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**FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION**

**PROGRAMME: BSC MASS COMMUNICATION**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**COURSE: RURAL AND COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER**

**COURSE CODE: MCM 304**

**LECTURER: MRS EZEAKOLAM A.A**

### **LESSON NOTE**

#### **MCM 304: RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER**

#### **OVERVIEW OF A COMMUNITY**

Information is power. Information is needed for making choices, for behavior change and for decision making. Every individual, group or community (rural and urban) needs information regardless of the social status. Information brings new opportunities to people and it brings about personal development. It is needed in every situation in life. Therefore when people come together with similar ideas and beliefs those people are referred to as members of a community.

#### **WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?**

A group of people living in the same proximity (i.e. in space, time or relationship). Community usually refers to a society or unit larger than a house hold that shares common values.

#### **WHAT IS A RURAL COMMUNITY?**

According to Baba (1988) the term rural community connotes the non-urban sector of any area or country. It is normally characterized by relatively small-size settlements (as contrasted to large-size of urban settlements) and heavy dependence on primary production activities (such as hunting/fishing, pastoralism and agriculture). Diso (2009) described rural areas in Nigeria as often conceptualised as areas characterised by sparsely populated settlements and absence of modern amenities (electricity, pipe-born water, schools, hospitals recreational facilities, etc.) with primary industries, mostly agriculture and local crafts as the people's dominant occupation. Dimgba Igwe (1991:175) gives a clear definition of rural community when he states that it is "a body of persons in the same locality, a cluster of villages or communities in a geographical location with distinguishable social-cultural and economic characteristics". Igwe goes further to explain that "there are urban communities where the cities constitute the community".

#### **CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Gyiyem & Dakur (2002) enumerated some characteristics of rural communities in developing nations as follows:

- Agricultural subsistence and other small-scale businesses such as carpentry, weaving, sewing, trading, carving and much more.
- Low level of literacy.
- Low level of innovativeness.
- Inadequate healthcare facilities and services.
- Rampant cases of disputes on land because of high inclination to land possessions.
- Inaccessibility of agricultural products to good transportation system, even some rural areas cannot be linked with the local government headquarters or state capitals.

Similarly, Anyanwu (1992) outlined six (6) basic characteristics with which a rural community in Nigeria can be identified as:

- Share beliefs which are nurtured and cherished by the people in the development of their common ideals, objectives, attitudes and values
- Share bonds of fellowship which demands obligations from the citizens and the conferment of benefits to them.
- Set standards and patterns of behavior which bring every citizen to conform to norms and values; it also helps to develop intimacy of relationships and bond of love and association.
- Common culture which is the aggregate of the social, ethnic, intellectual, artistic, ideas, traditions, customs, institutions, associations and materials.

### **SOCIAL PROFILE OF A COMMUNITY**

A community can be described by the following:

**Social Interaction:** It is usually done face to face and it binds the community together. It is largely intimate, permanent and strong. Unlike the city, it is informal and simple.

**Population:** The population in a community is small. Each of them know their selves personally to the point that they will be able to tell when a new visitor comes in. note that the reason for the small population is because only the very elderly and the very small ones live in the communities. Most youths have gone for greener pastures.

**Social Solidarity:** Every community take each other's matter very seriously. They have high regards for one another and see themselves as brothers and sisters

**Occupation:** Farming seems to be the major occupation of rural communities in Nigeria. Their aim is not to engage in mechanized agriculture but to fend for the immediate family's need and any extra will go to petty trading. Generally women carry the farm produce to the market to sell. Other occupation include fishing, tailoring, hunting, mat weaving and others.

**Recreation:** Community members have the way they relax. It could be through wrestling, dancing competition. All these activities are majorly done in the evenings or at moon light.

**Social differentiation:** Members of the community really do not have much difference. They have similar characteristics in terms of traditions, languages, beliefs, values, occupation and even behavioral patterns.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE AND ORGANISATIONAL PATTERNS IN A COMMUNITY**

Generally administration in a community is not clearly defined.

