

PROVISION OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY INFORMATION OFFICERS IN SOME SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS IN DELTA AND ONDO STATES OF NIGERIA

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The study investigated the provision of information for rural development by information officers in some selected local government areas in Delta and Ondo States of Nigeria. The study examined the kind of information provided by information officers for rural development and also to ascertain the problems that militate against them while performing their duties. To guide the study, four research questions were raised. Descriptive survey design was adopted and questionnaire was the research instrument that was used in obtaining data. The population of the study is 69 information officers in the rural communities in twelve local government areas in Delta and Ondo States under study. The study revealed that information for agricultural activities, information on maintenance and storage of agricultural produce etc. are the major kind of information provided by information officers for rural development. Result also shows that this information is disseminated to rural dwellers by information officers through the following channels; exhibitions and shows, Friends/Neighbours among others. It was discovered that information and communication technology (ICT) enhances the role of information officers in the following ways; create easy access to relevant information, easy transfer and delivery of relevant information etc. The major problems faced by information officers in discharging their duties are as follows; language barrier, inadequate funds, lack of information infrastructure, slow internet response, erratic power supply and inadequate personnel. Based on the findings, the following recommendation was made: Government should provide funds for information services in rural areas so that information will be adequately provided by the information officers for rural dwellers to enhance development.

Key words: Information Technology , Rural development, Communications

INTRODUCTION

Information is raw material for development for both urban and rural dwellers. Prosperity, progress, and development of any nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information. According to Abissat (2008), in a report on older rural people which indicates that, access to information and advice is a key resource for local people in maintaining active and independent lives. Access to information is also critical to letting people know their entitlements to welfare benefits and sources of support to overcome social exclusion. The role of information officers in a community development is enormous. Information is needed in every facet of human Endeavour to create change. For a nation to be termed developed; it has to start from the grassroots. Nigeria is a developing country where the majority of the population lives in the rural areas (Okiy, 2003). She emphasized that the need to involve them in national development process cannot be overemphasized. This can be achieved through the identification of the information needs of the rural dwellers and provision of innovative rural public library services to improve their level of literary and education and to enhance their ability to use practical information relevant to their daily lives. The information needs of rural communities range from health to agriculture. This is because majority of the rural communities are farmers. The general information needs of agricultural extension workers or librarians often include

obtaining information in the control of major pest on the farm, national prices of commodities and agricultural products, tax relief, tax laws etc. (Aina, 1987).

Statement of the Problem

Information is an essential ingredient to the development of any community. It is a well-known fact that information brings about knowledge and knowledge is power. The growth and development of rural areas in developing countries such as Nigeria depend to a large extent to the amount of information at their disposal. The office of information officers in these local government areas serve as bridge between the local government and the people in the communities in terms of their information needs and information dissemination. Information officers' work is very vital in the proper functioning of any organization, most especially in local government areas. The function of information officer cannot be overemphasized as their absence in any community in developing nations like Nigeria will spell doom with regards to under-development, high level of illiteracy, backwardness, poverty and illness.

It is against this background that this study attempts to investigate the kind of information the information officers provides for rural communities development, channels through which information officers disseminate information to the rural communities, how information and communication technology enhances the role of information officers in providing information for the development of rural communities and obstacles militating against information officers in providing information for the development of rural communities in the local government areas in Delta and Ondo States.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What kinds of information do information officers provide to the rural communities in Delta and Ondo States?
- What are the channels through which information officers disseminate information to the rural communities in Delta and Ondo States?
- How does information and communication technology enhance the role of information officers in providing information for the development of rural communities in Delta and Ondo States?
- What are the obstacles militating against information officers in providing information for the development of rural communities in Delta and Ondo States?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Information provided by information officers for rural communities' development.

