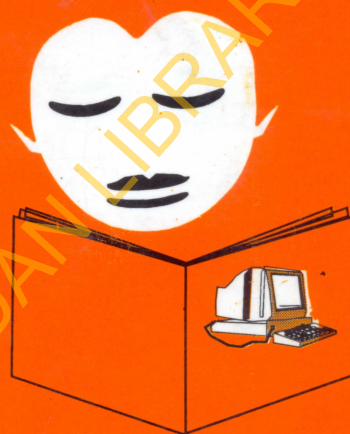


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# Libraries, Archives and Information Centres in Rural Community Development

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## Abstract

*The role of libraries, archives and information centres in the provision of information for rural community development is examined. A survey of the information provision facilities in two rural communities in Oyo and Kogi States were carried out, and the problems encountered in the provision, dissemination and utilisation of the information are highlighted. It was discovered that facilities for information provision are inadequate and the methods of information dissemination too limited and often untimely. The prospects of information provision through traditional and modern means of information dissemination are discussed and suggestions for improving rural information provision are given.*

## Introduction

Information provision is one of the major functions of libraries, archives, information and resource centres. All activities of these establishments are geared towards providing the users or clientele with current, timely and up-to-date information. Information being a very important resource has to reach everyone for proper development of the environment, community and the society at large to take place. As such, information is indispensable especially for rural community development.

Community development is the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate these communities in the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (United Nations).

A rural community generally refers to a

population living in an area of low density and of small settlement. The economic activities in rural communities centre on exploitation of land. Thus, subsistence farming, animal husbandry, poultry keeping, fishing, forestry, trading and others are the main occupation. The standard of living in rural communities is usually poor and the per capital income is low. Transportation is also a problem as the roads are bad (Madu, 2002).

Rural community development is a very vital aspect of national development. Without it, development is hindered to a large extent. This is because a lot of resources will remain untapped. Information for development i.e. Development information is the information that is gathered and processed and used in solving community problems and for advancing community development (Oyelude, 1997).



It is one resource that is very vital. It reaches people and is obtained from them through variety of strategies that are often planned and carried out by communication organisations such as mass media and extension workers (Steeves, 1999). Community development is not concerned with any one aspect of life such as agriculture, business, health or education, it is concerned with total community life and needs. Ideally, it involves all members of the community and requires their fullest participation in first making, and then implementing decisions.

### Rural Communities

Rural community development is dependent on flow of information, and the efforts of information workers e.g. librarians, archivists, information technologists, agricultural extension workers, journalists and people who work with the mass media. Scientists are also not left out in rural community development. Researchers in various fields especially in the agricultural sector do a lot in and for rural communities. The experiments carried out have to be documented and the results disseminated. This is where the advent of information technology becomes a blessing as more can be achieved than with the hitherto manual systems and ways of doing things.

#### 1. The Egbeda Community, Oyo State

Egbeda, is located about seventeen Kilometres east of Ibadan on the Ibadan-Ife Road. It is a relatively small settlement whose population according to the 1963 census is 1,718. The 1991 projected population is 3,931. Historically, the earlier settlers in the settlement were migrants from different towns like Ede, Iwo, Ejigbo and so on, who are mostly farmers. The settlement is therefore heterogeneous in its composition.

Like in most villages, the major occupation of the male population in Egbeda is farming while, majority of the women are traders. Being a market town, and the Local Government Headquarters, some of the males are also engaged in trading and civic jobs. The farm sizes of the farmers in Egbeda depend on the individual and major crops include food and cash crops such as maize, yam, cassava, vegetables and cocoa. Most of the dwellers in the town are low income earners, whose income are to a large extent not stable and determined by the fluctuations in the prices of their crops, which are sold mainly in Ibadan.

The settlement has a Police Post, and four Town Halls (Atari, Owobale, Efunwole, Erunmu). There are about nine churches and a mosque in the town. In addition, the settlement has three primary schools and a Secondary Grammar School. Other amenities in the town include private clinic and local government owned maternity centre (Arowosegbe, 2000).

Egbeda town has an almost uninterrupted electricity supply. There is also adequate pipe borne water supply throughout the year that was made possible as a result of the town's close proximity to Asejire Water Works. Though there is telephone connection to the town, it is only the industrial establishment and Ajoda New Town that enjoys the telephone service. Egbeda is well connected to Ibadan City by the very good quality Ife-Ibadan road. However, it is badly connected to most other settlements in the Local Government Area, by untarred roads, this makes communication (physical) difficult.

The *Baale* is the traditional head of the settlement and his election to the leadership position is by legacy and seniority. Whoever is the most senior in the ruling house automatically becomes chosen. The



introduction of the Ajoda New Town into the settlement was to have brought increased development but this has not been fully achieved as disputes over land ownership have prevented many from moving there.

### Community Organisations In Egbeda

There are two major community organisations: the Majekobaje and Amuludun organisations. Both have a membership of over a hundred people. The primary aim of the two organisations is that of engaging in self-help programmes for the development of the town. The women of the town contribute a little to the socio-political life. However, their major contribution is in the area of commercial activities and the forming of some social organisations.

