

De-mystifying the Development Process: The Role of Communication in Community Participation for Sustainable Development

By E. O. Soola

Abstract

This paper attempts to simplify and explain the development process. It canvasses a micro, incremental Community Participation (CP) and Basic Needs Approach (BNA) to achieving and sustaining improved living conditions for the underprivileged and marginalised socio-economic groups in developing economies. Community participation is operationalised as a people-centred, skill-enhancing and empowerment device. It seeks to enlist the active involvement and influential participation of intended beneficiaries of development programmes in needs identification, prioritisation, project initiation, financing, execution, monitoring, evaluation, and consequent sustainability. The paper argues that, community participation as an alternative approach to development, requires alternative communication types, channels and strategies in the pursuit, actualisation and sustainability of development objectives. It differentiates between communicational improvement and operational communication, appraises the potentials and limitations of communication in development and suggests the use of participatory, community-based, small-group media for effective community participation and sustainable development.

Dr E. O. Soola is Head of Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

La Dé-mystification du Processus de Développement: Le Rôle de la Communication dans l'Incitation de la Communauté à Participer plus Activement au Développement Sostenable

Par E. O. Soola

Résumé

Cette communication cherche à simplifier et expliquer le processus du développement. Elle est centrée sur une micro-société, l'amélioration de la participation de la communauté (PC), et sur l'amélioration des besoins fondamentaux (ABF) comme moyen de réaliser et soutenir le bien-être des groupes socio-économiques, qui sont défavorisés et marginalisés dans les pays en voie de développement. On favorise la participation de la Communauté concernée, afin de mieux identifier les besoins et les priorités, ainsi que pour déterminer le meilleur moment de l'initiation, où trouver les moyens financiers, la mise en exécution, une évaluation efficace et constante, ainsi que pour déterminer les possibilités d'une soutenabilité éventuelle. Selon cet exposé, la participation de la communauté au développement exige des moyens de communication, des canaux ainsi que des stratégies alternatifs, dans la poursuite, l'actualisation et la soutenabilité des objectifs. L'auteur essaye de distinguer le terme de "l'amélioration de la communication" de celui de "la communication opérationnelle", sans pour autant négliger les handicaps de cette approche, comme outil de développement sostenible.

Dr. E.O. Soola est le Chef du Département de la Communication et des Arts du Langage, l'Université d'Ibadan, Nigéria.

Introduction

The great expectations that heralded the development initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s, and the consequent widespread disillusionment that its failure generated, led in the 1970s, to a broadened, and more contextually relevant re-thinking of the development process. Prior to the 1970s, development was narrowly conceived in purely growth terms, with rise in per capita income as its indicator. Little consideration was given to the possibility of the neutralising effect of a corresponding rise in misery index, occasioned by inequity in the distribution of development benefits.

The inadequacies of growth-oriented development require that our searchlight for true development be focussed on human beings as the subjects rather than the objects of development. This emerging alternative is a people-oriented, human well-being, basic needs approach (BNA) to development. This development calculus, aimed at improved conditions of living for the individual and the community at large, calls for popular or community participation in the development process. Though not a new idea, popular or community participation is both a prerequisite to, and catalyst for, sustainable socio-economic development and general societal well-being.

The emerging alternative to the growth-oriented development is in consonance with the view of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (Aina and Salau: 1992), that development be made "equitable and socially responsive, recognising the extensive nature of poverty, deprivation and inequality between and within nations, classes and communities." It is also in consonant with Koinyan's view (1991:1) that "true development must mean the development of man - the unfolding realisation of his creative potential, enabling him to improve his material conditions of living through the use of resources available to him."

The Basic Needs Approach (BNA) to development as espoused by the ILO Geneva World Employment Conference of June, 1976

(Hughes, 1985) ascribes a definitive and significant role to community participation in the pursuit, attainment and sustenance of development. Development, according to the conference, should be manifested in significant improvement in the living conditions of the marginalised poor and underprivileged people, particularly in developing countries. Specifically, the BNA to development under-scores the critical significance of the active involvement and participation of the largely neglected, often alienated, people in the processes of felt and expressed needs identification and prioritisation, mobilisation and utilisation of resources as well as the equitable distribution of the resultant development benefits.