Traditional ruler

Council of chiefs

Family clans

Immediate family

Development councils/association (market women association, age grade heads and others)

### **COMMUNICATION PATTERNS IN A COMMUNITY**

Communication influences all the elements of a community. Attitudes, beliefs and patterns of the community are usually influenced by communication. Specifically, information can be said to flow along three lines in a community:

Downward flow

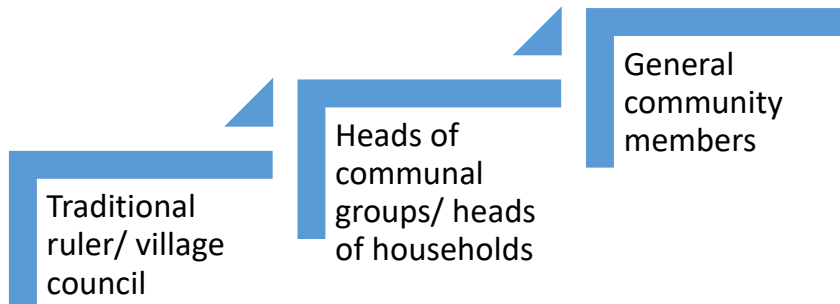
Upward flow

Horizontal flow

**Downward flow:** Here the message originates from the village council or traditional ruler to the general community members. The heads of the households or communal groups act as channels for transfer of messages, directives and decisions to the community members. It is transmission of information from top to bottom.



**Upward flow:** This is the passage of information from the bottom to the top. It may be in form of feedbacks to the previously sent messages or requests and wishes from the people. It passes through the heads of households community groups to the council of chiefs and then to the traditional ruler.



**Horizontal Flow:** this is the flow of information among people of equal standing in the community. The horizontal flow of information in a community makes for easy expression of ideas and opinions without barriers; it is done on equality basis.

**Community members**  $\longrightarrow$  **Community members**

Generally, **opinion leaders are stakeholders in the community**. They are active participants in the community and are easily believed by members of the community. They command respect, attention and have gained the trust of people in the community. Generally, they are vital agents for developmental messages.

## CONCEPT OF RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

**Community paper** is a term used by publishers, advertisers and readers to describe a range of publications that share a common service to their local community and commerce. According to Kasoma in Oso (2003) a rural community newspaper is a regular publication which carries news stories, features, editorials, illustrations and pictures as well as advertisements for rural people. It is usually put together by rural folks in their own community and published by them too. Ramirez (1989) notes that the community press serves as a window of the community to the outside world and it is also a link with the mainstream of information and national life. Generally a rural community is defined by ownership, access, democratization, local content and the local audience.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A RURAL NEWSPAPER

1. It is owned managed and controlled by the community
2. It is non-profit
3. It is development oriented
4. It serves as a means for a two-way flow of communication
5. It has limited coverage

6. It is localized in content
7. It serves as a means for public dialogue and education

### **ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER**

1. Accessibility: it is usually within the reach of members of the community and also serves as a source of information for people within the community. It has to be located in the community to provide ready information to community members and give them feedback too.
2. Affordability: the paper does not seek to maximize profit. Therefore is usually very cheap. It is something that the community members can afford.
3. Community participation: it is essential to the rural community newspaper is essential to the community and its content are also localized. The reason it is situated in the community is to the end that the members of the community take part in the production and operation of the newspaper.
4. Ownership and control: it is owned and operated by members of the community. This serves as a channel of communication to members in the community.

