FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OTUOKE

REMEMBERING THE NEGLECTED MAJORITY: INFORMATION, A VEHICLE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

An Inaugural Lecture

By

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TABLE OF CONTENT

LIST OF FIGURES

DEDICATION

This Inaugural Lecture is dedicated to the Almighty God who created me fearfully and wonderfully and has been and will forever be my strength and shield.

PROTOCOL

The Vice Chancellor

Members of the University Governing Council

Principal Officers of the University

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Past Inaugural Lecturers

Professors and Academic Colleagues

Captains of Industry here present

My Lords Spiritual and Temporal

Family Members and Friends

Invited Guests

Staff, Students and Friends of the University

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

PREAMBLE

I started my career as a Library Assistant and rose through the ranks to the position of Senior Librarian in the prestigious University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT). However, before I rose to that rank, I had worked with a Diploma in Library Science. On my attainment of a first and second degrees in Public Administration and Sociology respectively, I wanted to convert to be an administrative staff. I applied through the then University Librarian but he turned my application down. Reasons been that he would not allow me to leave the library because of the wealth of experience I had gathered over the years in the library. He rather advised me to go for a Master's Degree in Librarianship and promised that he would recommend me for study leave with pay. He further advised that I have more prospects in Librarianship than becoming an administrative staff. I yielded to his advice and went for my Masters in Library and Information Science.

When it came to writing my Master`s Thesis in Library and Information Science, I took advantage of my Sociology background and wrote on the Provision and Accessibility of Information Communication Technology in Rural Communities. I have since been interested in Information and Development in Rural Areas in Nigeria. Many of my journal articles are in Information and Development. One of my articles in international journal: (Availability and Accessibility of Information Communication Technology in Rural Communities is the most cited of my works in Google Scholar.

In this inaugural lecture, I have argued that information is critical in promoting development in rural areas. In the introductory part of the lecture, I have provided an overview of information. I have also looked at who are the neglected majority and the un-neglected minority and linked it to contemporary society. Additionally, I have examined development as a concept and linked it to information. I have also shown the relationship between information and development. I have also explored the key development dimensions and shown how they relate to Nigerian society. Furthermore, I have looked at the development challenges facing rural areas in Nigeria and shown how information can contribute in addressing them. Finally, I have proposed a model for using information for rural development. I call it KARI SIX STEPS MODEL OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT. The six steps are information research, information assessment,

information action plan, information implementation, information evaluation and information feedback.

1. Introduction

Today, we gather to discuss a pressing issue that affects the fabric of our societies: the development of our neglected rural areas and the critical role of information in this process. The concept of the "neglected majority" refers to the millions living in rural regions who often lack access to essential resources, opportunities and information. This lecture aims to explain how information serve as a powerful vehicle for rural development, empowering communities and fostering sustainable growth.

Despite the advances in technology and communication, rural areas often remain marginalized. This neglect perpetuate cycles of poverty, limited education, and inadequate healthcare. It is essential to recognize that rural development is not just an economic imperative but a moral obligation to uplift these communities.

1.1 What Is Information

One of the outstanding things you need to know to reach your place in destiny is information. One of the richest men today in the world (Bill Gate) is only trading information. He has better information in the world than others in the field. What they have, others don`t have, and so they are wealthy.

The making of every man is a function of what he knows. That is why a wise man said that “knowledge is power”. Even the word of God says “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4vs 6). Only those who know more become better and when you are informed you are transformed. To be uninformed is to be deformed in life. Make your choice today.

Information is so important that the amount or level and type of information you have can make or mar your destiny. Insufficient information about a thing is what has left many in the pool of the average, and the type of information you have determines the kind of life you will live.

In the days of information technology, computer and the internet, someone who is not computer literate but desires a surety job in an organization, such a person will not get the job. The level of your information determines the level of your success.

The difference between success and failure is information. The difference between poverty and prosperity is information. David Oyedepo in his book '*The Power of Information'* (Series book 2) says "The difference between losers and winners is information".

Information is life and life is information. This assertion may appear general and bogus but it highlights the centrality of information in our society today. It also goes to show two things. First, it suggests that as long as we are alive, we will continue to need information. Secondly, it suggests that we need timely, appropriate and adequate information to continue to be alive. Kari (2022) posits that information is the life wire of society to the extent that a disconnection in information leads to a distortion in the development of society. Kari and Baro (2016) noted that information is an essential ingredient that fuels the effective functioning of the society.

