

On Mass Communication and Mass Incommunication in Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the prevalence of mass media institutions and 'paraphernalia' in Nigeria, the Nigerian masses still remain marginalized and denied their right to communicate through the conventional mass media. This is due to the structure of mass media ownership and distribution which reflects pro-urban concentration and bias. This article argues that given this reality, one cannot legitimately and accurately talk of 'mass' communication in Nigeria since the media of mass communication is used mainly to talk *to* the masses rather than *with* the masses; neither are they used by the masses themselves to talk with each other. To this extent, therefore, there is a state of 'mass incommunication' in Nigeria, a state which calls for urgent change through democratization of the mass media.

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Communication de Masse et Absence de Communication au Nigéria.

Résumé

En dépit du caractère répandu des institutions des masses médias et leur attirail au Nigéria, la population nigérienne est encore marginalisée et privée de ses droits de communiquer par le truchement des masses médias conventionnels. Cela est dû à la structure des masses médias eu égard à la propriété et la distribution qui reflètent une concentration pro-urbaine et des préjugés. Cet article fait remarquer qu'à la lumière de cette réalité, on ne peut pas parler de façon légitime et précise de la communication de masses au Nigéria, étant donné que les médias pour la communication des masses sont utilisés pour parler aux masses au lieu de dialoguer avec les masses. Ils ne sont pas non plus utilisés par les masses eux-mêmes pour communiquer entre elles. A cet effet il y a au Nigéria une situation de la communication de masses qui nécessite un changement urgent à travers un processus de démocratisation des masses médias.

Introduction

In 1987, Nigeria boasted 23 daily newspapers, 29 weeklies published in English, nine vernacular weeklies, 54 magazines, 29 radio stations, 32 television stations and 25,000 hoardings (Momoh 1987). The latest count has put the number of television sets in the country at 4,900,992 as at the beginning of 1986, with over 20 million potential viewers (Isiekwen 1986).

These are by no means poor showing for a developing country of some 100 million people, especially when it is recalled that the UNESCO standard of 20 television receivers per 1000 population has been more than met. The same point can be made with respect to the radio. In 1976, there were some 3,500,000 radio sets in Nigeria and, in the absence of more current figures, it is reasonable to suppose that the number must have by now doubled. If this is so then we have also surpassed the UNESCO recommended figure of 50 radio sets per 1000 population.

Yet, in spite of this impressive array of mass communication paraphernalia in the country, there is still one sense in which it can be argued that there is really nothing like 'mass' communication in the country; that what actually obtains in its place is 'massive incommunication'. Our thesis is that if communication is to be viewed as a process of sharing and participation by everybody concerned ('communication' and 'communion' being congenetic), and to the extent that mass communication in Nigeria excludes a large majority of Nigerians (some 79% of those living in rural areas (Ndegwa 1985)) from the information-sharing process then it is misdirected, unproductive and, therefore, irrelevant to the development efforts of the country. For real mass communication to occur, it is not enough that there merely be mass media facilities. It is the use to which these facilities are put that determines their significance as instruments of mass participation of the citizens in the decision making processes of their country.

If development is to be regarded as 'a process of moving the whole social system upward so as to enhance the capacity of each member of society to realize his potentials and to effectively cope with the changing circumstances of his life' (Mabogunje 1978), 'if it is essentially . . . concerned with mobilizing communities and society as a whole to engage in the task of self-improvement' (Mabogunje 1978); further, if communication is necessary, not only for all aspects of a person's development, but also for all aspects of a nation's development' (Merril 1974) then it follows that should the mass media of a nation neglect to mobilize the citizens of that nation towards the attainment of this upward mobility, then they (the media) have failed in their most important role. They may accordingly be considered to be guilty of social irresponsibility and criminal apathy.

During the National Communication Policy Conference (February 2-

7, 1987) in Nigeria, several references were made to this serious inadequacy in the country's mass media system, namely, its elitist nature and its obvious lack of interest in the lives of the population. Earlier, a correspondent to *West Africa* magazine (1975) wrote:

What is it about Nigerian press system that makes it ineffective in society? The microphone, if properly used, can accomplish the following tasks in society: wipe out dictatorship; make civil war unnecessary; make military coups unnecessary; enforce social justice and assert equal rights; make democracy more successful in a communal society. The simple code to accomplishing [sic] these tasks is 'give the mass media to the people.' Do the mass of the Nigerian people have access to radio, TV and newspapers to tell their own stories and lay their complaints before the country How can journalism succeed when . . . 70,000,000 people . . . have no place in the country's mass media? Nigeria's problems will remain until we realise that for a country to succeed nobody must be ignored.