Justification for Community Participation

Before going on to describe the character of community or people participation, it is desirable to provide a justification for community participation in the development process:

- Designed to take advantage of rather than assault community, kinship and cultural ties, community participation enables development to be rooted in the strength, traditions, beliefs and values of a given community (its social organisations, indigenous skills, technology, hopes and aspirations). This helps to ensure an enduring culture of sustainable development.
- Community participation is an empowerment device aimed at equipping beneficiary communities with the capacity to identify, define, analyse and proffer solutions to their own problems, and thus exercise control over their environment.
- As a means of psychological satisfaction and motivation, community participation encourages direct active involvement and influential participation of the community in the

development process. This helps to create an enabling environment for local and external human and material resources to be tapped, pooled and mobilised for development purposes. In addition, as Lisk (1985) has noted, this approach also enables a community to acquire non-material needs related to intangibles of well-being such as social justice, basic human rights and related freedoms.

- Community participation encourages cost-sharing among beneficiaries of development, the district or central administrative authorities and aid agencies. This is of critical significance in these days of widespread economic downturn, crippling foreign and domestic debts, and consequent stringent economic measures with their attendant toll on budgetary allocations to the social sector. It helps to spread the burden of development and foster a sense of communal ownership and sustainability.
- Direct community involvement in influencing the decision-making process about the socio-economic development and general well-being of the community makes development programmes better understood, accepted, supported, valued and sustained.
- Community participation serves to ensure that the benefits accruing from community development efforts are equitably distributed to reach the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged socio-economic groups. This helps to avoid the bane and 'booby trap' of the growth oriented development, which Freedman (1985) has noted, left unspecified and untackled, the problem of inequality and poverty.
- The involvement and participation of beneficiaries of development provides a training ground for, and helps to build, a pool of enlightened participatory citizenry as well as

evolve a culture of self-reliance.

- Works-related community participation provides a means of combating the menace of unemployment and under-employment, particularly among young school leavers in the community.
- The micro incremental approach of community participation to development helps to break down the myth of massiveness and capital intensiveness of national development planning, which often uses high-flown, statistically-loaded, technical language beyond the linguistic reach of non-development experts.

The Character of Community Participation

Community, people or citizen participation, no matter its nomenclature, is aimed at creating an enabling environment for communities to explore and exploit their local human and material resources to improve their socio-economic conditions and general well-being. As Freedman (1985) has observed, however, its conception, interpretation and actualisation often vary from one geo-political, economic and cultural context to another.

In some contexts, community participation is an extension of politics of tokenism as community members are merely co-opted into the formal, often centralised decision-making process to fulfil, as it were, "all righteousness". In such contexts, decisions on development initiatives, resource allocation and programme execution rests largely with the central authorities.

In others, elected representatives, who may themselves be removed from the realities of the day to day experiences of the broad mass of the people, are handpicked to serve as the mouthpiece of the deprived and disadvantaged people. Similarly, popular people organisations at the local level may be accorded autonomous decision-making status without the

material wherewithal for the actualisation of community development objectives.

In yet other contexts, community participation may take the form of cooperation between bureaucrat policy-makers on the one hand, and beneficiaries of development on the other, without any discernible ceding of power of decision-making and influence to the community.

Finally, community participation may be genuinely people-centred, with the community members being the initiators and executors of development programmes, as well as the distributors and direct beneficiaries of the development benefits accruing therefrom, with only a token involvement of central authorities.

The Role of an Institutional Framework

The essence of an institutional framework for community participation in the development process is to decentralise and democratise the development process. If indeed, the goad of community participation is to liberalise the decision-making process and encourage the broad mass of the deprived and underprivileged process, the need for institutional re-structuring and attitudinal re-conditioning can hardly be overstressed.

The concept of decentralised administrative structure, as Lisk (1985) notes, is rooted in the thesis that the generation and perpetuation of poverty and inequality is, among other factors, the direct result of the dysfunctional nature of the concentration in, and monopoly of, productive resources by centralised authorities. Such a structure serves to marginalise the interest of the broad mass of intended beneficiaries of development by de-emphasising the significance of their decision and influence in the development process.

A decentralised institutional structure should, hopefully, enable local level participating institutions to exercise direct influence over the sourcing, allocation and use of productive resources in order to ensure that the basic needs of the deprived

socio-economic groups are not only met, but also that the ultimate goal of narrowing the widening gap of poverty and inequality is attained.

