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DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR ADVOCACY: A STUDY OF THE STOP OPEN DEFECATION ADVOCACY, SENSITIZATION AND ENLISTMENT PROGRAMME IN OSUN STATE

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ABSTRACT

Communication and development are connected. In order to achieve long-term benefits in any developmental effort, communication is absolutely crucial. In order to convey information, viewpoints, and views among the stakeholders, development communication attempts to build a two-way flow. Advocacy is all about persuading and influencing the public, but this cannot be done unless the communicators can clearly express their thoughts. This study set out to define development communication and identify its essential components in Nigeria. The study also looked into how development communication may be used to advocate the stop open defecation in Osun State, Nigeria. Results showed that the goal of the campaign to eradicate open defecation in Osun state was to promote healthy living by making sure that every home, school, and common areas like markets and parking lots have toilet facilities and are maintained clean and hygienic. This study also discovered that Osun state's campaign for stop open defecation used the Integrated Approach of development communication. As a result of the stop open defecation advocacy, the people of Osun state developed a stronger appetite and desire for a higher quality of life, which led to a shift in attitude and behavior and an improved quality of life.

Keywords: open defecation, development, communication, advocacy, Nigeria.

Introduction

Communication and development are entwined. Any developmental effort that wants to produce lasting outcomes must prioritize communication. Due to the theoretical base of both phrases, they are replete with a variety of usages and functions. By including important stakeholders in the development process, development communication enables long-lasting change in development operations.

In order to convey information, viewpoints, and views among the stakeholders, development communication attempts to build a two-way flow. Also, this form of communication seeks to create situations that are favorable for evaluating risks and opportunities, disseminating information, and bringing about behavioral and social change. Since the one-way vertical communication model of sender - message - channel - recipient has consistently failed, the

function of development communication has grown more crucial and pertinent than ever. The technique to communicating the processes has changed as the objective of development has expanded beyond economic growth to include other social elements. This new vision has made sustainability and citizen participation central components, as the World Bank has recently recognized. The World Bank states that "participation is increasingly recognized as a crucial aspect of sustainable development initiatives," and that "internationally, attention is being placed on the difficulties of sustainable development."

The goal of advocacy is to persuade and influence the public, but this cannot be done unless the communicators can clearly express their beliefs (Buckley, 2018). In order to successfully persuade the public through an advocacy campaign, support must be successfully mobilized. But a great campaign concept is useless if there is no way to deliver it to the target audiences. A solid communications plan to support your campaigning efforts is therefore essential to success, claims Smerdon (2015). Large-scale participation is impossible without communication, and vice versa. The foundation of participation must be two-way communication principles and techniques.

Knowing one's audience is a key component of advocacy, according to Coulby (2010). It takes a lot of work to identify stakeholders and the most effective ways to communicate with them in order to ensure that the correct people hear what you have to say and act in the way you want them to. The two primary audiences in advocacy efforts are often decision makers and influencers.

- Decision-makers: These are the primary audience. They are the individuals or groups who can make the decisions you want to influence.
- Influencers: These are the secondary audience. They are the individuals or groups that influence the decision-makers.

There are additional audiences, meanwhile, including media outlets, blogs, community organizations, and donors. Thus, this paper will focus on four key issues: What is communication for development? What constitutes development communication's essential components? What justifies its requirement in advocacy work today? What are the uses of development communication in Osun State's advocacy against open defecation?

Development Communication

Strategic communication is included into development programs with a focus on indigenous realities, and this is known as "development communication." Not merely information transmission, education, or awareness-raising are its goals; behavior change is as well. Jinadasa (2011) asserts that development communication is fundamentally participatory since participation is defined as people actively participating in development programs and processes; they offer ideas, take initiative, and express their needs and issues while claiming their autonomy. It is a collaborative social process that employs a variety of tools and techniques. In order to achieve lasting, meaningful change, it is also important to listen, establish trust, share knowledge and skill-building strategies, debate, and learn. It is neither corporate communication nor public relations.

In development communication, Gbaden and Tsafa (2021) list five keywords: discourse, stakeholders, information exchange, and mutual understanding. Dialog is the first major term

related to development communication. A communication between the stakeholders is always beneficial and necessary, regardless of the project type. Building trust, exchanging information, and ensuring mutual understanding all depend on dialogue.

