

## Introduction

Nigeria is also one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse societies of the world. It has about 250 ethnic groups and approximately 400 languages and dialects. It is one country that has grappled with lots of developmental challenges. Rather unfortunately, Nigeria with all its potential is host to the third largest concentration of poor people in the world and is among the top 20 countries in the world with the widest gap between the rich and the poor.

This is obviously a big Irony considering the enormous wealth that nature has bequeathed the country. Why for instance, do the great majority of Nigerian citizens lack access to clean water and safe water? Why is the fact of line statistic in Nigeria so low and poor? In its human development index report contained in the Africa peer review report (2008) the UNDP ranked Nigeria at 158 out of 177 nations. The report notes that the country's human development index at 0.453 is lower than the average HDI for sub Saharan Africa at 0.515. It notes also that 78 percent of the population live in rural arrears. The rural poor represent the largest overall segment of the poor and suffer greatly where public service delivery is concerned.

Official figures released by the African Peer Review (2008) indicate that in Nigeria infant mortality rate is 113 out of 1000 live births, maternal mortality is 1000 out of 100,000. Also at the end of the year 2000 out of about 36.1 million living with HIV/AIDS globally,

25.3 million reside in sub-Saharan Africa. HIV infection rate increased from 1.8 in 1991 to 5.8 in 2001 (Africa Peer Review Report 2008).

The challenges include the following-pre-natal and anti-natal care, breast feeding, child-abuse, ORT, gender discrimination, teenage marriage, child trafficking, malnutrition, ignorance, hand washing, poverty and many more.

## Communication for Social Change.

This paper therefore looks at what form, model or framework of communication can best suit the developmental challenges of Nigeria. It is Abosede (2004) who states that communication is fundamental, central and crucial to the creation of awareness of socio-ecological problems and many more like it. She notes however that access to information is limited in Africa, and cultural behavior and language/dialect diversities make communication rather complex. Therefore she cautions that the messages communicated and the media used must be relevant and appropriate to the various cultures. She cautions that importation and or partial adaptation of behavioral models must be done cautiously. The problem therefore, is which media or which strategy can better address the African challenge.

Theoretically there are three levels of social change, the personal, interpersonal and the community-where broader cultural, political, institutional change occur. There is also, the socio-ecological model of change, which views individual behavior as a product

of overlapping individual social and environmental influences.

Abosedo (2004) again notes that many of the theories underlying the models and framework used in some challenges in Africa like in HIV/AIDS are derived from socio-psychological and communication formulations borrowed from other environments and for other programmes which may not exactly fit the socio-ecological conditions of Africa.

According to her, this has indeed led to structural failures in the implementation of some of these programmes. She notes that assumptions such as individualism as opposed to collectivism on which of these theories and models are sometime based are some time foreign based on non western cultures. Therefore, the role of the media becomes critical to the fight against this scourge. A scholar Buratai(2004)states that there is a dominant view of development now which is essentially techno-scientific and which leaves out of its focus, the critical cultural paradigm of development. This is characteristic of the new media-The internet and other new technological mass media which though innovative and very highly interactive is predominantly individualistic. The effectiveness of the new technology is even more impeded by the fact that technological penetration in Africa is still very low.

### **The Challenge of Communication in Africa.**

Tweneboa Kodua (2011) states that the problem with the earlier media

approaches to human development challenges have been hampered by ineffective media methodologies. He notes that the target audience is often misplaced. The media was often one way ,highly individualistic. To him the media was 'expert' oriented often alienated from the real people. The efforts were ad hoc and unplanned and unstructured. solutions.

Kodua (2011) advocates a change in media approach .He recommends that media must embrace dialogue and engagement. It must address the issue of collective social change. It also must have the human rights approach and be community driven. Above all it must be strategic, systemic, evidence based and long term.

Effective media must be simply defined as a process of enlarging choices-some economic, some social, some political, others cultural. It is concerned with the process through which choices are enlarged, but it also focuses on the outcome of the enhanced choices.

To address these challenges of mankind development, a scholar Hocheimann (1999) advocates participatory development communication (PDC) which as a process, is regarded as goal oriented cultural and structural change effort which are facilitated by pro active indigenous communication transactions amongst local people within given cultural contexts. The critical factor is in Hocheimann's assertion that PDC is facilitated by use of indigenous communication patterns.

In Africa it could be asserted that the community factor pre-determinates in the question of development. Because the African society is man oriented, the community imperative is an assumed predisposition. If you build the man, you are directly or indirectly building society. Abosedo notes that in reality, behavior change is not sustainable without some degree of social change. Care must be taken to carry along all the segments of a community. Therefore communication methods and the messages must not be offensive to any group within the community. They must also convey and communicate the inherent cultural symbols and motifs of the people. This is a huge challenge in a country like Nigeria with diverse social, religious and cultural inclinations.

