyses and much more. They are the process-centred and knowledge-about stories we discussed earlier.

In this paper we shall take the specialised news packaging form known as *News Analysis* to be one major alternative form that can be used to write many of such news stories that defy the straight or conventional news presentation form as we pointed out above. The *News Analysis* form can effectively and better be used for any rural news story that focuses on the forces at work in any news situation, competing interests, differential points of view, possible explanations or interpretations of the whys and hows of any news situation.

An example is a story that analyses and records the processes involved in the abolition of an anti-social practice (e.g. the Osu caste system or high bride-price) that impedes development and peace in any rural community. The *News Analysis* form can also be used to write news stories that deal with consequential analysis of news situations which focuses on the consequences of a news event or situation for the individuals, groups and institutions in a particular rural community and beyond it. It must never be forgotten however, that news analysis must remain basically news in content, language and purpose. It must be based on news facts and must convey much information, in addition to doing other things of performing other functions. It is very useful in trend reportage and futuristic news stories that examine and report on such issues as a new agricultural invention, educational policy, social reforms, economic programmes or tax reforms, their effects on the rural community or the nation as a whole.²⁴

Another effective form of news presentation or writing in rural reporting is what we shall call the *Promo-News* form. This is a blanket and convenient term that can be used to describe the different promotional or promotion-oriented news stories and tit-bits that the rural reporter could use to promote assorted types of rural communities, community projects, government rural development policies and projects, rural development strategies, slogans and rural mobilization plans. Examples of such *promo-news* exist in some Nigerian newspapers, radio and television that have tried to pay some attention to rural coverage. But they are still far from adequate. For instance, the "Rural Star" which is usually a centre-spread insert in the "Weekly Star" has carried such stories as "Focus this Week: Umuchu Community", "Focus this Week: Amofia Ngbo Community". It has also published such promotional slogans as "Farm to feed well" and "Support your community development project". The "Rural Star" has also published rural development-oriented promo-news tit-bits like the following:²⁵

(1) One Community, One Project

Have you heard that every rural community in the country is expected to initiate and complete one self-help project, however small, this year? Do you know that government will give matching grants only to communities that embark on self-help projects? Have you registered your community development union? Do not be left out. Register your community development union and embark on some self-help NOW!

(2) War Against Guinea Worm!

Do you live in the guinea worm infested area of Anambra State? Are you suffering from guinea worm attack? The Anambra State Government has set up a task force on guinea worm eradication in the State. You can help the government to help you by preventing the spread of the disease. You can do this by:
Reporting all cases of guinea worm attack to the

task force through your nearest health extension worker.

Boiling all drinking water expected not be safe. Promoting all practicable measures to keep infected people from wading into public water sources or "Okpuru".

**PREVENTION IS THE BEST GUARANTEE
AGAINST GUINEA WORM!**

There is also the *Photographic News* form that the rural reporter should use regularly. This is in addition to the standard journalistic requirement that he illustrates his news stories, whenever possible, with photographs because one good photograph tells more stories than a thousand words. Here, a good photograph with a well-written caption or outline is used to convey the news very graphically and with great efficacy. Photographs of major rural historic places, local people, development project sites, farms, festivals, rituals and implements can be used to prepare very effective rural photographic news reports.

The "Rural Star" again offers us very good examples of the use of photographic news forms in rural news reporting. Two case examples from this paper will again be enough to illustrate the point we are making. The first one is taken from their "Ruralites of the Week" photo-news series. It was a beautiful picture of two Gwari women that was accompanied by the following very descriptive caption:

"With tender babies strapped at their backs, with scarcely any dresses to shield them against the blazing sun, with no shoes to protect the feet from the scorching earth, and all this with a full weight on the shoulder (full baskets of firewood), these Gwari women present a typical picture of the agonies of rural life, particularly for the women. Who says our rural women are not hard workers?

Think what you will, these are our ruralites of the week".

The second example of rural photographic news was a photograph of one typical traditional medium of communication (Oramedia) in Nigeria, the wooden gong.

entitled "When the Ikoro Sounds" and accompanied by the following very informative and educative caption"

"When the 'Ikoro' sounds, the entire community stands at alert and awaits further information or directive. The 'Ikoro', a giant wooden gong, is a familiar feature in most communities of Anambra State. Usually installed at a community square, or market, the 'Ikoro' is a very effective means of communication in the rural communities.

Our cameraman recorded this Ikoro at the Umuchu central market, in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State".

One other useful form of rural news packaging is the *Utility* form of news presentation. This is also called the *How-To-Do-It* form of news packaging. Utility news stories are very utilitarian in function and will come in handy in reporting various aspects, activities or processes involved in specific rural development projects. They are useful in public enlightenment campaign reporting, and teaching health, agricultural and environmental or personal cleanliness techniques or practices to the ruralites through indepth reporting. Such news stories should be highly informative and should be presented in lucid and simple styles, so that the non-expert or the semi-literate ruralites can easily understand them. It could be written in the interview format in which the facts of the utility of how-to-do-it story flows from the mouth of an expert. Examples include stories on growing fish in rice fields, how to apply fertilizer, and the 'minisett' method of yam production.

Another form in which the rural report can be presented includes the historical form 26 which is used to write a current news story that is more or less a historical account presented by a news source in a modern version and which has contemporary significance for rural growth, enlightenment, peace or such factors. It also includes the confession and personal experience news forms that can be effectively used to report the unique experiences and intimate revelations of well-known or ordinary rural dwellers from which other ruralites or even non-ruralites can get useful lessons or knowledge that will help them in their own lives.