Key Elements of Development Communication

1. Purposive: Every communication effort for international development has a specific goal. It has a purpose and adopts an approach that is very goal-oriented.
2. Responsive: Two-way, responsive communication is essential for development. Vertically, from the top of the government to the lowest levels, and horizontally, among the numerous departments and other stakeholders, communication should flow from all angles.
3. Creativity and innovation: These qualities distinguish the development communication campaigns. The messages should be created in such a way that they address the problem in a clear and concise manner and that everyone can agree on the solution within the confines of societal standards.
4. Sustainability and continuity: Effective communication must be ongoing and sustainable. Any kind of communication is only effective when it is ingrained in daily life and contributes to a better society. The people in need are the ones who need to arm themselves with resources that can help them sustain themselves in the long run, not the government officials who occasionally visit the town to educate and uplift them.
5. Independent verification: Development communication is a participatory method that includes, in addition to the government, a number of non-governmental organizations, community-based groups, extension agents, private citizens, and special agents.
6. Community participation: Every community has a distinct structure, method of communication, tradition, and set of demands. So, it's important to think strategically and separately about each of these. Along with the locals, the messages should be created in a way that is most appropriate for that particular community.
7. Government accessibility: Citizens choose their representatives to carry out their objectives. However, there is a general lack of interest in the government. It is frequently perceived as remote, uncooperative, and distant. The government's accessibility and visibility are demonstrated by the numerous development initiatives, which don't need communities to travel far or pay a high price to receive government services and information. Government representatives work closely with and answer to the general public, which increases their dependability and credibility across the board.
8. Simple and convenient communication tools A straightforward communication tool that is available to everyone is also a key component of the development strategy. The presentation needs to be on point, succinct, visually appealing, and written in plain English.

Approaches to Development Communication

According to Gbaden and Tsafa, there are several methods of development communication (2021). The interpersonal method is the initial strategy for development communication in Nigeria. The interpersonal approach can be applied through community development and extension strategies, as well as through mass mobilization and ideologies. Using information

on farming, agriculture, health, and cleanliness, agents travel between locations to instruct people on how to put new concepts into effect through hands-on demonstrations. This approach is largely aimed towards rural residents who are interested in innovating and putting new ideas into reality, who have the resources to do so, and who support their endeavours.

The mass media approach is the following style of strategy. This strategy heavily utilizes interpersonal channels, which are initiated by higher-ups rather than growth agents. According to this approach, the primary purpose of development communication is to raise rural residents' consciousness. The interpersonal approach and the mass media approach have the same goal, but they differ in their operational models and how the message is presented. The latter places more emphasis on awareness as a cornerstone for development while the former emphasizes issues with human and physical development.

The centralized mass media method comes after the mass media strategy. The mass media infrastructure, as well as the direction and content of communications, are all under central control in this approach, which employs an all-inclusive and decisive methodology. This strategy mostly relies on mass media, and the message content is similarly generic, thus it downplays the value of the interpersonal technique. The localized mass media approach, which follows the centralized mass media approach, places a strong emphasis on using locals through interpersonal communication, identifying issues and addressing them through local media like radio, community media, etc., using local dialects, and crafting the message in accordance with the objectives. Also, it fosters a climate of trust and openness to the message. The integrated approach is the final strategy for development communication in Nigeria. This strategy aims to use the potential of both the interpersonal strategy and the mass media while taking into account their advantages and disadvantages. This technique uses both centralized and localized mass media, as well as the extension and community development method, ideological and mass mobilization.

Importance of Communication and Advocacy

Smerdon (2015) asserts that if you are having a hard time convincing people to accept your idea, "Either you have a piece of junk or you are not successfully articulating what you have." You are to blame for both of these. As contentious as it may sound, effective communication and advocacy have the capacity to set you and your project on a path to major advancement, according to Buckley (2018). The success of any endeavour depends on its ability to communicate, and doing so is crucial to achieving its goals. The ability to communicate is essential for utilizing the knowledge that has become available to us in this day (Shaikh, 2012).In addition to daily encounters, emails, phone calls, text and video messaging, and in-person talks have become essential tools for team building, conceptualizing ideas, planning, carrying out, and assessing projects, among other things.