It is equally important, however, to appreciate the point that decentralisation of authority as an essentially human phenomenon, particularly as it assails the status quo, diminishing the power of the central authorities while vesting more power in the erstwhile "silenced mass" of deprived people, is never an easy exercise.

Understandably, desirable as institutional re-structuring may be (Majeres, 1985), attempts at decentralisation of institutional structures have hardly ever been conflict-free. Chinese communes and Pakistani agrarian reforms are replete with instances of conflict. Nor is conflict itself necessarily a negative phenomenon, particularly as it may serve to provide better insight into the process of change.

Closer home, one of the most successful attempts at institutional re-structuring for community participation is the Tanzanian "villagisation" scheme. Spurred by creative political ideology, and meticulously prosecuted with patriotic zeal, the Tanzanian 5-tier decentralised institutional structure held great promise for true and result-oriented community participation.

The Tanzanian institutional arrangements for community participation, according to Freedman (1985), include Workers Organisation, acronymed as JUWATA; the Women's Organisation (UWT); the Youth Organisation (VIJANA); the Parents' Organisation (WAZAZI) and the Union of Cooperative Societies (WASHIRIK); all institutionally linked with the party, and reaching down to the village level.

Freedman describes the main features of the system as a series of administrative as well as direct and indirect representational links that run from the village up through district and regional levels in the Prime Minister's Office, which serves as the coordinating centre for regional programmes. This is further linked to an intricate web of relationships between government administration and the country's single party, the CCM, result-

ing in independent and overlapping responsibilities.

The bane of the Tanzanian decentralisation of institutional structure, apart from the shortfall in resource inputs such as skilled manpower, financial and physical resources, information and leadership, is the influence of the technocrats which continued to loom large. This resulted in more 'top-down' control, a factor that negated the original intention and philosophy of decentralisation.

The Kenyan harambee system of community participation, according to Oyugi (1985:148), is consistent with the emerging perspective to development: that poverty and shortfalls from basic needs are more discernible at the local level and are closely related to the lack of effective participation of all concerned in the development process. In pursuit of the objectives of enhanced community participation, the Kenyan administrative decision-making power was delegated by the central authorities to the civil bureaucracy (Oyugi, 1985).

There is little doubt that bureaucratic decentralisation is inconsistent with community participation as key decision-making is almost the exclusive preserve of the bureaucracy. Not being broad-based, bureaucratic decision-making inevitably limits community involvement and participation in the development process.

The recent Nigerian experiment at community participation in spite of its age-long origin and initial promise, turned out to be a colossal failure. Doomed as it were from the beginning for its non-involvement of the intended beneficiaries, it was ill-conceived and poorly executed.

Although Nigeria recognises the pivotal role of community participation in grassroots development, her implementation of community development programmes leaves much to be desired. The country's 1976 Local Government reform was based on the need to stabilize and rationalize government at the local level which entails the decentralization of some functions of state governments to local levels in order to harness local resources for rapid development and ensure grassroots participation in our

developement process.

However, local government activities appeared to have been weakened by state government control. And though the Federal Government of Nigeria took immediate steps to redress this development by increasing the number of the local governments, and thus bringing them closer to the people by granting them greater political autonomy, and by enhancing their financial capability, all these gains were obliterated by a near total lack of accountability on the part of local government operators.

Another step taken by government to actualise community development was the creation in 1986 of the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI). DFRRI was designed to catalyse desired rural transformation by providing feeder roads, potable water supply, improved agricultural production and rural electrification, among others. However, DFRRI carried out its needs identification, prioritisation, project design, financing and even the contracting for project execution, first from Lagos, then later from Abuja, for the several thousands of communities in Nigeria.

In spite of the heterogeneity of these communities and the diversity of their needs, the directorate applied a common denominator to determine such needs. The projects were completely put in place, and were then ostensibly handed over to beneficiary communities for sustainability. Many of them were stage-managed to suite elaborate media-event commissioning and never functioned one day after.

Understandably, the communities never saw the projects as their own. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fatality rate of DFRRI's water, roads, rural electrification and food projects is in the neighbourhood of 90%. It could not have been otherwise, for there was no decentralised institutional structure for involving the intended beneficiaries in the decision-making process on project planning, execution and sustainability.