The gradiose claims of this correspondent notwithstanding, the point of the citation is that the mass media must be given to the people. The masses must be involved in the system because it is only then that their own voices can be heard and their views taken into consideration when matters affecting their lives are being discussed. It is only by doing this that they will be made to become truly effective, productive and creative members of the Nigerian community. At the moment, the large majority of the nation's people belong to the country's 'traditional zones of silence'; they are alienated and marginalized in the developmental efforts. To reverse the situation, there is need for a shift from the present oligarchical and centralized urban-centric communication structure to one that is more participatory, more flexible and more development-oriented in focus and practice. There is need for a communication system that is pressed to the service of all Nigerians, that is more socially responsible and aware, or a 'communication engagée' — one in which all people are involved and have a stake as subjects.

Merrill (1974) contends that when one is talking about an underdeveloped society, like the Nigerian one, there is, strictly speaking, nothing like mass media. He argues that the power structure (the elite) of such a society do not often care for, and do not in fact want a mass media system. This is how he has put the case:

True 'mass media' in this earliest stage are non-existent; only specialized or elite media are to be found. No mass media exist mainly because there is no mass literate audience; related to this is the fact that there is a kind of tribal isolationism, poor transportation and communication facilities, and low economic levels. At any rate, media cannot really communicate *with* (or even to) the masses of the people. What is present at this stage of national development are elite lines of communication: from elite to elite within the power structure. So it can be reasonably said that the traditional society has *elite* media, not mass media.

I think it would be superfluous to make further comments on a matter that has been so clearly expressed. Thus Merrill reinforces our point that there is in Nigeria at the moment really no mass communication

other than in the purely technological, technical sense. More importantly, this is what the people in authority perceive and want: the mass of the people are not quite ready yet for communication; they would not know what to do with it if they got it.

Print Media

There are, as we noted earlier, some 115 newspapers in Nigeria at the moment — dailies, weeklies and magazines. Of these only nine are published in indigenous languages; the remaining 106 being in English. Perhaps, this is expected in a situation like ours in which English is the official language. This is an unfortunate situation for Nigeria where at least three indigenous languages easily account for at least 30 million speakers. It is indefensible that only nine papers — and these, weeklies — are published in native languages while the rest are produced in English with not much more than between five to ten million speakers. Furthermore, most of the English language newspapers are published in urban centres and, predominantly in Lagos, the capital city. The justification for this situation, is presumably that newspaper readers are concentrated in the cities and are not to be found in the rural areas because of widespread illiteracy.

A careful analysis of the 'competence level' of those papers published in the favoured language (English) reveals that not a few of the articles, the features and the editorials — especially the latter — are written in the kind of language that seems deliberately designed to confuse and frustrate the average Nigerian reader. The Nigerian newspaper audience is mixed-brow, that is, not like those of a country like Great Britain where the so-called 'quality' papers exist side by side with relatively low-brow ones, each with their specific audiences; the Nigerian audience is a motley mixture. Newspapers in Nigeria try to cater to different classes of readers in one single issue. This should have dictated that the language of the papers be pitched at such a level that is accessible not only to the few relatively highly educated readers but also to the majority of the newspaper readers whose competence in English is not so high. One would, therefore, have expected our journalists to profit from the advice of Daniel Defoe (in Ashe 1972) who said that:

If any man was to ask me what I would suppose to be a perfect style of language, I would answer: that in which a man speaking to 500 people of all common and various capacities, idiots or lunatics excepted, should be understood by them all.

Arthur Christiansen (quoted in Ashe 1972) put the same point thus:

What is a bad story? It is a story that cannot be absorbed at the first time of reading. It is a story that has to be read two or three times to be comprehended. And a good story can be turned into a bad story by just one obscure sentence.

Defoe and Christiansen are saying that simplicity of language is a *sine*

qua non of a mass circulation paper if its intention is to educate, inform and entertain. But how do Nigerian papers fare in this regard?

Research suggests that the language of our papers is by and large too sophisticated to effectively communicate with the average Nigerian reader. Odejide (1980) and Sanni (1985) have conducted readability studies on the language of Nigerian editorials and their conclusion has been unambivalent: that editorials, which should normally be pieces of persuasive, mobilizational discourse are generally pitched at a level far beyond the competence of the average Nigerian West African School Certificate holder. Sanni found, for instance, that the editorials of the *Guardian* and *Daily Times* newspapers are written at a competence level that most ordinary readers would find frustrating. 80 per cent of the *Guardian* editorials evaluated fall at the university graduate's competence level while the remaining 20 per cent could only be understood by undergraduates. Similarly, 30 per cent of the *Daily Times* pieces could only be made much of by graduates, 50 per cent by undergraduates while only 20 per cent would be expected to be understood by senior secondary school pupils.