2. WHO ARE THE NEGLECTED MAJORITY

The neglected rural dwellers in Nigeria represent a significant portion of the country's population, yet they remain largely marginalized in terms of economic opportunities, infrastructure and access to basic services. Rural dwellers in Nigeria home to about 69 - 70% according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020) were classified as poor compared to 40.1% of people living in urban areas. They comprise mostly farmers, fishermen and small scale traders.

These people are spread across thousands of communities, often in remote locations far from urban cities. The majority of them are involved in subsistence farming or small scale agriculture, relying on traditional methods for food production. Most rural dwellers live in poverty with limited access to modern agricultural tools, markets and financial services.

Nigeria's rural economy is predominantly agrarian, and despite the country's wealth in natural resources, these communities are largely excluded from the benefits of development. High unemployment and underdevelopment rate are prevalent in rural areas.

These groups often struggle with poverty, limited access to education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure, making them vulnerable to further social-economic disadvantages.

PICTURE OF RURAL DWELLERS FIG. 1

AND RURAL FAMERS FIG. 2

2.1 Who Are The Urban Dwellers In Nigeria

The Unneglected People

Urban dwellers, the unneglected in Nigeria, consists of individuals who reside in cities and towns rather than rural areas. Urban areas in Nigeria are generally defined as settlements with a population exceeding 20,000 people. Major centers include Lagos, Port Harcourt, Kano, Ibadan, Enugu etc but there are many other smaller cities. These areas typically have better infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals and electricity, although these facilities can still be over stretched due to rapid urban expansion.

Urban dwellers come from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. The cities serve as melting pots where people from different parts of the country convege in search of better livelihood. Urban centers in Nigeria are hubs for economic activities, ranging from formal employment in industries, services and government institutions to informal sectors like Petty trading, transportation and businesses. Urban dwellers in Nigeria represent a diverse and dynamic population ranging from professionals and business owners to informal workers and rural migrants. While cities offers opportunities for economic advancement and improved access to services like healthcare, better schools, access to agricultural information etc these opportunities are lacking to a great extent in the rural areas.

PICTURES OF URBAN DWELLERS FIG 3

AND URBAN MECHANIZED FARMING FIG. 4

3. INFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

3. 1. **The Conception of Information**

The concept of information is a complex one that has been debated by philosophers and scientists for centuries. Kari (2021) says that scholars are not in agreement on the appropriate definition of information. There is no single definition of information that is universally agreed upon, but some common elements include:

Information is a representation of reality: It is not reality itself, but rather a way of understanding and communicating about reality.

Information is meaningful: It has significance to the person who receives it.

Information is useful: It can be used to make decisions, solve problems, or understand the world around us.

Information is dynamic: It is constantly changing and evolving as we learn more about the world.

From the foregoing, it can be said that information is a unit of representation that communicates meaning. The concept of information is closely related to other concepts, such as data, knowledge, and meaning. Data is the raw material of information. It is unprocessed and unintelligible. Knowledge is information that has been interpreted and understood. It is the result of combining data with our own experiences and understanding. Meaning is the significance that we attach to information (Dalrymple, 2011; Cheng, et al., 2011; Kanehisa et al. 2023). It is what makes information useful and valuable to us.

The concept of information is essential to our understanding of the world around us. It is the foundation of communication, learning, and decision-making. It is also a key resource in today's knowledge economy.

3.2 The Role of Information in the Neglected Rural Communities and the Urban Areas in Nigeria

In today's digital age, Information is a critical asset for development, influencing every aspect of human life, including education, health, Agriculture, economy and governance. However, the availability, accessibility and use of information differs significantly between rural communities and urban areas in Nigeria. The disparities in infrastructure, literacy levels and

technological advancement shape how information is disseminated and utilized in these settings.

3.3 The Role of Information in Rural Communities

a) Agriculture

Rural communities in Nigeria are predominantly agrarian, and access to information on modern farming techniques, weather patterns, pest control and market prices are essential for improving agricultural productivity. Information helps farmers adopt better practices, increase yield, and access local and international markets. However, in many areas, traditional methods of information dissemination such as words-of-mouth are still prevalent due to limited infrastructural development.