The above attempt to examine the role of institutional framework in community participation is not intended to suggest that the formal sector is irrelevant in the emerging development

process. On the contrary, both the formal and informal sectors may be made to function in a symbiotic relationship. The formal sector or the central authorities should, in addition to providing resource inputs such as funds, technical and managerial know-how, act only in an advisory capacity to the informal local authorities responsible for mass mobilisation for popular participation. The ultimate influence and decision-making on community participation should rest with the direct beneficiaries of development benefits - the local communities.

The point being stressed here, as Martin de Graaf (Quarmyne, 1990:1) has aptly noted, is that "development is people, and their strengths to define, defend and improve their lives". According to Quarmyne (1990:4), one of the myths that need be 'exploded' in the pursuit of development objectives is that "development does not happen to people through a benevolent confluence of forces. Development is achieved by people through the discovery and exercise of their own powers."

The Role of Traditional and Social-Cultural Organisations

Local communities and people at the grassroots are faithful custodians of community culture and traditions. They are closely linked in communal organisations and affinities such as family unit, friendship and neighbourhood networks; kinship and clanship groups, age grades, development unions, trade and professional associations; as well as rural cooperatives, women associations, youth organisations, craft and artisan guilds and religious affiliations.

As Hughes (1985) has observed, in their favour are their local origins and enshrined patterns of behaviour. These networks of relationships provide a cohesive force not only to galvanise the people into development-oriented action, but also to act as checks and balances in minimising abuse of leadership.

Some observations on how a few of these groups can be harnessed for development purposes are instructive here. Youths constitute a veritable source of energy and vitality coupled with

high expectations. Unfortunately, particularly in most developing countries, they also constitute the bulk of the unemployed segment of the population. Community works-oriented popular participation for water supply schemes, access road construction, recreational, health and educational infrastructural development projects provide avenues for enlisting willing and vibrant youths in community participation for token financial rewards.

The Nigerian National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), the Boys Scout and similar voluntary organisations are often used for this purpose. Unless youthful energy and zeal, particularly of the unemployed, are so channelled, unfulfilled aspirations for the 'good things of life', and the consequent frustration therefrom may lead to the emergence of miscreants and hoodlums, the Nigerian brand of whom is known as 'area boys'.

Women's contribution to development in every sector of national life, though unrecognised and undervalued, can hardly be overstressed. Though for long denied formal education, job skill training, and credit facilities for self-employment as a result of institutional and cultural barriers, women's proven productive zeal is widely known. As Hughes (1985) has suggested, even non professional women, organized in market or craft associations can be usefully engaged in the provision of social welfare and public works constructions such as maternity centres, markets, village squares, community and recreational centres.

Women's full potentials for, and active participation in, community development will be enhanced only by the extent to which a society is prepared to prosecute a deliberate and systematised scheme of socio-economic and institutional restructuring. Such a scheme should be designed to break down male domination and prejudices while extending such privileges as increased educational opportunities, vocational skills development training and credit facilities to the womenfolk.

Traditional age grade associations are a common feature of many African societies. Rooted in the traditions and custom of the people, age grade associations provide an effective means of

inculcating into members, societal and community values of purposive, competitive community development.

Development Unions are by virtue of their orientation and objectives, constituted to initiate, seek funding for, or sponsor and execute development programmes and projects essentially through a self-help scheme. Development unions have a culture of collective action which is a critical resource in community participation. They are, therefore, easily mobilised into prosecuting development programmes at the grassroots level. There is a tendency for development unions to enthusiastically and sacrificially prosecute development programmes and projects, and vigilantly work towards their sustainability.

Communication for Effective Community Participation

The above attempt to sketch the form and character of community participation provides both theoretical and practical underpinnings for the critical role of communication in the development process. Community participation, being an alternative approach to development, requires alternative communication types, channels and strategies in the pursuit, actualisation and sustainability of development objectives.

But while there is no longer any doubt that communication is a critical resource input in the development process, it would appear now with the benefit of hindsight, that the potentials of communications technology to leapfrog developing countries to the orbital space of development has, over the years, been exaggerated.

Consequently, while there have been huge investments in communicational improvement (acquisition of sophisticated modern communication technology hardware), operational communication has received only token attention. By operational communication is meant the human variable in media choice and use. It is not often appreciated that this, rather than an impressive array of communication technology, determines the effectiveness of the media in the pursuit of development

objectives. Not much consideration is given to the crucial role of the media chooser, message designer and producer, his/her training and skill, as well as his/her knowledge of the socio-cultural and political context of the audience(s) of their media messages.