### **RURAL AND URBAN NEWSPAPER**

<b>S/NO</b>	<b>ELEMENTS OF COMPARISM</b>	<b>URBAN NEWSPAPER</b>	<b>RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER</b>
1.	Location of the newspaper	The urban newspapers are usually published in the town like Abuja, Lagos, Kaduna and much more	Rural newspapers are located and published in the village or rural areas like Oke, Omu-aran and much more
2.	Area of coverage	It covers a wide range of event and happenings in the country and even covers foreign stories too.	It covers happenings and developments in the community. It is limited in its area of coverage.
3.	Frequency of publication	Urban newspapers are published daily	Most times it is produced weekly or monthly
4.	Philosophy	Profit or entertainment oriented	Developing the community and passing information
5.	Allocation for local news and features	Space for local news are minimal compared to national and foreign stories	Space for local content are the bulk of the content here
6	Allocation of space to national news and features	Urban newspaper gives more space to national news and features. It is the major content of the paper	Little space is allocated to news and features.
7.	Advertisement Content	It contains many adverts that cut across areas in the nation like insurance,	It does not contain many adverts. Adverts here are usually about things sold in the community.

		banking, fashion, cars and much more.	
8.	Scope of News and features	News and features is majorly about politics, government officials and prominent people.	It includes news and features information around the community.
9	Circulation/Distribution	It have wide and national circulation spanning through several cities and states.	It has limited circulation and distribution.
10	Price	Urban newspapers are expensive.	Rural newspapers are quite cheap or distributed free.
11	General Characteristics	It usually contains more pages	It is smaller in size with few pages

### **THE NATURE OF RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER READERS**

1. School Children
2. Farmers
3. Market Women
4. Business People
5. Artisans
6. For Civil Servants and Other Workers

### **RELEVANCE OF RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER IN RURAL/NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Roles of the rural community newspaper**

1. Reports the urban areas to the community
2. Reports the community to the community
3. It celebrates community life
4. It serves as a medium of transmission of cultural heritage
5. It serves as a medium of entertainment
6. It serves as a medium of mobilisation for community members
7. It provides ideas to guide policies and programmes

#### **RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER AS A CHANGE AGENT**

the rural community newspaper is an instrument for social change, it help develop in the people the right attitudes towards innovations, self worth, determination to be productive and facilitates the development.

### **THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER**

Democratic-Participant theory (Seminar Presentation)

Development Media theory (Seminar Presentation)

Development Journalism: (Seminar Presentation)

### Qualities of Development Journalism:

- It is purposive: it is aimed at enhancing and fostering development in a society.
- It provides new information that perceives and responds to the concerns and needs of the people.
- It is pragmatic: meaning it is result oriented and seeks to achieve tangible development goals. It takes up issues and relates them to the happenings in the society to enhance development.
- Development journalism is based on research and facts, it make use of survey to gather data for development programmes.
- It is participatory, it gives the people room to be involved in attaining developmental goals.

### Framework for the practice of development journalism in Nigeria



## **Rural Community Journalist**

A community journalist refers to a journalist that works for a community newspaper and having the same professional qualities of a journalist for other kind of conventional newspapers.

### **Characteristics of a rural community Journalist**

A community journalist:

1. Should possess the required skills, knowledge and training of journalism.
2. Should be inquisitive and sense for news.
3. Should be humane and have respect for human dignity.
4. Should understand the physical and psychological information needs of the rural audience.
5. Should be one that freely socializes with people (community).
6. Should speak and understand the native language of the community.
7. Should understand the culture, environment and the social needs of the rural people.
8. Should have the ability to break complex issues into simple terms to the understanding of the rural people.

### **Functions of a rural community Journalist:**

- Bridge the communication gap by providing information that is not accessible to them easily.
- Provides information that can bring development to the rural community and can serve as means of setting positive agenda in the community.
- Help identify and project rural issues for solution and government attention.
- Help to sensitize and engage community members through writing on developmental issues that can propel community members to seek self-help projects and participating actively in community development projects.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere for dialogue and settlement of rural issues.
- Used as instrument for political education on political processes during election period.