Information provision will lead to effective use when it is targeted toward issues such as new opportunities for improvement, markets and pricing, health information and valuable resources for improving productivity (McNamara, 2003). To foster national development in communities' practical information relevant to their daily lives should be provided (Okoye, 2003). According to Okoye (2003), Nigeria which is a developing country where the majority of these rural dwellers are either non-literate or semi-literate. There is therefore the need to involve them in national development process and this can be achieved through the identification of their information needs and the provision of innovative information services to improve their level of literacy and also to enhance their ability to use practical information relevant to their daily lives. In the opinion of Aina (2004), the predominant occupation of the majority of people in Africa is farming most especially those in rural areas. He noted that less than 10% of the labor force in the developed countries is engaged in agriculture, yet they are able to feed their nations and export the rest to other part of the world include Africa whereas an average of 70% in Africa labor force is engaged in Agriculture yet they cannot feed the continent. This is simply due to inadequate supply of information to farmers in rural area of Africa. Kiplang'at (1999) postulates that dissemination of relevant information to the farming communities can facilitate the effective adoption of agricultural inputs, decision making on markets and adoption of scientific methods. However, lack of dissemination of information across the agricultural supply chain is a major concern in the developing world.

Aina (2004) opines that farmers would benefit from global information, if information centres, are cited in rural areas complete with all information and communication gadgets. Mbarika (2002) noted that the information sought by members of the community reflects the interest, needs and aspirations of these rural areas. Other community information interests so far have been health information on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, governance, micro-credit and livelihood etc. They emphasized that as the project is established rural communities the emphasis is shifting

towards serving the needs of special interest groups and the primary special interest groups are; health, education, women, agriculture and youth. Momodu (2002) noted that rural people need information of all types for the development of themselves and their environment. She emphasized in her study that 40% of the respondent need information for agriculture, 20% need information for health, 8% need information for politics and education respectively, 14% need information for economic, 7% need information for community development and 3% need information for other purpose.

Sources/channels of information dissemination

Aiyepoku (1992) noted that information channel is anything which delivers information that is useful to the consumers or to the users of the system. In the opinion of Aina (1989), extension workers/librarians should be in position to contribute positively towards disseminating information to farmers, they also utilize other methods such as agricultural shows, posters, radio/television broadcast, farming, magazines, motion paucities/slides etc. He emphasized that these are channels through which libraries/extension workers can provide information to rural formers. Public libraries must be established to function effectively in the provision of agricultural information to farmers in rural communities (Aina, 1986). Aboyade (1987) noted that librarians are expected to repackage information materials which have been tailored to meet the information needs of rural inhabitants in a language and format that they would understand. Traditional media and new ICTs have played a major role in diffusing information to rural communities, and have much more potential. There is need to connect rural communities, research and extension networks and provides access to the much needed knowledge, technology and services. Studies on information systems serving rural communities have focused on specific sectors such as agriculture or health, instead of covering the rural community needs in a holistic manner. Rural information systems must involve rural communities and local content must be of prime importance (Mchombu, 1993). Jacob (1999) noted that apart from information generated with each community, information from outside the vicinity reaches people through a variety of channels like the mass media, government ministries, agricultural extension workers, social welfare, community development officers, rural health personal etc. He emphasized that the pattern of information transfer activity is also characteristic of some other agent interacting with rural people, such as adult educators. Fiofori (1975) noted that information transfer in rural community is purely base on oral communication.

Influence of ICT on the job of information officers

Nigeria and other developing countries must begin to use Information and Communication (ICTs) to address the multidimensional problems of the rural communities. Diso (2005) says that "the way to democratize access to ICTs is to give priority to education generally and literacy and mass education to growing adult population, especially in rural areas." Nigeria cannot escape globalization. The success of globalization in Nigeria and other developing countries depends largely on the development of the rural populace. Rural communities must be enabled to deal positively and decisively with the environmental problems confronting them, pursue a wide range of activities to increase their productivity, and be more enlightened to promote greater attitudinal change and skills. Diso (2005) states that "the roles ICTs play and their influences on our lives have become so diverse and pervasive that it is almost inconceivable to do anything without them". Rural inhabitants should be fully incorporated into effective use of ICTs. Internet was found appropriate for transmitting information across the network.