Channels of Communication and Advocacy

The purpose and the audience or your message should inform which option you choose to communicate. Coulby (2010), highlight these channels to include:

1. In-person meetings (best for engaging individuals, local authorities and small groups)
2. Phone calls, video chat or conference (for communications involving remote participants)

3. Social media (Facebook and Twitter posts, short videos, posters and flyers)
4. Bulk SMS (best in advocacy campaigns or marketing your service)
5. Traditional media (radio, information centre, TV, newspapers) – best for advertising or creating awareness
6. Community events (festivals and other public gatherings are a good place to spread messages)
7. Electronic communications (E.g., periodic newsletters via email subscriptions, blog posts)

The Stop Open Defecation Advocacy, Sensitization and Enlistment Programme in Osun State: A Review

In 2019, a non-governmental organization, Ilerioluwa Development Initiative (IDI), identified a health and social challenge that tended to affect the well-being of the people of Osun and embarked on a State wide advocacy, sensitization and enlightenment programmes against Open Defecation –the practice of defecating in the open places such as fields, back of the houses, and every open place other than in toilets. The advocacy aimed at tackling one of the very serious development challenges facing Osun State as open defecation is a major challenge born out of an age-old practice of the people of the State. Over the years, it has been identified as a major destroyer of health and pollutant of the environment.

The aim of the advocacy was to achieve good healthy living by ensuring that there are toilet facilities in every home, schools and public places like the market and motor parks and that they are kept in clean and hygienic conditions. The IDI identified its target audience(s) who are either decision makers like women and children, market men and women, commercial transporters, majorly the people across the 30 local government areas of the state and influencers like the State Government, Osun State Rural Water, Hygiene and Sanitation Agency (RUWESA), Traditional rulers, Landlords, Local Government Council Chairmen and Officials, Executives of market men and women among others.

Both audiences were instrumental in the development of a comprehensive campaign on the need to improve access to water Sanitation and hygiene in the state in which one of the expected fruits of the campaign was availability of decent toilets in every home, community, school, market and Public place in the state.

The Integrated Approach of development communication was adopted for the advocacy. It used fully the extension and community development method and ideology and mass mobilization but also uses the centralized and the localized mass media approach.



The campaign was purposive; has an objective and was goal-oriented in its approach. It was responsive; had room for dialogue and feedback. It was equally innovative and creative. It is the first time such a health and social menace would be undertaken. The messages were designed in ways that addressed the issue in a simple and lucid manner and the solutions were acceptable by everyone within the framework of the norms of the society. Easy and simple communication tool, which is easily accessible by everybody, was used. The presentation of the message was relevant, brief and attractive and it was rendered in a language that could be easily understood. As each community is unique, the messages were designed in a manner most suitable for each particular community in cooperation with the local people. The channels of communication were in-person meetings, traditional media mostly the radio was adopted as well as social media and community event like seminars and public meetings. Also, the approach of the advocacy was built in a way that gave room for sustainability and continuity. It was embedded in the pattern of the society; in the everyday lives which was leading to a better society. The approach designed wasn't about the government officials who occasionally visited the community to educate and uplift them like the sanitation officers, but about the people who equipped themselves with resources that could help them sustain themselves in the long run but ensuring they provide a sanitary facility and seeing to its maintenance.

Monitoring and evaluation of the development process were carried out as they helped to assess the progress and modify the message and tools and processes when the need arouses to suit each situation and audience. Finally, as development communication is a participatory approach, there was an independent validation of this advocacy, enlightenment and sensitization programmes to see if it brought about a change in the society. In November 2020, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) presented the Award of Certificate to Ifedayo





Local Government Area as Open Defecation Free (ODF) Local Government as validated by the National Task Group on Sanitation (NTGS) on October 30, 2019.
Caption: Presentation of Open Defecation Free Award of Certificate by UNICEF

Conclusion

In conclusion, development communication was an important tool deployed in the Stop Open Defecation advocacy in Osun State by a Non-Governmental Organization, Ilerioluwa Development Initiative to provide information about the challenges in the environment, this knowledge and information was effectively communicated to the people by explaining the development process and programmes in such a way that the programme found acceptance among the beneficiaries (decision makers) and they were equipped to take advantage of the solutions being offered to them. No doubt, the advocacy sharpened the people's appetite and desire for a better quality of life, and produced a change of attitude and behavior, resulting in enhanced quality of life.

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