Agriculture is the backbone of many rural economies, providing food, income, and employment for millions of people globally. As rural areas face challenges such as limited infrastructure, unpredictable climate, and lack of resources, the effective flow and use of information play a critical role in improving agricultural productivity and sustainability. This lecture will explore how access to accurate, timely, and relevant information contributes to agricultural development in rural areas.

3.4 The Importance of Information in Agriculture

Information is vital for decision-making in agriculture. Farmers need knowledge on various aspects, such as:

i. **Crop Selection and Management**: Farmers need data on the best crops for their soil type, climate, and market conditions. Information about crop varieties, pest resistance, and yield potentials help optimize production.

ii. **Weather Forecasting:** Timely weather information helps farmers plan activities like planting, irrigation, and harvesting. For instance, knowing when rainfall will occur can save crops from drought or excess flooding.

iii. **Market Information:** Understanding market demand, prices, and consumer trends enables farmers to decide what to grow and where to sell their produce for the best returns. Access to market data can also reduce exploitation by intermediaries.

iv. **Pest and Disease Control:** Information on early detection of pest outbreaks and advice on appropriate treatments helps minimize crop losses. Sharing local pest trends through information networks can enhance regional resilience.

v. **Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Information about sustainable farming techniques, soil conservation, water management, and organic farming empowers farmers to adopt practices that increase productivity without depleting natural resources.

3.5 Information Delivery Channels in Rural Areas: There are several methods through which information can be shared with rural farmers. These include:

i. **Extension Services:** Government and non-governmental agricultural extension officers serve as key information intermediaries, providing training and advice directly to farmers.

ii. **Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** Mobile phones, internet platforms, and radio programs are increasingly important in rural areas, enabling the rapid dissemination of agricultural knowledge. For instance, mobile apps can provide weather updates, access to market prices, and agricultural tips.

iii. **Farmer Cooperatives and Groups:** These organizations create platforms where farmers share information among themselves. Peer-to-peer learning within rural communities is often a trusted source of knowledge.

iv. **Educational Institutions and Research Centers:** Universities, colleges, and agricultural research centers generate research and development (R&D) that can be translated into practical information for rural farmers.

3.6 Challenges in Disseminating Information to Rural Farmers: Despite the importance of information, rural farmers face several challenges in accessing it:

i. **Limited Infrastructure:** Rural areas may lack adequate communication infrastructure, such as internet connectivity or mobile networks, to access real-time information.

ii. **Illiteracy and Language Barriers:** In many rural areas, a significant portion of the population may be illiterate or only speak local dialects, limiting their ability to use written or digital information.

iii. **Cost and Accessibility:** Subscription fees for agricultural services via mobile apps or internet platforms can be too high for small-scale farmers, reducing their access to critical information.

iv. **Misinformation:** Farmers may sometimes receive conflicting or incorrect information, which can lead to poor decision-making.

3.7 The Future of Information in Rural Agriculture

i. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Analytics:** In the future, AI can help analyze massive amounts of data on weather patterns, soil conditions, and crop performance, providing personalized recommendations to farmers.

ii. **Drones and Satellite Imagery:** Remote sensing technology can provide detailed information on soil health, crop growth, and water availability, helping farmers make informed decisions.

iii. **Blockchain Technology:** Blockchain can provide transparent supply chain management, ensuring that farmers are fairly compensated and that market information is accurate.

2.8 Role of Information in Urban Areas

i. Economic Growth and Business

Urban areas in Nigeria, such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, are characterized by rapid economic activities and a concentration of industries. Access to timely and accurate information on market trends, business opportunities, and financial services is critical for entrepreneurship and business growth. The proliferation of internet services, mobile devices, and social media platforms enables businesses to operate more efficiently and access wider markets.

ii. Education and Skill Development

Urban schools and universities often have better access to technological tools and digital libraries, which provide students with vast information resources. The availability of e-learning platforms, online courses, and educational forums has expanded opportunities for urban residents to gain new skills and knowledge, often in real-time.

iii. Health Information Systems

Urban dwellers have better access to healthcare facilities and are more likely to benefit from advanced health information systems. Digital platforms and mobile apps have become increasingly common in disseminating health information, booking appointments, and facilitating telemedicine services. This ensures that urban populations can access critical health services and information, contributing to better health outcomes.

iv. **Political Engagement and Governance**

In urban areas, the role of infomation in governance and civic participation is more pronounced due to the higher literacy levels and greater access to media outlets and the internet. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp are widely used to share political news, government policies, and election updates. This information empowers urban residents to engage in political debates, organize protests, and influence policy decisions.