According to Ochogwu (1995) for Nigeria to catch up, we have to leap fast into the new global information, there is need to have strategy for quickly production of information professionals in Nigeria which can use the new technology in providing value added information need for decision making in the emerging highly competitive global business, government, industrial, political even community and personal scenario. McLean & Johnson (2003) observed that community development network in rural Nigeria demonstrates how ICTs do not just come to a rural population, but are introduced and with a great deal of work, are adapted in specific situations.

Problems militating against information officers in providing information for rural development

Diso (2005) posits that structural and infrastructural problems, official corruption, unstable political and economic policies growing insecurity, and unstable power supply hamper this development. The scholar stressed that rural inhabitants in the present day Nigeria are not reaping from the fruits of the enormous wealth of the country. Aina (1986) noted that the major problem faced by extension/information professionals is the level of illiteracy among rural dwellers. Information materials have to be repackaged to the format that can be understood by them, and this is a challenge to the information officer since the resource are limited. Another constraint observed is inadequate extension/information officers in rural areas. Mclean & Johnson (2003) pointed out that incessant power outage and most rural areas total blackout is one of the major problem faced by information officers in rural areas in Nigeria. They also pointed out that the problem of infrastructure is also apparent in the development of radio in rural areas. In their study, they noted that radio reception is limited to evenings and early mornings. Accessibility is a key factor in the selection of information channels. Barriers to

information accessibility may be due to distance, language, power outage in case of using electronic source, technical problems etc. Lastly, they also noted that lack of ICT training program/personnel is also a problem encountered in rural communities' development. Kizilaslan (2006) argues that proper dissemination of information for agricultural and rural communities is a crucial tool in the fight against poverty and deprivation. Information helps the poor to avail of the opportunities and also reduce their vulnerability. Information officers in rural communities have not risen to the challenges of rural-based information services (Onohwakpor & Akporido, 2006). It is very clear that library-based information services like provision of books and other reading materials, SDI/CAS, reprographic, reference/referral and lending services are almost non-existent in some rural areas of the country.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey method to investigate the provision of information for rural development by information officers in some selected local areas in Delta and Ondo states. The population for this study consisted of 69 information officers in 12 local government areas in Delta and Ondo States. They are: Okpe, Patani, Ughelli South, Ughelli North, Uvwie and Ukwani local government areas in Delta State and, Owo, Ose, Akoko North-east, Akoko North-west, Akoko South-west and Akoko South-east in Ondo State. The population of the study is relatively small hence the researchers decided to study the entire population. Egbule & Okobia (2001) stressed that the entire population can be studied or investigated when the population is not large, when there is enough time to conduct the study, when the sole objective of the study is to provide accurate account of the population, when one has adequate finance to conduct the study and when there is enough manpower to help in the collection of data. A questionnaire entitled "The Provision of Information for Rural development by Information Officers Questionnaire (PIRDIOQ)" was used as the instrument for data collection and made up of two parts. The first part consisted of biographical data. The second part is made up of four items which contain structured statement aimed at eliciting data on Provision of Information for Rural development by Information Officers. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed personally by the researchers and their close associates who served as research assistants in the various local government areas under study. The data obtained from the copies of the questionnaire retrieved from the respondents were analyzed using simple percentages and frequency counts to answer the research questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Local Government Area of the respondents

Name of LGA	No of Information Officers	Total No of Responses	Percentage
Okpe	4	4	5.80
Patani	3	3	4.35
Ukwani	5	5	7.25
Uvwie	7	7	10.15
Ughelli North	7	7	10.15
Ughelli South	4	4	5.80
Owo	4	4	5.80
Ose	5	5	7.25
Akoko North-east	8	8	11.59
Akoko North-west	7	7	10.15
Akoko South-west	8	8	11.59
Akoko South-east	7	7	10.15
Total	69	69	100.00

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Table 1 indicates the total number of information officers in the twelve local government areas. The study shows that 8 (11.59%) of the respondents are from Akoko North-east and Akoko South-west Local Government Area, Uvwie, Ughelli North, Akoko North-west and Akoko South-east Local Government Area are 7 (10.15%), Ukwani and Ose Local Government Area have 5 (7.25%) each, Okpe, Ughelli South and Owo Local Government Area have 4 (5.80%) and Patani Local government Area are 3 (10%). From the analysis, it is clear that respondents from Akoko North-east and Akoko South-west Local Government Areas are more in number amongst the Local Government Areas.