## **Rural News Reporting**

### **Defining rural news and rural reportage**

Rural news refers to events and happenings in a rural community. Events such as new developmental projects newly achieved, important festivals, cultural and social information that accelerate information.

Rural reportage is the practice of giving information and communication from rural events and happenings. It involves keeping the rural people informed on what is happening in the society, creating the awareness they need on national other development plans of the government.

### **Reporting/rural journalism**



Rural journalism refers to a professional process of determining the issues in the rural area that are news worthy. The area of reporting and operation in the rural area and this area conditions the functions and activities.

### **Factors that militate against rural news reporting in Nigeria**

1. Marginalization of the rural areas in terms of effective 2 way communication.
2. Inadequate developmental information to the rural areas.
3. The media are concerned with commercial interests and politics that they neglect the rural areas which are not commercially viable.
4. The media have become too elitist and above the reach of the common people.
5. Most media houses are operated and located in the urban areas
6. Only special events such as commissioning of a project or festivals that reporters cover in rural areas, nobody reports other issues affecting the rural people.
7. True conditions of the rural community are not brought to the attention of the government and stakeholders making the conditions of the rural to remain the same.

Sources of rural news: festivals, events and way of life the people that needs development.

### **Establishing a Rural Newspaper Production**

In establishing a rural newspaper, it is important to understand the need to fill the under report of rural people by the media gap already created. The rural community struggle for space to feature in most mass media report. The establishment of a rural community newspaper is an agent of national development. Development starts from the mobilization of the rural community because large percentages of the population in Nigerian dwell in the rural areas. Therefore, there is need for the establishment of rural community newspapers.

The following are steps taken to establish rural community newspaper:

- a. Feasibility study: the first stage before one can establish a rural community newspaper is conducting a research to know the environment and what opportunities are there for the newspaper by- (i) determine the audience and readership for the newspaper. (ii) know the financial requirements in running the rural community newspaper. (iii) determine the human and material resources that are needed to make it a success.
- b. Gaining the consent of the community: the next after feasibility studies is to gain the consent of the community where the rural community newspaper is to be established. Gaining consent will help the rural people embrace the newspaper. It is important to let the community know of the plan to establish a newspaper for the community so they can embrace and accept it as theirs with the necessary support to make it successful. Without the consent of the people they will be hostile and non receptive which will affect the efforts put into establishing the newspaper.

- c. Registration of newspaper: newspaper must be registered before commencing operations in Nigeria, the registration is firstly done with Corporate Affairs Commission and then with Newspaper Registration Board. The registration can be as a limited liability company, partnership or one man business. The newspaper must be given a name that will make the people see it as theirs. E.g. Oko voice.
- d. Rural newspaper editorial policy: a well drafted editorial policy that will guide the newspaper operations will be drafted to help know the areas of coverage and what should be prominent in the newspaper. The editorial policy is the constitution guiding the newspaper outfit and shapes the nature of the publication, influencing the contents and dictates of the format.
- e. Rural newspaper economics: fund for the rural community newspaper is an important aspect to consider before establishing one. The fund to sustain the operation of the newspaper, purchasing the required machinery for production and the cost of human resources should be sourced for before commencing.
- f. Securing an office: it is important to make available an adequate space for office, store for equipments and accommodation for staff. The office should be situated in the midst of most its readers residence.
- g. Recruitment of staff: well trained staff should be hired as well as community members who will volunteer to be actively involved. For a rural community the size of the entire staff may not be too large but they should be highly skilled to carry out their duties so that the newspaper can achieve its objectives.
- h. Procuring of equipment: where the newspaper is adequately fund they can procure their own equipments but in case where there is no fund to purchase equipments they can do with an existing printing press.

### **Factors to consider when establishing a rural community newspaper**

- Literacy level of the rural dwellers.
- Rural interest.
- Development needs of the rural community.
- Funding
- Style of writing: the writing style must be appealing to the interest of the people and it should be in a direct expression.