It is important to stress here that the Flesch Readability test used for these evaluations was in fact designed for an EL situation (Bobrow 1974). Hence, the fact that it is only an American college (university) graduate who would be in a position to understand 8 out of 10 of the editorials from the *Guardian*, for example, does not mean that the average Nigerian graduate, for whom English is at best a second language, would perform equally well. It is common knowledge that the language ability of our present generation of university graduates is not the highest. From the foregoing, it appears that Nigerian newspapers, from whichever angle one wants to look at the issue, do not appear to be publishing for the masses of the people.

In Frank Ugbajah's (1985) 'structure of a typical African country', there are three clearly discernible classes of people: the urbanites, the slumites and the ruralities, comprised respectively, of 5, 25 and 75 per cent of the population. According to him, it is the tiny minority of urbanites — politicians, academics, white-collar workers, civil servants, managers, sinecure holders, military/police top brass, business executives, expatriates, the orthodox clergy, members of the bench and bar — that monopolize, for their own benefit, most of the nation's natural resources and other facilities including, of course, communication. In accordance with this model, Nigeria's print media, to judge from their geographical deployment, their intended audience and the language of their expression, really belong to the country's urbanities. It is elite communication *par excellence*, both in conception and practice. Little wonder, then, that there is no Nigerian newspaper in existence with a circulation figure of up to half a million. This is dismal performance in a country of over 100 million people.

Broadcast Media

When we turn to the broadcast media (radio and television), we find much the same situation: there appears to be no conscious and sustained attempt to communicate with the masses. This is a less excusable situation than in the print media sector which, being partly government, and partly privately owned, could be partially absolved of the charge of insensitivity to the needs of the people; ownership does determine, to a large extent, the operations of a newspaper. There is no such defence for our broadcast media as all of them (32 television stations and 29 radio stations) are owned by government which should mean that they would be engaged purposively and unambiguously in the task of mobilizing the rural population for development purposes.

Radio Broadcasting

On its inception on 16 June, 1952, the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, (as it was then known) had nine clearly stated objectives as guidelines for its operations. For the purpose of this paper, only two are reviewed, namely: (1) 'to provide opportunities for the free, enlightened and responsible discussion of important issues, and to provide a two-way contact between the public and those in authority; (2) to provide special broadcasting services in the field of education, and in all other areas where the national policy calls for special action.

We suggested earlier that there are enough radio sets in Nigeria to meet UNESCO's minimum standard for a developing country. Availability of radio sets is therefore no serious problem, especially if we resist the temptation to ask: how many of the total are owned by people in the rural areas? What is at issue is: what end is radio broadcasting really being made to serve in the light of the two objectives stated above. More specifically, the questions that arise are: (1) to what extent, if at all, has radio broadcasting achieved a two-way communication between the public and those in authority; and (2) to what extent, if at all, have the potentials of radio been harnessed for the education of the people to help them towards self-awareness and consequent uplifting of their station in life? In other words, to what extent has radio broadcasting been engaged in development communication?

A UNESCO (1965) report on India's Rural Radio Forum is illuminating on this point:

In the developing countries, the greater part of the people live on the land, are frequently isolated by illiteracy and lack of transport. Effective communication with rural people and their active participation in the life of their country are essential for developing society. Radio broadcasting, when skilfully used, has proved to be the most effective medium of communication with those far flung populations.

William Hachten (1971) similarly observes, while comparing the

development of the transistor radio in its influence and potentials to that of Gutenberg's invention of the movable type in 15th century Europe, that the transistor 'is letting in the world to hundreds of millions still isolated by geography, poverty and exploitation.'

The radio, then, if skilfully used, could become a very effective means of reaching the people, wherever they may be, and establishing the two-way contact between the public and those in authority that is so essential for grass-roots involvement in the nation's efforts at development. In the Nigerian situation, however, such creative use of the radio is not in evidence at the moment. Nobody, for example, who listens regularly to the programmes aired on our radio can fail to be struck by their pervasive, unabashed urban-centredness. Programmes that are designed specifically for the rural population, focussing on their problems and aspirations as Nigerians, as farmers, as artisans, as petty traders are scarce and tentative. They are produced and presented by technocrats with urban perspectives and their own ideas of what the people need to know. There is, in other words, a clear patron-client relationship between the producers and the consumers of the programmes.