3.9 Challenges in Information Access and Dissemination

i. **Digital Divide**

There remains a significant digital divide between rural and urban areas in Nigeria. While urban areas enjoy better internet access and digital literacy, rural communities still struggle with limited access to electricity, internet connectivity, and digital devices. This affects the quality and speed at which information is disseminated.

ii. **Language Barrier**

In both rural and urban areas, the language in which information is communicated can pose a barrier. Many rural dwellers speak local languages and may not fully understand English-based information, while urban residents, despite having better access, may still face linguistic challenges if the information is not delivered in accessible formats.

iii. **Infrastructural Constraints**

Infrastructural inadequacies, especially in rural areas, limit the effective dissemination of information. Poor road networks, lack of reliable electricity, and underdeveloped communication networks hinder the flow of information, thereby isolating rural communities from the benefits of digitalization.

3.10 The Role of Government and NGOs

The Nigerian government, along with NGOs, has a critical role to play in ensuring equitable access to information across rural and urban areas. Several initiatives, such as the provision of community radio stations, mobile information services, and e-governance platforms, are geared towards bridging the information gap. These efforts help improve agricultural practices, education, healthcare delivery, and civic participation by providing people with the information they need to thrive.

4.0 USING INFORMATION AS A VEHICLE FOR REMEMBERING RURAL COMMUNITIES IN DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The Importance of Remembering Rural Communities in Development

Rural communities make significant contributions to national economies, especially in sectors like agriculture, natural resource management, and cultural preservation. However, they often lack infrastructure, access to quality education, healthcare, and digital resources. Many development policies and initiatives, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, like Nigeria tend to focus on urban areas, sidelining rural populations. For Development to be Inclusive:

i. Rural communities must be remembered and involved in national conversations.
ii. Development strategies need to focus on integrating rural areas into the wider economy and society.
iii. Utilizing information as a resource can bring to light the needs and contributions of rural areas, enabling targeted interventions and policies.

4. 2 Dimensions of Development

Economic growth: Economic growth is often measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), which is the total value of goods and services produced in a country in a given year. Economic growth is important because it can lead to improvements in living standards, such as higher incomes, more jobs, and better access to goods and services. Xepapadeas (2005) says that economic growth is one of the efficient ways of promoting development. Acemoglu (2012) holds a similar view regarding the centrality of economic growth in promoting

development. Hanushek and Woessmann (2007) also hold similar views regarding the usefulness of economic growth for promoting development.

4.3 Social progress: Social progress can be measured by indicators such as life expectancy, literacy rates, and access to education and healthcare. Social progress is important because it can lead to improvements in the quality of life, such as longer and healthier lives, greater opportunities for education and advancement, and better protection from harm. Klofsten et al. (2018) say that social progress usually leads to social change, thus leading to development. Klofsten et al. add further that social progress needs to be carefully planned because it cannot take place by accident.

4.4 Environmental sustainability: Environmental sustainability can be measured by indicators such as greenhouse gas emissions, water use, and waste production. Environmental sustainability is important because it can help to protect the planet for future generations. Ögmundarson et al. (2020) submit that environment sustainability ensures that the environment is safe for people to leave in.

Development is a complex and challenging process, but it is essential for improving the lives of people around the world. By working together, we can create a better future for ourselves and for generations to come. Here are some of the challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve development:

4.5 Poverty: Poverty is one of the biggest challenges facing the world today. Millions of people around the world live in extreme poverty, without access to basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, and healthcare. Poverty is a state or condition in which one lacks the financial resources and essentials for a certain standard of living. Poverty can have diverse social, economic, and political causes and effects. There are two main types of poverty: absolute poverty and relative poverty. Absolute poverty is a situation in which a person lacks the basic necessities for survival, such as food, water, shelter, clothing, and healthcare (Béné et al., 2014). Relative poverty is a situation in which a person's income is significantly below the median income in their country or community. Poverty can have a number of negative consequences for individuals and societies, including:

4.6 Increased risk of disease: People living in poverty are more likely to experience poor health, due to lack of access to healthcare, poor nutrition, and exposure to environmental hazards.

4.7 Reduced educational attainment: Children living in poverty are more likely to miss school, drop out of school, and have lower educational attainment.