Table 2 shows the state of the respondents. It was revealed in the study that 30 (43.48%) of the respondent are from six Local Government Areas in Delta state, while 39 (56.52%) of them are from six Local Government Areas in Ondo state. This implies that there are more Information Officers in Local Government Areas in Ondo than in Delta state

Table 2: State of Respondents

State of Respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Delta	30	43.48
Ondo	39	56.52
Total	69	100

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Table 3: Academic Qualification of the Respondents

Qualification	Respondents	No of respondents	Percentage
SSCE/GCE	Delta	10	33.33
	Ondo	8	20.51
ND/Diploma	Delta	12	40.00
	Ondo	13	33.33
BSC/Polytechnic HND	Delta	7	23.34
	Ondo	13	33.33
Master	Delta	1	3.33
	Ondo	4	10.26
Total	Delta	30	100.00
	Ondo	39	100.00

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Table 3 indicates the qualification of the respondents. The study reveals that 10 (33.33%) and 8 (20.51%) of the respondents in Delta and Ondo Local Government Areas had WAEC respectively, 12 (40.00%) and 13 (33.33%) of the respondents in Delta and Ondo Local Government Areas are ND/Diploma holder respectively, 7 (23.34%) and 13 (33.33%) of them in Delta and Ondo Local Government Areas possess B.SC/HND respectively and 1 (3.33%) and 4 (10.26%) of the respondent in Delta and Ondo Local Government Areas had Master degree respectively. From the analysis, it is shown that respondents with ND/Diploma certificate are more in number followed by those that had B.SC/HND, and then follow by those that had SSCE/GCE and those that had Master degree. It is also revealed that Ondo state have more educated information officers than Delta state.

Research Question One

What kind of information do information officers provide to the rural communities in Delta and Ondo States?

Table 4: Kinds of information provided by information officers

Kinds of information	State	SA		A		D		SD		UND		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Information for general knowledge	Delta	17	56.67	13	43.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	22	56.41	16	41.03	-	-	1	2.56	-	-	39	100
Information for special services	Delta	23	76.67	6	20.00	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	21	53.85	17	43.60	1	2.56	-	-	-	-	39	100
Information for research work	Delta	13	43.33	10	33.33	5	16.67	2	6.67	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	16	41.03	15	38.46	3	7.69	4	10.26	1	2.56	39	100
Information for development	Delta	20	66.67	7	23.33	-	-	3	10	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	23	58.97	13	33.33	2	5.13	1	2.56	-	-	39	100
Information relevant to politics	Delta	10	33.33	8	26.67	10	33.33	2	6.67	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	15	38.46	12	30.77	7	17.95	5	12.82	-	-	39	100
Information for agricultural activities	Delta	25	83.33	5	16.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	26	66.67	13	33.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	39	100

Continuation of table 4

Information for health care service	Delta	23	76.67	7	23.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	24	61.54	14	35.90	1	2.56	-	-	-	-	39	100
Information on weather condition	Delta	8	26.67	15	50	3	10	4	13.33	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	12	30.77	15	38.46	9	23.08	3	7.69	-	-	39	100
Information on market condition of agriculture produce	Delta	24	80.00	6	20.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	25	64.10	13	33.33	-	-	1	2.56	-	-	39	100
Information on micro-credit livelihood	Delta	10	33.33	12	40	8	26.67	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	22	56.41	10	25.64	4	10.26	3	7.69	-	-	39	100
Information on government policie	Delta	20	66.67	7	23.33	3	10	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	20	51.28	14	35.90	3	7.69	2	5.13	-	-	39	100