While it cannot be disputed that most of the programmes are endogenous, they are, quite often, only so in name. The producers, graduates of our universities' and polytechnics' mass communications departments, or of similar institutions abroad, are really not equipped to handle rural mass media work. Consequently, with the best intentions in the world, the programmes designed for the rural area are only rural in form but urban in soul and tone. Yet, as Jose Luis Cobaco, Mozambican Minister for Transport and Communications, was reported to have observed in an interview sometimes in 1978: 'Journalists must maintain close contact with the people; they must know the needs of the people, and must inform in a simple, clear language about the reality of the people' (in Hamelink 1983). The present writer has, for example, often wondered how many non-English-speaking Yoruba listeners are really able to make much of our Yoruba newscasts. So closely related to English in idiom and syntax do they seem that the impression created is that they are first written as English news before being translated, often unsuccessfully, into Yoruba. Indeed, the seeming alacrity with which many a Yoruba newscaster, having laboured through the Yoruba news, re-enters the familiar English language ground is often amusing — and tragic. The programmes in English are often presented in an English accent so sinister and 'sophisticated' as to frustrate easy intelligibility for many an uninitiated listener.

Television Broadcasting

Television broadcasting is by its very nature, directed at the well-to-do of society. In spite of the impressive five million receivers we are alleged to

be owning in the country, television is essentially 'useful only for a small urban elite; it places a priority on social services for this small elite instead of on the masses of rural peasants, who should receive the higher priority in national development' (Hamelink 1983). Commenting on the situation in Nigeria, Hamelink (1983) says: 'Nigeria announces a Western color television system when the cost of a black and white set would absorb the annual income of an average farmer'. In present-day Nigeria, one would hardly be exaggerating to suggest that the cost of a colour television would probably absorb the annual income of a university graduate — when he is fortunate, that is, to earn any income at all.

Television, then, is shamelessly elitist and the programmes are designed mainly for the urban people who reside, in any case, in those places where the power to run the receiver is available. There is no doubt, of course, as to television's great potentials as an educational medium — its audio-visual qualities make this so — but its cost-effectiveness as such a medium, because of its limited coverage, is questionable. One thing that is beyond doubt, however, is that it cannot hope to compete with the radio in ability to reach the masses in the rural areas. To that extent, therefore, we can dismiss television as a possible agent of social mobilization in the country for a long time to come.

In addition to the problem of mass inaccessibility to the medium, as a result of the demands of near round-the-clock transmission which is the model in the West where it originates, television in Nigeria has to feature an enormous amount of imported programmes designed in and produced for a completely different cultural environment from our own. The predictable consequence is that these programmes bear very slender relevance to the realities of our situation. Inadequate funding (many of the television stations are now required to be self-sustaining) coupled with the dearth of trained personnel, ensures that very few locally produced indigenous programmes are available for telecasting. Consequently, in order to continue to exist, television houses eagerly seek advertising revenues from whatever sources which, not infrequently, happen to be multinational sources whose interests may not always coincide with those of the nation.

The multinationals are in the country to promote their products and their orientation is, as is to be expected, clearly consumerist. The advertisements they sponsor, thus, are intended to encourage the kind of consumerism, which may be quite welcome in the already industrialized nations where the advertisements are packaged but completely unwholesome in an underdeveloped society such as ours. The national economy cannot just support the kind of consumption patterns that such advertisements try to stimulate.

According to Herbert Schiller (1969), one observer reported as follows regarding the television situation in Nigeria:

I did a study in Nigeria a couple of years ago. During that time I watched Nigerian television. Do you know that most of the prime hours of programming time on Nigerian television was made up of filmed television shows from the United States, many of them of a soap opera variety? . . . The Nigerians apparently watched because there was nothing else to watch. But of all the sheer waste of programme time in a country faced with very grave problems as we see today, it just seems atrocious that this medium with the potential of television was utilized in that way. The reason that it is utilized in that way is that it is cheaper for the Nigerian television networks to buy American films than produce their own or get other types of material.

Although the situation described is, perhaps, no longer the same (it is likely, for instance, that sponsored religious programmes have superseded some of the American soap operas) the observations, in essence, are as valid today as they were twenty-two years ago when they were made. Television is still not being used in Nigeria to tackle the nation's development problems; it is still largely concerned with trivia, and is still completely irrelevant to the large majority of the country's population. It is for such reasons as have been discussed above that Tanzania, perhaps more realistic, has resisted the temptation to introduce television.