4.8 Increased crime: People living in poverty are more likely to be involved in crime, due to a number of factors, including lack of opportunity, lack of education, lack of employment and exposure to violence.

4.9 Political instability: Poverty can lead to political instability, as people living in poverty may be more likely to support radical or extremist movements (Palmer & Di Falco, 2012). Look at what is happening in Niger, Gambia, Gabon, etc.

4.10 Inequality: Inequality is another major challenge to development. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening in many parts of the world, and this is preventing people from reaching their full potential. Inequality is the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities among members of a given society. It can be measured in a variety of ways, including income inequality, wealth inequality, and access to education and healthcare.

There are many different causes of inequality: economic factors such as globalization, technological change, and tax policy can all contribute to inequality. Also, social factors such as discrimination, segregation, and lack of access to education and healthcare can contribute to inequality. And finally, political factors such as corruption, cronyism, and lack of transparency can also contribute to inequality (Frazer, 2006 Stewart, 2016).

4.11 Climate change: Climate change is a major threat to development. It is causing more extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and other changes that are having a negative impact on people and the environment. Climate change is caused by human activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels, which release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These gases trap heat, causing the planet to become warmer. There are a number of things that can be done to address climate change, including: reducing our reliance on fossil fuels; investing in

renewable energy sources; improving energy efficiency; protecting forests; and adapting to the impacts of climate change (Bahadur, et al. 2013).

Despite these challenges, there is reason for hope. In recent decades, there has been significant progress in development. Millions of people have been lifted out of poverty, and life expectancy has increased in many parts of the world. However, there is still much work to be done in Nigeria and we need to continue to work together to achieve development for all.

5.0 INFORMATION AS A TOOL FOR ADVOCACY AND INCLUSION

Information can serve as a vehicle to:

i. **Raise Awareness**: Information helps highlight the specific challenges faced by rural communities such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, poor health services, and limited access to education. Accurate data can inform decision-makers about the realities of rural life, helping to debunk myths or stereotypes that may marginalize these areas.
ii. **Promote Visibility**: Rural communities often face exclusion from mainstream media and policy discussions. Information channels, including digital platforms, storytelling, and research, can make these communities visible to both local and global audiences, driving resources and attention toward their development needs.
iii. **Empower Rural Communities**: When rural populations have access to information, they are empowered to participate in local governance, decision-making processes, and economic activities. Access to market information, agricultural practices, healthcare knowledge, and educational resources can transform rural livelihoods.
iv. **Attract Investment**: Accurate, timely, and well-disseminated information about the economic potential and resources of rural areas can attract both public and private investments. Development projects, entrepreneurial ventures, and innovation hubs can be encouraged in rural settings through the use of data and storytelling.

5.2 The Role of Digital Technologies in Enhancing Rural Development

Digital technologies have revolutionized information dissemination, and rural areas stand to benefit significantly if these technologies are effectively harnessed. The use of mobile phones,

the internet, and social media has become critical in spreading information, improving access to services, and providing platforms for advocacy.

5.3 Key Areas Where Digital Information Can Support Rural Development

i. **Agricultural Development**: Farmers can access information on crop prices, weather forecasts, and best practices in sustainable farming, thereby improving productivity and income.

ii. **Healthcare Access**: Telemedicine and mobile health services can provide rural populations with information on health services, disease prevention, and maternal care.

iii. **Education and Skills Development**: E-learning platforms and mobile apps can bring educational opportunities to rural children and adults, providing them with the skills needed for employment or entrepreneurship.

iv. **Market Access**: Digital platforms can link rural producers directly with buyers, cutting out intermediaries and increasing their profit margins.

5.4 Challenges to Effective Information Use in Rural Development

Despite its potential, there are challenges to using information effectively for rural development. These challenges include:

i. **Digital Divide:** Many rural communities lack access to reliable internet, electricity, or digital devices. Bridging this gap is essential to ensure that information can reach and benefit these populations.

ii. **Literacy and Education Barriers:** Even with access to information, low literacy levels in some rural communities may hinder its effective use. Development programs need to include capacity-building and education to help people make the best use of information.

iii. **Cultural and Language Barriers:** Information must be tailored to the local context. In many rural areas, information provided in national or international languages may not be accessible to the local population. Translation into local languages and culturally appropriate communication is vital.