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Decision Key

Decision /Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total	%
Strongly agreed	39	44	29	43	25	51	47	20	49	32	40	419	55.20
Agreed	29	23	25	20	20	18	21	30	19	22	21	248	32.80
Disagree	0	2	8	2	17	0	1	12	0	12	6	60	7.91
Strongly disagree	1	0	6	4	7	0	0	7	1	3	2	31	4.08
Undecided	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.13
	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	759	100

Table 4 shows the kind of information provided by the information officers both in Delta and Ondo states. A total of 419 (55.20%) of the respondents strongly agreed that information provision is essential for development in rural communities, 248 (32.80%) of the respondents agreed, 60 (7.91%) of the respondents disagree, 11 (3.06%) of the respondents strongly disagree, while only 1 (0.13%) was undecided. From the analysis, it is obvious that information officers in these local government areas know the exact information needs of the rural dwellers, this account for the strong confirmation. The major information provided in order to meet the information needs of rural communities are as follows in this order; information for agricultural activities, information on maintenance and storage of agricultural produce, information for health care services, information for special services, information for development and government policies. It is therefore not surprising to observe that the above are the information needs and information provided in these areas. Majority of the people in rural community engaged in agriculture for livelihood, that is why their basic needs centre on information for agricultural activities was on high. This finding is corroborated by Momodu (2002) who noted the information needs of rural dwellers to include, agriculture, health, politics and education, storage, processing of farm produce etc. Aina (1985) also supported this finding by stating that extension agent/information officer major function is to disseminated useful practical information related to agriculture.

Research Question Two

What are the channels through which information officers disseminates information to the rural communities in Delta and Ondo States?

Table 5 indicates the channels through which information officers disseminate information to rural communities both in Delta and Ondo states for development and their responses. A total of 349 (63.23%) information officers strongly agreed that information disseminate via the listed channels is vital in meeting set targets, 131 (23.73%) agreed and 44 (7.97%) disagreed, 21 (3.80%) strongly disagreed and a small respondent of 7 (1.27%) were undecided.

Table 5: Channels through which information officers disseminate information.

Channels	State	SA		A		D		SD		UND		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Posters/audio and video cassettes	Delta	20	66.67	7	23.00	3	10.00	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	25	64.10	12	30.77	2	5.13	-	-	-	-	39	100
Radio/television	Delta	20	66.67	6	20.00	4	13.33	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	24	61.54	10	25.64	3	7.69	2	5.13	-	-	39	100
Libraries	Delta	15	50.00	7	23.33	5	16.67	2	6.67	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	19	48.72	9	23.08	4	10.26	5	12.82	3	7.69	39	100
Personal contact	Delta	22	73.33	5	16.67	2	6.67	1	3.33	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	26	66.67	11	28.21	1	2.56	1	2.56	-	-	39	100
Exhibitions and shows	Delta	25	83.33	5	16.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	27	69.23	12	30.77	-	-	-	-	-	-	39	100
Electronic means (ICT)	Delta	17	56.67	5	16.67	3	10.00	3	10.00	2	6.67	30	100
	Ondo	22	56.41	9	23.08	3	7.69	3	7.69	2	5.13	39	100
Friends/Neighbours	Delta	23	76.67	7	23.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	26	66.67	12	30.77	1	2.56	-	-	-	-	39	100
Home access to internet	Delta	20	66.67	1	3.33	9	30.00	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	18	46.15	13	33.33	4	10.26	4	10.26	-	-	39	100

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Decision Key

Decision /Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	%
Strongly agreed	45	44	34	48	52	39	49	38	349	63.23
Agreed	19	16	16	16	17	14	19	14	131	23.73
Disagree	5	7	9	3	0	6	1	13	44	7.97
Strongly disagree	0	2	7	2	0	6	0	4	21	3.80
Undecided	0	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	7	1.27
	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	552	100

From the analysis, it is shown that information officers disseminate information to dwellers in these rural communities through the following channels in this order, exhibitions and shows, Friends/Neighbors, personal contact, posters/audio and video cassettes, and Radio/television. This finding is corroborated by Aina (2004) who noted that extension agents/librarians are in position to contribute positively towards disseminating information to farmers through; agricultural shows, exhibitions, posters, radio/television broadcast, directly and indirectly involving the farmers in the process. The study also agrees with the work of Fiofori (1975) who noted that information transfer in rural community is purely base on oral communication.