The micro and communal nature of community participation in the development process requires a shift from the big to small and participatory community media, or what Kasoma (1995:59), quoting various authorities, has described as "co-equal, little media-centred, government-with-people communication"; in preference to "top-down, big media-centred, government-to people communication". Communication is never a unidirectional, unilinear flow of information, but a dynamic, recursive, transactional and sharing experience, one that cannot be dichotomised into a 'superior-or-active, super-thinker sender,' on the one hand, and a 'subordinate-passive-ignorant receiver,' on the other.

The point of emphasis of this paper is the need to appreciate the potentials and limitations of communication technology in development process in particular. George (1990:49) for example, has cautioned against focussing on the medium out of the total context of its intended use, as this may be counter-productive. According to him, any piece of equipment or new technology is only as useful as the skill and creativity of its human operator.

For the role of communication in community participation, our concern must thus first be to research into the cultural, socio-economic and political milieu of the receivers of our media messages and beneficiaries of development benefits. Next, we need to give serious consideration to the message, its form and design, drawing from our understanding of the audience. Finally, we must then choose the medium, or media mix, as George (1990:48) has suggested, "from a sound knowledge base of what is needed, what each available medium can do, what combination of media is complementary, how much it costs to deliver messages through those media."

In addition to a good knowledge of the target audience, message effectiveness, particularly for community participation will be enhanced by evolving a community participatory media culture. This requires that the audience be involved at every stage of the media planning process, particularly in the decision-making about message type, design, delivery and reception.

The need for prudent management of limited community financial resources demands that cost-cutting considerations be uppermost in media choice, planning and delivery considerations. The size of the audience should influence media choice, as should the nature of community participation in the development process. This calls for localised, people-centred groups, as opposed to establishment media. Quarmyne (1990:6), quoting Ramirez, has defined group media as that

medium which is a means for small groups to develop a critical attitude towards the reality of self, the group, community and society through the participation in group interaction. ...as an approach, group media has helped marginal groups to speak to one another, to articulate their thoughts and feelings. As a process, it has been successful in community organizing.

Group or community media may be formatted as localised (rural) radio, rural (community) newspapers, film (mobile cinema), video (forum) radio cassette recorders, slide projectors and wall posters. Experience has shown that the conception and operation of these media formats differ from one society to another. It is, therefore, considered necessary to demonstrate how some of these media might be conceived and operated for maximum effect in community participation.

Localised (Rural) Radio

In the context of Africa with its predominantly illiterate, rural population, radio remains the most popular modern mass medium for rapidly creating mass awareness and legitimising development ideas. Radio's universality and popularity across the spectrum of society is enhanced by its simplicity of form and operation, its portability and accessibility.

Radio's simplicity and cost-effectiveness make it amenable for what George (1990) has described as programming designed for local interest groups and broadcast on low frequency transmitters to a very restricted geographical locale. These unique characteristics of radio endear it to advocates of community participation. Rural radio stations, located in rural communities and drawing from localised rural experiences, initiatives and talents may be used to design programmes aimed at specific development programme objectives.

Such groups will serve to complement the expertise of the radio's technical crew by feeding it with information on local problems, needs and circumstances in a bi-directional information traffic between the "experts" and the local communities. As critical listeners, community participants will evaluate the immediate and practical relevance of the programming to their development needs. This participatory discussion group will also determine the extent to which their input into the programmes, including the choice of programme topics, has been reflected in the broadcasts.

Localised (Rural) Community Newspapers

A rural community newspaper, like its radio counterpart, must essentially be participatory. The format being advocated here is a small media type which should not only be located within the locale of community participation groups, but must also derive a very big proportion of its content from the community. Communication for development is, after all, an interactive cyclical and transactional process.

Villagers too, as Kasoma (1990:) has noted, have a lot to offer during such interactions. Any outside development expert who ignores the age-long native wisdom and indigenous experience of community people does so at the peril of his development objectives.

Kasoma (1990:61) has provided an impressive detail of how a truly participatory rural newspaper should be run for maximum

effect. He defines a participatory rural newspaper as, "a regular publication on current events and issues by and for the ruralists which is published in their own locale."