The remaining part of the discussion will be devoted to how the situation can be redressed such that Nigerian mass communications may no longer continue to ex-communicate the masses of the people. We start, again, with the print media: how can these be taken to the people?

Some Directions for Change

1. The Print Media

To ensure that our newspapers are true mass media of information, a serious re-evaluation of their content and style of presentation should be undertaken. There is certainly a need for more development-oriented features and news stories that are targetted to the general audience. More articles on such topics as family planning, health, improved agricultural practices, education and such other matters as concern large sections of the population should be regular features in our newspapers. There should be a purposeful attempt to domesticate our journalism practice rather than ape, slavishly, the 'journalism of exception' that constitutes, in essence, the basis of our received journalistic practice.

The Western countries which now serve as models for our journalism are so developed that their newspaper audience can, perhaps, only find new titillations in a journalism that is mostly concerned with the *outré*, the unusual. The realities of our own situation demand that we go beyond this to fashion out a new concept of newsworthiness. What is news in Britain or America need not automatically be so in Nigeria. The situations are completely unlike.

Also, the language of the newspapers published in English will need to

be made more accessible to the general reader. As of now, one needs to be more than functionally literate to be able to read our newspapers with profit, with the result that such scanty information as is directed at the average reader, being often couched in a language that is not easily intelligible, is hardly efficiently processed by the intended audience. The preference should, therefore, be for short, simple sentences, two-syllable words and little or no technical vocabulary, all of which should combine to enhance the readability of the newspapers. It would be well, still talking about newspaper language, to take the following admonition of David Linton's (1981) to heart when he advised:

We would all communicate far better if we stopped trying to impress each other with our command of the English vocabulary . . . Remember two million adults in Britain can't read. Only 40 per cent understand what is meant by 'vulnerable'; only 11% know what a 'decade' is; 13% understand 'chronological', 40% 'autonomous', and if you described something as 'empirical', 90% of your population will have no idea what you're talking about.

If such a situation as this obtains in Britain which is more literate and where English is the mother tongue, then the need for our writers to use the simplest possible words should be considered overriding since the average Nigerian's competence in English can by no means match his counterpart's in Britain.

More important is the need to establish community-based, vernacular newspapers in the country. These papers should not be 'public relations', philanthropic affairs such as the five or so now available in some states but genuine, community-inspired ones, planned and thought through by the community in which each is to be based. As far as one can tell, there is no such paper in the country at the moment and yet the potentials of a community/rural press for developmental efforts are difficult to overestimate.

One can suggest at least four reasons why the establishment of community/rural papers should be considered a wise national investment. First, such a press would encourage effective dialogue, and open the way for the much desired two-way contact between the people, the government and development agents. In other words, participation of rural people in the nation's affairs would be given a boost.

Second, socio-economic welfare at the grassroots level would be promoted. Access to important development communication would be facilitated since the information would be disseminated in a familiar language which should greatly increase the interest level and the depth of understanding of the people.

Thirdly, a rural press, should provide excellent support for adult literacy programmes since newspapers produced in their local language will ensure that new literates do not relapse into illiteracy simply because no cheap reading materials are available. Finally, such a press cannot but foster in the people a feeling of belonging, of being, at long last, part of

the nation, a feeling which should motivate them towards self-reliant tasks for the development of themselves and, by extension, that of the nation.

The major constraint apart from the ever present one of money would be that of widespread illiteracy, especially in the rural areas; but this should not be considered an insurmountable obstacle. With the present literacy rate in the country, it should be considered feasible even now to embark on rural newspaper projects at small, pilot levels, especially in those areas of the country where the illiteracy problem may not necessarily be as daunting as in some other areas. It might be reasonable, for example, to consider starting such pilot projects in certain parts of the old Western Region where, as a result of relatively long-standing free primary education programme, the level of adult literacy is not entirely insignificant. When this has been tried and found successful, then the planning, the logistics, the methodology and experience can be built on, shared, and used in other regions (McLellan 1987).

One could even argue that the newly established Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures should consider the establishment of rural newspapers as in perfect consonance with its brief and its quite worthwhile efforts to open up the rural areas in a bid to integrate these sections of the country into the mainstream of national life. After food and road, a rural press should be considered not a completely irrelevant infrastructure.