Research questions Three.

How does information and communication technology influence the role of information officers in providing information for the development of rural communities in Delta and Ondo states?

Table 6 indicates the ways ICT enhances the job specification of the information officers both in Delta and Ondo states. A total of 403 (59.35%) information officers strongly agreed that ICT enhances the job specification of information officers, 199(29.31%) of respondents agreed, 46 (6.78%) disagreed, 25 (3.68%) of the respondents strongly disagree and 6 (0.88%) of them were undecided.

Table 6: Ways ICT enhances the role of the information officers

Ways ICT enhances Job specification	State	SA		A		D		SD		UND		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Create easy access to relevant information	Delta	23	66.67	7	23.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	27	69.23	11	28.31	1	2.56	-	-	-	-	39	100
Easy retrieval of relevant information	Delta	17	56.67	10	33.33	2	6.67	1	3.33	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	22	56.41	14	35.90	2	5.13	1	2.56	-	-	39	100
Improving the information literacy skills of the information officers	Delta	15	50.00	11	36.67	-	-	2	6.67	2	6.67	30	100
	Ondo	20	51.28	10	25.64	3	7.69	3	7.69	3	7.69	39	100
Easy transfer and delivery of relevant information	Delta	23	76.67	7	23.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	26	66.67	11	28.21	2	5.13	-	-	-	-	39	100
Facilitate the decision making process to boost development	Delta	23	76.67	4	13.33	3	10.00	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	21	53.85	15	38.46	1	2.56	2	5.13	-	-	39	100
Facilitate the retrieval of health related information such malaria and HIV	Delta	21	70.00	5	16.67	2	6.67	2	6.67	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	25	64.10	12	30.77	-	-	2	5.13	-	-	39	100
Facilitate the retrieval of information on sanitation and water provision	Delta	19	63.33	4	13.33	7	23.33	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	22	56.41	14	35.90	2	5.13	-	-	1	2.56	39	100
Enhance global learning e.g distance education	Delta	13	43.33	11	36.67	3	10.00	3	10.00	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	19	48.72	13	33.33	3	7.69	4	10.26	-	-	39	100
Facilitate the retrieval of agricultural related information	Delta	25	83.33	5	16.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	23	58.97	15	38.46	1	2.56	-	-	-	-	39	100
Enhances investment opportunities amongst communities	Delta	12	40.00	9	30.00	7	23.33	2	6.67	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	17	43.59	11	28.21	7	17.95	3	7.69	-	-	39	100

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Decision Key

Decision /Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	%
Strongly agreed	50	39	35	49	44	46	41	32	48	19	403	59.35
Agreed	18	24	21	18	19	17	18	24	20	20	199	29.31
Disagree	1	4	3	2	4	2	9	6	1	14	46	6.78
Strongly disagree	0	2	5	0	2	4	0	7	0	5	25	3.68
Undecided	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	0.88
	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	69	679	100

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From the analysis, it is obvious that ICT enhances the job specification of the information officers/cooperative farmers in the following ways; create easy access to relevant information, easy transfer and delivery of relevant information, facilitate the retrieval of agricultural related information, and facilitate the retrieval of health related information in that order. This finding is supported by Mclean &Johnson (2003) who noted that ICT allows information officers access to information that are of interest to the rural communities such as Health information on Malaria and HIV, agricultural, governance, micro credit and livelihood, etc..

Research four

What are the obstacles militating against information officers in providing information for the development of rural community development in Delta and Ondo states?