In Africa, cultural symbols and archetypes play crucial roles in interpretation and communication, especially in understanding the latent and inherent meanings in all forms of culture and social behavior.

Archetypal materials and images for example are art forms that can be used for effective communication. They may be classified as physical and non physical. The physically identifiable materials and objects are generally visual materials which by their essence communicate messages and meanings. These according to Wilson (1997) include institutional, iconographic and symbol-graphic. Wilson (1997) had identified six modes of African traditional communication, which he has identified principally as the instrumental, the demonstrative, the

iconographic, extra-mundane, institutional and visual.

Wilson states that the instrumental consists of idiophones, membrane-phones and symbol-graphics. They generally include gong, woodblock, drum-bell and rattle, also whistle horns, from plants and animals. Symbol-graphy, is the use of cryptic representation in the form of writing, made on surfaces like the rind of bamboo, walls, cloths or on the ground. Iconographic, consist of use of objects and floral media. They are significant in that the objects refer to a thing event or concept. These concrete representations may have a universal application or significance, like in the presentation of kola-nut, charcoal, white pigeon or fowl.

The Visual mode of communication, consist of colors, dressings, appearances and general comportment, which is used to communicate feelings or emotions and attitude. It has the advantage of pictorial communication, that is through the speed of the impact of the message. Institutional communication consist of the use of certain traditional institutions, like marriage, chieftaincy, shrines, mask and masquerades.

Also contributing to the communicative import of traditional images and symbols in Africa, Eze (1995)notes that in Africa images and icons are reflections of the society and that traditional image symbols best exemplify nature and society.

It is Seelig (1994) who states that traditional art materials suggest ideas because of their inherent physical evs

properties and more importantly ,because of the way they seem to contain or absorb unique information, he believes that materials actually contain clues that allows us to discover our own reality through a subconscious process, an intuitive, creative journey of which material is an active partner.

Symbols and visual constructs in Africa can indeed convey critical, deeper messages and meanings for the African and is indeed a relevant strategy to the mobilization of social consciousness and behavioral change.

### **Modules of Communication for Change.**

The methodologies for communication for change hitherto applied in the projects for communication change appear quite similar. Let us examine some methods of communication for change that have been used to instill social change and see their effectiveness.

### **The Participatory Development Communication (PDC).**

This involves 5 steps:

- Identifying participants-
- defining the issue or problem
- problem solving processes and resource identification;
- goals and objectives including assigning roles and responsibilities;
- design of action and community feedback;

This system very much agrees

with the SBCC model which has similar 5 steps.

- introduction(type of strategy- advocacy or social mobilization);
- understand the situation(cause and effects of a problem);
- focus and design;
- creating(creativity and materials to use);
- Implementation and monitoring;
- evaluating and re-planning.

### **The Community Imperative.**

It is Alumuku(2006) who notes that the importance of community communication is a direct derivative of everyone's right to communicate. Communication is therefore increasingly seen as a process through which the exchange and sharing of meaning is made possible and by which social relationship and as a result social institutions are created and maintained. It is a two way process, and interactive by its very nature. This horizontal flow of communication which is inclusive of all members of the community has become imperative in today's society, where social harmony and communion have become incumbent. Traber (1986) notes that such grass roots communication can become an agent for change in religious life, socio-economic development and the struggle for human rights. It can help communities arrive at self reliance, cultural identity, freedom, independence, respect for human dignity, mutual assistance, and participation in the reshaping of the environment.

### **Community Radio.**

Community radio is an example of

a modern communication technology and method that can be used to reach the community. It provides programming that is particular to the community's identity and character. It also focuses on local or indigenous culture. i.e. the way the people, the individual members of the community express their dreams and hopes. Also how they talk about their past and future. It also allows the people to communicate in the people's language. Community radio also has artistic expression especially through local music, dance, poetry, theatre, story-telling and so on.

It is the function of community radio to provide an independent platform for interactive discussion about matters and decisions of importance to the community, including of course health matters.