Related to these two forms is the personality sketch form which in rural news reporting should not be restricted to the chiefs and opinion leaders, but should include ordinary local people like wine-tappers, black-smiths and carpenters who qualify for news attention by outstanding performance, oddity or some other rural unique news values that may not necessarily fit into the news values of conventional journalism. Such stories can again be well-presented in standard interview or dialogue formats.

In addition, rural news can adopt the precision journalism form of presentation when suitable. This is a form that comes in very handy when the rural reporter has an array of secondary and primary data in the form of tables, graphs or other quantitative or statistical modes which he would have to use in packaging his rural news. There are many other forms.²⁷ The ones discussed here should spark off the creative abilities of the rural reporter and lead him to many more imaginative and interesting forms of packaging his rural stories to "catch" his audiences and move them to action.

Finally, in packaging his rural news stories, the rural reporter should make sure that he is familiar with and can satisfy the publication or news presentation requirements of the ultimate channel or medium of publication for his story. The most popular media of rural news reports seem to be the local or rural radio broadcasting systems and the rural, local, provincial or community newspapers and magazines that have a rural focus. A rural reporter who is writing for any of these specific media only has the task of mastering their in-house and general policies, styles, formats, angles and technicalities and can easily write his stories to satisfy them.

But a rural reporter who is a freelancer or who is working for an "all-media medium" like a news agency has the more onerous task of ensuring that his stories are versatile, broad-based or general enough in terms of style, content, language, format, angles and such factors in order to satisfy the peculiar needs of the various media that will use them, maybe with little adjustments by them here and there. All rural reporters should also be familiar with the various types of traditional media of communication (Oramedia), know their characteristics and potentialities, and so be able to transmit their stories through them whenever appropriate.

Summary and Conclusion

We started this paper by stating the importance of rural news reporting and writing for rural and national development and pointing out the inadequate attention it is presently receiving among government and media insiders. We then moved from there to define what we mean by rural news reporting, provided the theoretical framework for the paper by examining the sociology of rural news reporting and offering a philosophical framework that should guide the rural reporter. We proceeded by examining the dominant strategies for rural reporting, rural news gathering strategies and sources, some specialised techniques for packaging rural news reports and the general and specific channels for transmitting rural news reports.

Having done all this, we feel comfortable enough to just conclude by reminding all of us that in the present age of information, machines and factories alone cannot bring about rural or national development, because they need to be operated by human beings who are well-enlightened or informed, motivated, persuaded and properly organised or mobilized through well-planned and executed information policies that include adequate reporting of the rural areas.

There lies the great importance of rural reporting and the rural reporter. Therein lies also the great need for media structures and communication training institutions in Africa to play a more effective new role in the area of ensuring people's participation in development communication. Improved practices and training in the area of rural reporting constitute one effective way through which they can play this role more efficiently.

Notes and References

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15. Tony Momoh must have had this in mind when he stated that the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) was well-placed to give effective coverage of the rural area - Reported in *Daily Star*, May 25, 1987, P.16.
16. See Ikechukwu E. Nwosu, "Mobilizing People's Support for Development: An Analysis of Public Enlightenment Campaigns in Africa", *Africa Media Review*, Vol.1, No.1, 1986, pp.48-65.
17. See Igwebuike Romeo Okeke, *The 'OSU' Concept in Igbo Land*, Enugu: Access Publishers (Nigeria) Limited, 1987.
18. See Brian S. Brooks, et al. *News Reporting and Writing*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980, p.297.
19. See Philip Meyer, *Precision Journalism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979, and Idowu Sobowale, *Scientific Journalism*, Ikeja, Lagos: John West Publishers, 1984.
20. See Ikechukwu E. Nwosu, *A Guide to Christian Writing in Africa*, Enugu: Christian Communication International, 1987, p.69 for detailed explanation of this model and its application to news writing and reporting for rural development.
21. See *Ibid.* p.90.
22. See Edward J. Smith, "Screw Model Has Advantages Over Inverted Pyramid", *Journalism Educator*, Vol.33, No.4,

1979, pp.17-19, for more detailed explanation of this model and diagrams to illustrate it.

23. See R. Thomas Berner, "Literary Newswriting: The Death of an Oxymoron", *Journalism Monograph*, Number 99, October 1986, and Michael Schudson, *What Time Means in a News Story*, New York: Gennett Foundation, 1986.
24. See Everette E. Dennis and Arnold H. Ismach, *Reporting Processes and Practices: Newswriting for Today's Readers*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981, pp.170-171.
25. These slogans and promo-news and photo-news can be found in "Rural Star" sections of *Weekly Star*, 29th March, 1987, 5th April, 1987 and 24th May, 1987. See also Kathy McAdams and John Sweeney's indirect advocacy of what we called Promo-News in this paper in their article "Copywriting and Newswriting Need Similar Skills", *Journalism Educator*, Vol.41, No.4, Winter, 1987.
26. This is one of the forms discussed by Olutunde A. Oladimeji, *Creative News and Features Writing*; Lagos: Directorate of Information, Nigerian Navy, 1985, pp.47-51.
27. There is, for instance, the cultural reporting techniques or forms recommended by Norman H. Sims and David L. Eason, "Reporting Cultures Penetrates Realm of Feelings Drives: Teaching Cultural Reporting", *Journalism Educator*, Vol.36, No.1, 1981, pp.6,7,47 and 48.