iv. **Mistrust in External Information Sources**: Some rural populations may distrust external sources of information, particularly if previous development efforts have failed. Building trust is essential for information to be effective in promoting development.

v. **Lack of Record**

Kari (2023) observed that information is not passed to the next generation. All the herbs our fathers knew, where are they now? In fact, our colonial masters took advantage of that. They even called them "native doctors". Where are we today? Our great grandfathers knew so much about local herbs but they did not pass it on to their children in any recorded form and today we have lost out on all what they knew. When old people die, an encyclopedia is buried. They die with their knowledge. We would have had many great Pharmacies like Alexander Flemming, Jesse Boot, Hubert Humphrey.

5.5 Case Studies: Information-Led Rural Development Initiatives

i. Malaysia has always emphasized on improving the productivity and production of primary commodities which make the largest contributions to the Malaysian economy. They have the establishment of the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development in 1967 and the Palm Oil Research Institute in 1975. It has been reported that these institutes have done exceedingly outstanding work as is evident from highly competitive status enjoyed by Malaysians in the world market in palm oil. We all know that Malaysia came to Nigeria and collected our palm seedlings to improve on them. Research findings shows that the seedlings were made available to all rural farmers.

ii. In India, the use of mobile phones has helped to increase agricultural productivity by providing farmers with access to weather forecasts, market prices, and agricultural advice (Fu & Akter 2016; Baumüller, 2017). Agriculture is important when discussing development because it has the capacity to employ many people as well as produce raw materials for industrial use. Therefore, any attempt to improve agriculture is commendable because it will have a chain of impact.

iii. In Kenya, the use of ICTs has helped to improve education levels by providing students with access to online learning resources and by making it easier for teachers to communicate with each other (Bariu, 2020). Education is also an important empowerment tool because when people are educated, they are mentally equipped to make sound decisions and become better citizens. Illiteracy is a time bomb and any nation that treats education with seriousness is planning for a long-term development. Therefore, in contemporary society, ICT can be used to promote education.

M-Pesa is a mobile money service that revolutionized financial access for rural communities in Kenya. Through mobile technology, rural populations were able to access banking services, conduct transactions, and improve their economic stability, highlighting how digital information can foster rural economic development.

iv. **Digital Green in India**: This initiative uses video technology to train farmers in sustainable agricultural practices. By sharing locally produced videos in rural communities, Digital Green empowers farmers with knowledge and best practices, demonstrating the transformative power of targeted information dissemination.

v. In Brazil, the use of ICTs has helped to reduce poverty by providing people with access to microloans and other financial services (Rebehy et al., 2017).

Poverty is cancerous. Poor people are vulnerable and a nation with a high number of poor people is facing a serious problem. Mehlum et al (2006) say that poverty leads to an increase in the crime rate. This means that an attempt to combat crime must also take into account the problem of poverty rate.

These are just a few examples of the many ways in which information can contribute to development. As ICTs continue to evolve, it is likely that the impact of information on development will become even more significant. The implication, therefore, is that information is an integral component of development. Any effort to promote development will need to consider the role that information can play in the process.

5.6 Challenges on the use of information for rural communities in Nigeria

i. Lack of access to information: Rural areas in Nigeria have limited access to information resources, such as libraries, computers, and the Internet. This challenge

will need to be addressed for rural people to be able to access information that will propel development.

ii. Low literacy rates: Rural residents have low literacy rates, which can make it difficult for them to access and understand information. It will be good to devise ways of addressing this limitation so that rural areas will be integrated into Nigeria's development plan.

iii. Cultural barriers: Cultural barriers can also make it difficult for rural residents to access and use information. For example, some cultures may have taboos against discussing certain topics, such as family planning or HIV/AIDS. Information will be needed to address such cultural beliefs.

Language barriers: Language barriers can also make it difficult for rural residents to access and use information. In Nigeria, for example, there are many languages that might make it difficult to effectively circulate information.

6.0 THE WAY FORWARD: HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE INFORMATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

i. **Invest in Infrastructure:** Governments and organizations must invest in the infrastructure that supports the flow of information in rural areas, including internet access, electricity, and transportation.

ii. **Tailor Information to Local Needs:** Information must be relevant and localized. Development programs should be designed to address specific challenges faced by rural communities, and information must be in a form they can understand and use.

iii. **Promote Collaboration Between Stakeholders:** Governments, NGOs, private companies, and local communities should work together to create information systems that support rural development. Partnerships can facilitate knowledge exchange, co-create solutions, and foster trust.

iv. **Leverage Local Knowledge and Networks:** Rural communities possess vast amounts of traditional knowledge that can complement modern information systems.