He identifies a three-sided, give-and-take mutual communication relationship for the development process - villagers, participatory rural newspaper reporters (PRNs), and development agents (DAs). The development agents are usually state or government extension workers. Participatory rural newspaper reporters, on the other hand, should be part and parcel of the villagers, even when they come from outside. These three components of the participatory rural newspapers must be in constant dialogue on the issue-input into the newspaper.

In addition, they must initiate discussions on, and suggest appropriate solutions to the problems raised in the local newspaper. None of the three sides in the discussion group can afford to be prescriptive. Rather each must, in a reciprocal manner, be able and willing to shift grounds on being presented with superior and practicable solutions to problems and suggestions for action. In such discussion fora, there is certainly no room for superior-subordinate relationship. The environment must be conducive to knowledge-experience-sharing.

Needless to say, the readership will tend to be low at the beginning of the operation of a participatory rural newspaper. But readership statistics will improve as the paper covers issues of immediate and practical relevance to the communities as a result of the input of community members, and as the paper 'speaks' to them in their local language, using their idioms, codes and symbols.

Other Low-Cost Print Formats

In a bid to cut costs and achieve effectiveness, recourse may be made to smaller print formats. George (1990) has noted that for circulating a very limited amount of precise information to a large audience, the circular or flyer - a two page publication - is not only economical but also effective. It can be distributed and

read or posted on walls for single-copy wider readership. The quality of flyers will, however, be enhanced by beautiful illustrations and attractive appearance.

Where the audience is predominately illiterate, as it is bound to be at present in most African countries, visually illustrated posters, carefully designed with community members' input and appropriately trial-tested, can produce remarkable results. In situations of acute financial constraints, community bulletins manually typed, illustrated and duplicated on roneo machines may serve as an avenue for development information dissemination in rural communities.

Participatory Folk Theatre

Popular (folk) drama has for decades proved to be an ally in the development process, particularly within grassroots communities. Popular theatre techniques being rooted in traditional communication forms such as story-telling, recitations, dances, chants, songs, masquerades, and so on, serve, as Mlama (1990:34) has observed, to help people to concertize the problems in theatrical performances, highlighting their own perceptions on the root of the problems and the possible solutions.

By virtue of the grassroots origin of popular theatre, George (1990:55) has also note that:

it is immediately compelling and possesses the ability to communicate directly to community groups... involves the members of the community itself as producers and performers to design and articulate the message and substance of the entertainment - a further insurance that the cultural imperatives of a society are honoured in the methods of presentation.

Though not often considered cost effective because of the enormous time and energy invested and the limited number of people involved, it needs be appreciated that involvement in theatre performance is not limited to acting. Often in rural communities, passers-by as well as standers-by are drawn, as it were, into the performance. Even rehearsals of interesting and topically relevant themes usually serve as crowd pullers.

Mlama (1990) has observed in the case of theatre for rural development in Tanzania, that it was normal to see women with pails of water or baskets on their heads stopping for a long while to watch rehearsals even as they commented freely on the theme and performance or clap and laugh in agreement with the issues raised. Across Africa, Asia and Latin America, audience members familiar with local dance steps have been observed to spontaneously burst into singing and dancing to songs and tunes laden with relevant development messages.

Video Format

Video cassette recorders and cameras constitute a relatively cheap medium for small group information-sharing. The audio-visual capacity of a video recorder makes it a useful tool for disseminating demonstration messages and provoking discussions among predominantly illiterate rural communities.

Unlike radio, however, video not only requires electricity but also expertise in manning and maintaining the equipment. There is need for trained and skilled personnel in the area of programme design, production and editing as well as in equipment operation and maintenance.

Small format video for community participation must have local relevance focusing on issues and problems of the community and deriving its talents as much as possible, from community members. Small viewing and discussion groups with an operator who is trained to intelligently contribute to discussions and answer questions, will help to minimise video's tendency to be a unidirectional medium.

Conclusion

This paper has been an attempt to re-examine the dominant concept of development, and in recognition of its inadequacies, propose a shift in emphasis from the growth-oriented capital-intensive, government-initiated and executed development

programmes to ones that focus on community participation and human well being. The paper points to active involvement and influential participation in the decision making process, cost-sharing, equitable distribution of development benefits, a culture of self-reliance, communal belonging, and sustainability of development programmes to justify community participation in the development process.

