

MOBILISING THE RURAL COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGNS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The rural communities in Nigeria are bedeviled with an avalanche of challenges including infrastructural deficit ranging from poor road network, lack of potable drinking water, poor sanitary conditions, poverty and diseases. All these have attracted the attention of global agencies such as World Health Organizations (WHO), United Nation Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), National Centre for Diseases Control (NCDC) to initiate policies and programmes aimed at ameliorating the deplorable conditions. But unfortunately, noble as these efforts and initiatives may be, proper articulation of such challenges remain a burden and unfulfilled leaving the rural dwellers to languish under these walloping conditions. Thus, communications becomes essential in order to drive the development campaigns to the grassroots to enhance participatory communications and mutual understanding and cooperation. Integrated model of communication for social change was adopted as the theoretical anchor for the research. This is in line with integrated multi-media approach which is apt for the dissemination of messages in the rural communities. The study was a survey design and relied essentially on interview and focus group discussion (FBDS) to elicit opinions, views and perceptions being a qualitative research method. The research was situated in three senatorial districts, covering nine(9) Local Government Area in Cross River State. A critical analysis of selected development campaign programmes revealed that most development initiatives aimed at mobilizing the rural communities have failed largely because of inappropriate use of communications strategies – ignoring the traditional and interpersonal means of communications even without giving a thought to a multi-media integrated approach to rural community mobilization. Thus, the study recommends the planting of development campaigns on recognized existing community leadership pattern taking into consideration the socio-cultural norms and political structure of the people.

KEYWORDS: *Mobilization, Sustainable Development, Rural Communities*