Integrating local knowledge into development initiatives ensures that solutions are culturally relevant and sustainable.

v. **Create Feedback Mechanisms**: Information should flow both ways. Rural communities should not only be passive recipients of information but active contributors. Development strategies should include mechanisms for gathering local feedback to ensure initiatives are responsive to community needs.

6. 1 Kari Six Steps Model on Rural Development in Nigeria

Based on the foregoing discussion, we can see that information is a crucial tool for promoting rural development through agriculture. Many studies are conducted, and useful findings are documented, but these findings are not effectively communicated to rural dwellers so that they can benefit from such results. Our forefathers had useful knowledge of herbs, but they did not document it so most of what they knew was not effectively transferred to their succeeding generation. Information can be used to educate rural dwellers and mobilize them to take part in positive development initiatives. In this inaugural lecture, I am recommending a model for using information for rural development. The model is called KARI SIX STEPS MODEL OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (Fig 2). The model provides for a six-step approach that needs to be followed to apply information for the purposes of promoting rural development in Nigeria. The stages are typically in hierarchy and as one step is complete, it gives the room for the beginning of the next step. The implication is that to use the model to promote development in rural areas, all the steps must be diligently followed. This model is graphically illustrated thus:

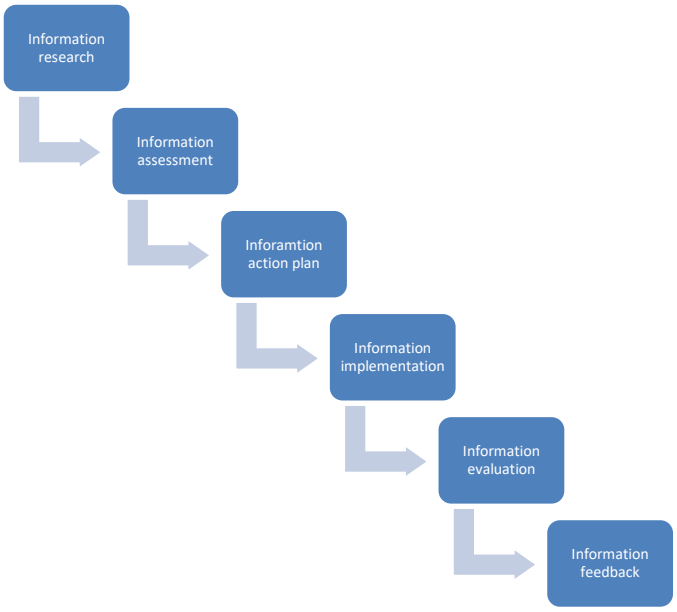


Fig. 5

KARI SIX STEPS MODEL OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The variables in the model are explained below:

Information Research

This step involves conducting research to understand the needs of the area being targeted. Rural areas in Nigeria differ and development must be specifically designed to address the development needs of specific rural areas. The aim of the information research is to understand the best way to communicate development initiatives to target areas. Part of the efforts here should include the identification of the various stake holders that could contribute to the development of rural areas. The stakeholders could include donor agencies, government officials, non-governmental organizations, opinion leaders, among others.

Information assessment

Here, the goal is to understand the information challenges associated with specific rural areas. By so doing, it will be easier to use information for the purposes of development in rural areas.

Information action plan

The work here is to come up with an action plan that will be used to promote development in rural areas. It is essential to clarify here that it is better to design an action plan based on the target rural area.

Information implementation

This is the stage where what is planned is being implemented. It is the time to ensure that the action plan is brought to reality.

Information evaluation

This stage entails evaluating the impact of the information plan that was implemented for the development of the rural areas.

Information feedback

Here, attention should be focused on getting reactions from the rural areas that received the information action plan.