### 2. The Ebira Community, Kogi State

Ebira is a land, a people, a language and a culture. Ebiraland comprises six main clans: Eika, Okehi, Okengwen, Adavi, Eganyi (Ajaokuta) and Okene. They are located within the radius of about 80 kilometres around the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers in the middle belt region of Northern Nigeria, in the newly created Kogi State.

The Ebira society consists of many segmentary patrilineal lineages. In Ebiraland in the 20th century, Ebira became suddenly transformed into chiefdom by an imposition of a paramount chief and the integration of the Ebira communities within a centralised administrative structure. Amongst the Ebira people of Kogi State, there has always been a central ruling government for the entire land especially as a republican linguistic group. The Ebiras have developed over the years, a rotational system of clan chiefs and a colonial system of appointing "warrant chief" as the group paramount ruler (Sani, 1993; Subair, 2003).

Socially, the culture of the Ebira people is anchored on Ebira native law and custom. These laws cover subjects like marriage rites, burial ceremonies, religious activities, the traditional festivals, the language, the market days etc. The three dominant religious ideas embraced by the Ebiras are the (*Ori*) involving the worship of the oracle and the deities of ancestors, Christianity and Islam. The traditional festivals of Ekwuechi and others form the bedrock of Ebira culture. The festivities mark the basis of Ebira people's annual calendar of cultural activities. Life for the Ebiras has endless resources of joy, artistic and sporting talents at both the national and international levels (Morounfola, 1970).

With the creation of States, Ebira land has benefited in the area of education, there is a College of Education, Federal University of Technology, many Primary and Secondary schools. Some of the areas formerly very rural are becoming rural -urban due to the introduction of the tertiary institutions. The Okene and Eganyi communities fall into this category.

### Statement of the Problem

- One of the problems encountered in rural community development is that there are no public libraries for the educational development of the masses, therefore, the illiteracy level is high.
- Rural-urban migration causes culture conflict and other social ills in rural communities.
- Modern communication technologies have not been able to help in promoting literacy programmes in rural communities. This is due partly to the low literacy level of the rural populace. They hardly know how to handle the communication technologies. Again, many of these



technologies depend on electricity and so communities without electricity are still suffering.

- Another problem is that the information generated in these rural communities and the results of use of science and technology is not being systematically documented. Libraries, archives and information centres seem not to be meeting the needs of the rural populace.

### **Libraries, Archives, Information centres and Rural Communities**

Libraries and information centres are important to rural communities. Archives also have a role to play in this regard, although, their relevance is not immediately apparent. The main functions of libraries i.e. collection, storage, organisation and dissemination of information, are indispensable in rural communities. A rural community that has a rural or even mobile library is better off than those without. Information to meet the needs of the rural populace is carefully selected and put in a form that will be most beneficial to them. Aboyade (1991) has dealt extensively with the provision of information for rural development. She developed a model for Rural Dissemination of Information (RUDIS), which is still as relevant then as now. This model is people-oriented as it involves the rural populace itself, with a feedback mechanism designed to provide information and solve the problems of the rural community. Mutua-Kombo (2001) identifies factors that affect the provision of information in rural Kenya especially for rural women as:

- (i) the government limited support of the information sector;
- (ii) male dominance;
- (iii) conflict of interests of information providers ;and
- (iv) media interests and nepotism.

He proposes that a solution to this problem is the need to recognise women's groups' role in information use among rural communities. However, it is obvious that knowledge for rural development needs to be preserved by libraries, archives and information centres. Ngulube (2002) discusses the measures of preserving indigenous knowledge or IK (experiential, locality-specific knowledge and practices of medicines as well as healing, hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture, combat, education and conservation developed by indigenous people over the years) in Africa. The importance of preserving IK, issues and concerns in the management and preservation of IK, and the role of information professionals in IK preservation, are discussed.

These two examples illustrate the importance of librarians, archivists and information technologists in development efforts especially rural community development. As Manda (2002) concludes after evaluating the role of information in agricultural development in Tanzania, information will continue to play a marginal role in the process of agricultural transformation if some basic institutional and structural problems are not solved; information needs are location specific and; unless libraries play a more dynamic role in assessing the real information needs of farmers, they will remain irrelevant institutions in the process of rural transformation.

Gbadamosi (2000) appropriately advocated many avenues through which public libraries could pioneer the overcoming of underdevelopment of rural libraries in Nigeria. He places emphasis on the fact that lack of infrastructural facilities is not the major problem, but the total lack of a coordinated central network system, which can monitor the development in rural areas. He suggests a



resuscitation of the Federal Library Advisory Committee (FLAC) to achieve this.

