**INFLUENCE OF MASS MEDIA MESSAGES ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**(A STUDY OF IKOT EKPENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA)**

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

* 1. **Background of the Study**

It is a known fact that all the raw materials used by industries are provided by rural communities. Inspite of this numerous contributions by the rural communities, they have not received the adequate attention that they deserve. Though government are doing everything within their power to see this situation as reserved, they should also realize that they have not been making effective use of the mass media to foster rural development. Through the use of the various mass communication media, shaping and channelling the minds of the rural communities to the issues that affects them will be possible and this will also go a long way to bettering their condition.

Rural development planners should realize the value of the communication media and should adequately employ this values in all facets of their programmes. Before now much attention had been paid to the urban communities. It was only during Ibrahim Babangida’s regime that the defunct Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) was established which laid emphasis on the development of the rural communities. This directorate as at then was to effectively promote the frame work of grass root social mobilization.

According to Udofia (2010) without clearly determining the needs of the rural people it is unwise to impose on them any objectives which are irrelevant in their cultural settings. Similarly, any rural development programme which excludes the ruralities in the conceptualization and planning stages only to seek their support at the implementation stage is likely to fail. In support of this view the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (1978) states that the process of integrated rural development requires the interaction of people, institutions and government at all levels and its success depends on the degree of involvement of the generality of the people who are to benefit from it.

Udofia (2010) further added that for rural development to be achieved the needs of the rural societies must be clearly defined. It has been ascertained that rural societies needs information especially on issues such as health, agriculture, employment, education, family and community matters. They need information on such issues for survival and for solving their problems.

Kingsley Esin (1986) states that in rural areas television and radio have clearly established themselves as powerful forces of transformation. Other media scholar’s states that traditional forms of communication though not often acknowledged are also powerful forces of transformation.

* 1. **Statement of Problem**

The mass media is also known to be an agent of social change and a tool for creating awareness. All these efforts notwithstanding, the mass media in Nigeria are concentrated in capital cities and heavily populated areas and even government owned media have failed as well in reaching remote areas of the country. It is acknowledged more than ever that adequate information dissemination is the basis of an informed and rational citizen.

Developments usually involve issues, policies, budgets and activities which can only be acceptable or successful through the effective use of mass media as fourth estate of the realm. Unfortunately, these forgeries are done in a discriminating manner by our government, by concentrating development in the urban areas while neglecting the rural areas. Consequently, this has led to unnecessary frictions between the government, mass media and the rural dwellers, which could not have arisen if the people were properly informed and persuaded through effective, organized and sustained governmental programmes.

Therefore, the research problem is to find out the extent to which the mass media has helped the rural communities in the context of development.

* 1. **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study includes:

1. To find out the attitude of Ikot Ekpene people towards the mass media.
2. To find out which medium of mass communication the people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area choose to expose themselves to.
3. To find out if the people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area prefer the mass media to use their native language predominantly in passing information to them.
   1. **Research Questions**

This research is being proposed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the attitude of Ikot Ekpene people towards the mass media?
2. Which medium of mass communication do the people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area choose to expose themselves to?
3. Do the people of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area prefer the mass media to use their native language predominantly in passing information to them?
   1. **Scope of Study**

This study focuses on the influence of mass media messages on rural development. Spatially, this work is delimited to Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Hence, it does not try to cover all the Local Government in the State.

* 1. **Significance of the Study**

The progress and strength of any country depends first and foremost on the progress of its people. To some degree it also depends on its communication capability and the use of mass media to bring about the desired development in the rural communities. Hence, this study is significant in the following ways:

1. It will help the mass media to bring about development in the remote parts of the third world countries.
2. The thesis of this research will equally be of great value to Nigerian development planners to enable them to know how to effectively use the resources at their disposal to justify development in the rural communities.
3. It will help the Nigerian government to establish strategic and logistic policies that will bring about the desired development in our communities.
4. It will also serve as a source of reference material to guide students and researchers in any related study.
5. It will enable the researcher to determine the extent to which mass media messages have enhanced rural development.
   1. **Limitation of the Study**

In the course of this study, the researcher has faced some difficulties on the part of the respondents who refused to accept the questionnaire because they feel the research is going to expose their educational deficiencies.

However, the researcher intends to eliminate the above limitation by using community leaders to educate the respondents on the purpose of the research before the primary data gathering exercises.

* 1. **Definition of Terms**

For ease of understanding the following terms were defined:

1. **Impact:** This is the influence or effect that something has to make something or somebody behave in a particular way.
2. **Mass Media:** These are channels through which information could be disseminated to the members of the public. Such channels include radio, television, newspaper and magazines.
3. **Message:** This is the physical raw information which the source encodes. It is the subject matter or theme of communication.
4. **Rural Development**: This is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated area.