Let me add here that for some time now, I have been involved in studies that relate to the promotion of the welfare of rural people. My findings have consistently shown that rural dwellers constitute the majority of the populace, and issues related to their development affect the majority of the population. For example, in my study on "Availability and accessibility of ICT in the rural communities of Nigeria," I found that about 80% of Nigerians live in rural areas and they lack access to ICT (Kari 2012). This is disturbing because ICT is at the heart of development in the 21st society. When rural areas lack access to ICT tools, it will be difficult for them to access research findings. In another study on "Libraries and social media as catalysts for national unity and security in Nigeria," I found that libraries have a crucial role to play in the development of national unity and the promotion of food and national security (Kari, 2019). It is essential to point out here that national unity and security cannot be achieved if rural areas are disconnected from the rest of the world. In this lecture, I have highlighted the need to ensure that the rural areas are connected with other areas so that they are not excluded from development. This is crucial so that people in rural areas do not create problems for those in the city. What this lecture suggests is that when any discussion on development is being held, it is essential to consider the integration of those in rural areas. There needs to be a deliberate plan for them, and their uniqueness needs to be considered. The uniqueness here means their low level of education, low literacy rate, poor access to the internet and other ICT tools, ignorance and poverty rates. Anything short of that will mean a disintegration of a section of the country.

7.0 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The Lecture ***"Remembering the Neglected Majority: Information as a Vehicle for Rural Development"*** contributes to knowledge by emphasizing the critical role of information in promoting rural development, particularly for populations often overlooked in development efforts. Some key contributions include:

1. **Highlighting the Rural-Urban Information Divide:** The work draws attention to the disparity in access to information between rural and urban areas. It suggests that without equitable information dissemination, rural populations remain marginalized, hindering their social and economic progress.
2. **Advocating for Information as a Development Tool**: It emphasizes that access to accurate, relevant, and timely information is vital for empowering rural communities. Information helps farmers, entrepreneurs, and rural dwellers make informed decisions that can improve productivity, livelihoods, and overall development.
3. **Bridging the Knowledge Gap:** The lecture explores how information technology and communication tools can bridge the knowledge gap in rural areas. It proposes practical strategies for integrating information dissemination into rural development programs.
4. **Policy Recommendations:** It offers insights and recommendations for policy makers on how to improve rural information systems, ensuring that development interventions are inclusive and effectively meet the needs of rural communities.
5. **Empowering the "Neglected Majority":** By focusing on the neglected rural populations, it challenges traditional development models that often prioritize urban-centric approaches. The lecture underscores the importance of considering rural perspectives in national development plans.

In summary, the lecture contributes by positioning information as a key driver for rural empowerment and development, providing frameworks and suggestions for making information more accessible to rural communities.

8.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

8.1 CONCLUSION

It is true that educational attainment affects an individual ability to comprehend and therefore use messages. This means that modern communication and Information Technology to Illiterates and semi-Illiterates rural population may not be effective. When the economy of a country is down, the only people who can salvage the economy are the farmers who live in the rural areas.

Nigeria is still in the rudimentary stages of participating in the information society. Her focus is still in the urban areas in the provision of basic amenities and information infrastructure.

Rural areas in Nigeria will for long a time be excluded from the global information village because of their under-development and lack of social amenities like electricity.

From the findings of my studies, it is Obvious that imposing new information Technology (IT) on illiterate rural dwellers who do not have the necessary knowledge and skill and lack of basic infrastructure for the functioning of the information flow will be a waste for now.

In conclusion, addressing the needs of the neglected majority requires a concerted effort to leverage information as a tool for development. By prioritizing access to information, we can empower rural communities, enhance their resilience, and pave the way for sustainable development. Let us commit to remembering the neglected majority and ensuring that information serves as a bridge to a brighter future for all.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made

1. **Town Criers**: A town crier is a man identified by the community to pass information to the generality of people in the community. The town crier speaks the local language, goes to all the nooks and crannies either during the day or at night and transmit information to the villagers. This is for an information officer to copy exact information from research findings or government that concerns rural dwellers to work in collaboration with town criers.

2. **Folktales and Story Telling:** These are stories told by elders in a society to children and youth in order to educate, inform and entertain them. they could incorporate songs, dances and drama in telling the tales. Folk-tales usually pass on important information and culture of the society.

3. **Songs:** songs are used to eulogize individual and communities.

4. **Drama**: this is used to communicate information, pass on political messages and teach moral values in the community.

5. I also recommended that for the time being, musicians who are good in passing information, town criers be properly trained to work with librarians and other information agencies, who will in turn interact with the rural dwellers on the new ideas gathered from researchers and the information industry.

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