### **Science and Technology in Rural Community Development**

The importance of the contribution of science and technology to development has never been in doubt. The difficulty has been in the application of science and technology to development. A symbolic relationship however exists between science and technology. Science, a systematic search for truth, provides the basis for technology. Without technology, science becomes sterile: without science, technology does not exist. But it is technology, the application of techniques, and not science, which leads to increase in production and thus development (Williams, 1978).

In the development of rural communities, science and technology is very important. Rural dwellers, farmers, hunters, fishermen etc., so on have their indigenous technology. This technology has served them for ages. Anthropologists and archaeologists have discovered a lot that is only just becoming

apparent to the new generation. This technology is gradually being recorded, preserved and adapted to new forms and better ways of achieving the same end.

Rural industrial projects like *garri* processing, palm kernel oil production and others are evidence of the use of science and technology in rural community development. Even in areas of public and reproductive health of the rural community, science and technology is evident. For example, traditional medicine is now recognised for its efficacy and modern ways of presenting the drugs are being adopted.

### **Methodology**

The two rural communities - Egbeda in Oyo State and Ebiraland in Kogi State were used in the study because both were observed to be rural communities that are gradually moving towards the urban. A brief history of the communities was by interview with the community heads. Thereafter, through observation and direct interview methods using research assistants, information was sought on the information provision facilities available in each of the communities.



**Information Provision In Egbeda and Ebiraland**

<b>Infrastructure for Information Provision</b>	<b>Egbeda</b>	<b>Ebiraland</b>
Schools, Libraries, Government parastatals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Primary and Secondary Schools</li> <li>2. School libraries</li> <li>3. Local Govt. Information Office.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Primary, Secondary and Tertiary institutions.</li> <li>2. Library of schools, Academic libraries</li> <li>3. Min. of Agric/Livestock</li> </ol>
Mass Media	Radio, T.V/Video	Radio, T.V/Video, Cable, Satellite
Print Media	Newspapers, Magazines	Newspapers, Magazines
Viewing Centres	One television viewing	Four television centres
Women Special Centre/ Information Resources Centres	None	A women special centre for weaving of traditional cloth, basket weaving, sewing, garri processing.
Cooperative societies	The societies here provide information on loans and micro credit scheme, local industries etc.	Cooperatives provide entrepreneurship information for small scale investors.
Archives	Oral archives - from elders mostly unrecorded. No instituted museums or archives.	Oral archives - tales told by the elders-mostly on tapes which are sold at resource centres.
Campaign awareness programmes	Programmes on health and agriculture	Programmes on health, agriculture etc. by government and NGOs.
Telephone	Land line connection (to industries and Ajoda New Town) G.S.M. connection partially all right.	'Okene has analogue land line connection. GSM fully networked.
Bill boards	Not used	Used in some of the rural urban communities.



## Discussion of Findings

### Information Dissemination among the Ebira

The Echane masquerade festival and the periodic Ikede festivals are used to communicate information to various categories of Ebira people through the ministration of songs and to promote unity and relaxation for their farmers, hunters and other people, to bring peace and good health to all. These festivals pass information and are fora for re-union, inter-marriage and useful exchange of visits for Ebira people in their different locations. They are also means of displaying mutual respect amongst the people. Those who constitute the top leadership of the festivals and the Eku priest were in the past people of high integrity whose dedication to their field was not compromised in any way.

### Information Dissemination in Egbeda

Mass communication media is the main method of information dissemination in Egbeda. Radio, Television and Newspapers are the main means of getting information across. The T.V. programme *Agbe loba* meaning "Farmer is king" is a popular programme watched in Egbeda. The Radio programme *Bohuyo* (Feed the town) and *Eje ka roko* (Let us farm) are also listened to. Film shows also are used in getting information disseminated. The rural populace here enjoys watching films especially free film shows.

It was observed that billboards are not used to good effect in this community. Only on Ibadan -Ife expressway are some billboards evident.

### Prospects

Libraries, archives and information centres can take the lead in provision of rural community information needs to achieve some measures of improvement in the following ways:

- The preservation of oral archives, which is the major source of traditional method of information generation, should be made a priority.
- The level of literacy promotion should be enhanced in information development, through the establishment of educational centres i.e. schools, Adult Education Centres, Computer Training Centres, Women Special Education Centers etc., to educate the rural masses.
- More mobile libraries should be established to encourage reading and educational advancement.
- All those in the information industry, like libraries, teachers, agricultural extension workers and the information ministries, should arrange awareness campaign programmes constantly.
- Notices and information promotion through billboards is necessary in rural areas.
- Radio and television programmes should also be designed to take information to the grass roots as a matter of priority, because they provide news, entertainment and information. Film shows can also be used as they not only entertain but also demonstrate some skills, teach new behaviours, attitudes and values orientation. They are a resourceful communication medium for community development programmes.
- Research results in science and technology should be compiled and repackaged to meet the needs of rural communities. Community newspaper can be developed, written in the local language with translation of the reverse side. The local peoples participation in the production process will make the effort more meaningful. It will help in literacy campaigns also.



- Libraries, archives and information centres should work together in a cohesive network to provide information for rural community development.

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