2. Broadcast Media

The broadcast media have been shown to be as unhelpful in the nation's developmental efforts as their print counterpart. Radio programming, specifically, could be more creative and innovative than is the case at present by trying as much as possible to involve the target audience in its conception, planning and even execution. Programmes that are dreamt up by some highly-placed producer in the comfort of his studio are often found to be quite irrelevant to the realities of the situation they seek to be describing and are consequently met with apathy and rejection.

Nigerian radio is not quite ready yet for commercial broadcasting which is the practice at the moment. If radio stations are required to be self-financing, as they are now, then nobody can blame them if they jettison more productive, social communication programmes for more disinterested but money-yielding sponsored programmes of a less uplifting nature. Nowadays, for instance, prime slots seem to be reserved for the inevitable religious broadcasts with which one is bombarded from station to station from morning to night. Government should therefore re-examine its stance on this matter and consider radio broadcasting as an essential social service to be paid for by the tax payers, but still essential nevertheless.

One could, in addition, make a case for a decentralized and deprofessionalized rural radio for the country such as the Sri Lankan Machaweli Community Radio, the Senegalese Radio Rurale, the Kenyan Rural Radio*, to cite just three of several such projects already embarked upon in developing countries.

Rural radio broadcasting encourages full participation of the audience in its programming and ensures that such cultural variables as the following are taken into consideration in programme planning: 'the attitude of the target audience, the values they hold, group norms which they hold, their form of interpersonal communication, and their belief system' (Schramm 1973). It is when the people are involved in this way that one can truly say that the radio, not just a radio set, belongs to the people. Such a project could be started, as in the case of the rural newspaper discussed earlier as small pilot schemes located this time in selected parts of the north of the country since the radio can dispense with literacy. Such a project should be able to find comfortable accommodation in the portfolio of the Directorate of Food, Roads and Infrastructures.

Television is an elite medium, urban-based and, therefore, at the moment of little or no value as a medium of mass communication. It is still possible, in spite of these obvious shortcomings of the medium to make certain suggestions which, if adopted, may result in its being less relevant to society's goal as time goes on. There should be more local programming of a development nature and this can be in the form of short, inexpensively produced features on certain important development activities undertaken in the country.

If each of the 32 television stations identified one such activity and did a feature or a documentary on it, then there would be some 32 Nigeria-originated programmes for possible swapping among the stations. There should, furthermore, be no crying need for the near round-the-clock transmission which, as is being attempted now, cannot but result in massive importation of foreign programmes which are so willingly dumped on us. Six meaningful hours of intelligent television should be considered more productive and more rewarding than eighteen hours of trivia, especially imported trivia. Finally, the provision of community viewing centres, as is being attempted already in some states in the country, should be considered an important way of exploiting television's potentials to serve more than urban needs. Rural viewing stations have proved to be very successful ventures in a country like Sudan, for example.

'Oramedia'

These 'informal transference' media (Fred Omu's phrase) include family

*This does not exist any more (Editor).

visiting, marriage and circumcision feasts, town and village festivals, harvests, markets — all of them potent channels of communication with the rural masses. Other such channels are the town criers, talking drums, village squares, schools, churches and mosques, which are all avenues for information dissemination in rural communities. All these must be used alongside the modern mass media in view of the fact that:

...the press and radio can have profound influence in changing the ways of people only if they are fully supported by the informal, social channels of communication which are intimately related to basic social processes. Rapid national development calls for the coordinated and reinforcing use of both the impersonal mass media and the more personal, face-to-face pattern of social communication (Quoted in Merrill 1974:47).

Conclusion

It is mostly in a technical sense that one can really describe as 'mass' such communication as exists in Nigeria at the moment. In a deeper, more fundamental sense, what really exists is massive incommunication with the generality of the people. The newspapers, radio and, particularly, television are as of now urban-based and meant to cater for the elite of the population. There is differential access to these media and such attention as is paid to the masses of the people is extremely slender and token.

Suggestions for possible ways of redressing the unwholesome situation that obtains today have been made. There is need for a serious rethinking of our entire communication philosophy such that the 80 per cent of the population that is now marginally served by the media are brought more prominently into the communication picture by encouraging and facilitating their participation in the whole process. These traditional zones of silence (to borrow Fidel Castro's phrase) must be given the voices to sing their own songs and we must be prepared to listen to them. It is only by doing this, by engaging in communication sharing and participation that the present state of mass communications (concerned with impressive assemblage of communication hardware in the urban centres) will metamorphose into meaningful mass communication — the equitable participation of all citizens in the information gathering, dissemination and consumption process. It is not until then that the present mass incommunication will become true mass communication.

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