Whilst examining communication models Alumuku (2006) states that participation which community radio offers, is key to development. When people communicate about their situation, and about options of improving it, they are in effect participating and they are also laying the foundation for collective action in which they participate. It allows sharing of opinion and ideas. Other people who watch others in a programme are also very likely to be influenced by it. He notes that people in poor communities tend to be fatalistic about their situation. They will all have individual perceptions but development cannot take place on the basis of this. What is needed according to Alumuku is a collective perception of the local reality of the

options for improving it. And this can only be achieved through internal discussions within the community about it's situation, the cause and possible actions for improvement. UNESCO conference on promoting community media held in Kampala Uganda in 1999 agreed that the construction of community life is central to the philosophy of community radio. It is a medium which serves all genders, races, and social classes but especially the marginalized, for it is the voice of the voiceless and the mouth piece of the oppressed people. Notably, community radio is not about the community doing something for the community but the community doing something for itself that is owning and controlling its own means of communication and determining its future.

Nigerian Community Radio policy (2010) provides that, it ensures that they:

- Ensure that programming driven and derived from the community.
- Ensure that broadcast programmers are development oriented, meet the needs and aspirations of the community and broaden their horizons in educational, economic, political, cultural and social matters.
- Enhance local cultural norms that dignify humanity, promote indigenous creativity in verbal arts and music.
- Encourage programming diversity through exchanges between communities.

Community Radio programmers

could come through interviews, documentaries, drama, folk tales, songs, dance, art, discussion programme, phone in programme, oral interviews, sermons, festivals etc.

The policy states that programming and content shall reflect the diversity of the potential audience and actively seek to cater inclusively for all groups within the community, especially women, youths, children, people living with disability and persons living with HIV and AIDS, and other debilitating ailments.

Furthermore, programming shall be mostly locally sources, be in the language of the community served as much as possible reflect the socio-political realities of its environment. And that potential members shall participate in the development of the broadcast content.

## Theatre

The community radio option is very closely related to the community theatre approach which has been adopted with amazing results in several parts of Africa. It is Buratai (2004) who states that community theatre as a process and practice of development communications is often associated with and realized through the deployment of community cultural values, ideals, and their nuances of expression. Among the cultural tools strategic to the goals of the community theatre project are language, song, music, dance, folktales and folklores with which the community is not only conversant but which also serve as the means of self expression and

articulation, thus embodying their world view and perception.

Okwori (2004) notes that community theatre is localized within a particular community. It addresses issues and problems within the community. The plays according to him are intended to provide information and awareness which will instigate the community members to engage in debate and discussion of the issues raised by the drama. This of course will lead to critical consciousness, a kind of awareness that moves the community members to take action. Community theatre as a medium can be constructively engaged for development through participatory methods through which development issues can be communicated.

It is Hochheirmer (1999) who advocates the **de-massification of the media**, as a model for communication for change. He notes that 'de-massified' media, strives to reach the people directly. De massified communication according to him have the following distinct advantages.

- they are traditional in the true sense of the word and therefore have strong indigenous linkages
- The content is not commercial and the messages have local flavor
- they utilize appropriate indigenous materials and resources
- they depict the people's actual reality, their ideas, wisdom, tradition, arts and culture.

## Conclusion

This paper concludes that for

communication for social change models to reap the desired impacts in Nigeria, they will have to integrate the community imperative. Whatever new or modern social media must take into cognizance the huge percentage that live in rural communities, who are unreachably by the new modern social media. The paper recommends that the media must be systemic, planned and evidence based. It must promote positive goals for the society. It notes that community radio remains one of the most effective strategies to reach the communities themselves.

#### References

- Abosede, O. (2004) Creating Awareness About the Impact of HIV/AIDS In Nigeria. Paper presented at AFRICAST. Abuja. Sheraton Hotel. October.
- Alumuku, Tor Patrick(2008)Community Radio for Development. Paulines Publication Africa. Kenya.
- Buratai, Mohammed Inuwa (2004) Community Theatre and Cultural Projection Community Theatre. Zaria. Zaria Press.
- Okwori, J.Z. (2004) Origins of Community Theatre Community Theatre. Zaria. Tamara Press.
- Traber, M. (1986) Introducing the new world Information and Communication Order, NWICO'In Communication For all New World information Order.
- Tweneboaa-Kodua, A. (2011) Communication For Development. History and Shifts. UNICEF WORKSHOP. Rockview Hotel Abuja Sept,26.
- African Peer Review Report (2008)No.8 Midrand, South Africa. Nigerian Community Radio Policy(2010).
- of Art, Vol 1, No1, Lagos: National Gallery.
- Hochheirmer, J.L. (1999) Planning Community Radio as Participatory Communication; in Shirley White, The Art of Facilitating participation. London. Sage Communication.
- Nwabueze, Emeka (2003) Vision and Revision .Selected Discourse on Literary Criticism. Enugu. Ephata Press, Nigeria.
- Nwadiuwe, Charles (2005) "Materials of the Reel: Culture Design and Visual Representation in Nigeria Video Film" SONTA publication.