In sketching the character of community participation, the paper has noted that community or people participation is aimed at creating an enabling environment for communities to explore and exploit their local human and material resources to improve their socio-economic conditions and general well-being. Community participation, the paper has observed, takes on different interpretations in different political, socio-economic and cultural contexts.

These range from a token involvement of community people, to a genuinely participatory involvement of community members in the decision making process on needs identification and prioritisation, project initiation, financing, execution, monitoring, evaluation and sustainability.

The paper has underscored the role of institutional framework in community participation. According to the paper, a highly centralised institutional frame work is antithetical to effective community participation. The paper has, therefore, advocated a decentralised institutional structure aimed at enabling local participating institutions to exercise direct influence over the sourcing, allocation and use of productive resources to meet the basic needs of the deprived, poor and underprivileged members of their various communities.

Communication, the paper has stressed constitutes a critical resource input in community participation. In charting a communication course for community participation, the paper has suggested a shift from the big media and communicational improvement to community-based, small-group participatory media and operational communication. The focus of this shift is the need to de-emphasise media technology in preference for

its context of use - the cultural, socio-economic and political milieu of media messages and intended beneficiaries of development benefits.

The paper has furthermore emphasised the need not only to give serious attention to media messages, but also to ensure the active involvement of media audiences at every stage of media planning process, particularly in the decision making process about message type, design, delivery and reception.

The paper highlighted the potentials of local (rural) radio, localised (rural) community newspapers, small format video and folk theatre for community participation. The local origin and small format of these media make them amenable to audience (community) participation. Their messages can be simplified and made contextually-relevant and small audience-specific in nature.

Bibliography

- Aina, T.A. and A. T. Salau (1992). *The Challenge of Sustainable Development in Nigeria*, Ibadan:NEST.
- Freedman, D.H. (1988). "Popular Participation and Administrative Decentralisation in Basic Needs-Oriented Planning Framework: The Case of The United Republic of Tanzania." In F. Lisk (ed). *Popular Participation in Planning for Basic Needs*. England: Avebury Publishers, pp. 127-147.
- George, N. (1990). "The Dilemma of Appropriate Media Selection for Dissemination of Development Information." In K. Boafo and N. George (eds.). *Communication Processes: Alternative Channels and Strategies for Development Support*. Canada: IDRC.pp.46-57.
- Hughes, A. (1988). "Alternative Forms and Levels of Popular Participation: A General Survey." In F. Lisk (ed). *Popular Participation in Planning for Basic Needs*. England: Averbury Publishers pp. 52-94.
- Kasoma, F.B. (1990). "Rural Newspaper Fora: Another Model of Communication for Development." In K. Boafo and N. George

- (ed.). *Communication Process: Alternative Channels and Strategies for Development Support*. Canada: IDCR, pp. 58-72.
- Koinyan, L.D (1966:) *Planning for Effective Grassroots Development*. Lagos: Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural, and Rural Infrastructures.
- Lisk, F. (1988). "The Role of Popular Participation in Basic Needs-Oriented Development Planning". In F. Lisk (ed.) *Popular Participation in Planning for Basic Needs*. England: Avebury Publishers, pp. 15-30.
- Majeres, J. (1988). "Popular Participation in Decision Making with Reference to Development Planning: An Institutional Approach". In F. Lisk (ed.). *Popular Participation in Planning for Basic Needs*. England: Avebury Publishers, pp. 31-51.
- Mlama, P.M. (1990). "Women as Communicators - The Potential in the Popular Theatre Process". In. K. Boafo and N. George (eds.). *Communication Processes: Alternative Channels and Strategies for Development Support*. Canada: IDRC, pp. 31-45.
- Moshiro, G. (1990). "The Impact of Information on Rural Development: A Case Study of the Community Media for Rural Development Projects (Tanzania)". In K. Boafo and N. George (eds) *Communication Processes: Alternative Channels and Strategies for Development Support*. Canada: IDRC. pp. 21-30.
- Oyugi, W.O. (1988). "Popular Participation and Access to Basic Needs in Kenya". In F. Lisk (ed). *Popular Participation in Planning for Basic Needs*. England: Avebury Publishers, pp. 148-185.
- Osuji, E. (1992). "Community Participation". In E.E. Osuji Booklet compiled for UNICEF-Sponsored Workshop on Community Participation.