Table 7: Obstacles militating against information officers

Obstacles	State	SA		A		D		SD		UND		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Inadequate funds	Delta	21	70.00	9	30.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	26	66.67	12	30.77	1	3.33	-	-	-	-	39	100
Inadequate personnel	Delta	19	63.33	10	33.33	-	-	1	3.33	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	24	61.54	14	35.90	1	2.56	-	-	-	-	39	100
Lack of information infrastructure	Delta	22	73.33	8	26.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	24	61.54	13	33.33	2	5.13	-	-	-	-	39	100
Erratic power supply	Delta	22	73.33	8	33.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	23	58.97	13	33.33	3	7.69	-	-	-	-	39	100
Non-challant attitude on part of personnel	Delta	12	40.00	9	30.00	3	10.00	3	10.00	3	10.00	30	100
	Ondo	17	43.59	12	30.77	5	12.82	5	12.82	-	-	39	100
Lack of information and ICT skills	Delta	17	56.67	7	23.33	3	10.00	3	10.00	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	18	46.15	10	25.64	2	5.13	4	10.26	5	12.82	39	100
Slow internet response	Delta	21	70.00	7	23.33	2	6.67	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	25	64.10	13	33.33	1	2.56	-	-	-	-	39	100
Distance to source of information	Delta	17	56.67	2	6.67	10	33.33	1	3.33	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	18	46.15	9	23.08	5	12.82	4	10.26	3	7.69	39	100
High Cost of information bearing source	Delta	20	66.67	7	23.33	3	10.00	-	-	-	-	30	100
	Ondo	23	58.97	13	33.33	3	7.69	-	-	-	-	39	100
Language Barrier	Delta	24	80.00	4	13.33	-	-	2	6.67	-	-	30	100
	Ondo											39	100
		25	64.10	13	33.33	1	2.56	-	-	-	-	39	100

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Decision Key

Decision /Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	%
Strongly agreed	47	43	46	45	29	35	46	35	43	49	418	61.29
Agreed	21	24	21	21	21	17	20	11	20	17	193	28.30
Disagree	1	1	2	3	8	5	3	15	6	1	45	6.60
Strongly disagree	0	1	0	0	8	7	0	5	0	2	15	2.20

Table 7 shows the obstacles militating against information officers both in Delta and Ondo states when providing and disseminating information to rural communities to foster development. A total of 418 (61.29%) information officer strongly agree with the diverse factors listed in the questionnaire, 193 (28.30%) of them agreed, 45 (6.60%) disagreed, 15 (2.20%) of them strongly disagreed and 11 (1.61%) of the respondents were undecided. From the analysis it is clear that the following problems militate against information officers in a bid of providing information to the cooperative farmers in rural communities in this order; language barrier, inadequate funds, lack of information infrastructure, slow internet response, erratic power supply and inadequate personnel. This is corroborated by Aina (1986) who noted that the major problem faced by extension/information professionals is the level of illiteracy among rural dwellers. Ahila (2004) also supported this finding by noting that information facilities are not available in rural communities and this poses a lot of challenges to health/information officers. In support of the findings of this study Mclean & Johnson (2003) also stated that one of the major problem is the electricity grid, provided by power holding corporation of Nigeria extends all the way to various areas but it is unreliable and even if lights are on they are seldom bright enough to read/see. They also pointed out that the problem of infrastructure is also apparent in the development of rural areas.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study reveals that:

- The major information needs and information provided by information officers should include the following in this order; information for agricultural activities, information on maintenance and storage of agricultural produce, information for health care services, information for special services, information for development and government policies.
- The channels used by information officers disseminate information to cooperative farmers in these rural communities include the following in this order: exhibitions and shows, Friends/Neighbors, personal contact, posters/audio and video cassettes, and Radio/television.
- Information and communication technology enhances the job specification of the information officer in the following ways; create easy access to relevant information, easy transfer and delivery of relevant information, facilitate the retrieval of agricultural related information, and facilitate the retrieval of health related information in that order.
- The major problems faced by information officers in the process of discharging their duties are: language barrier, inadequate funds, lack of information infrastructure, slow internet response, erratic power supply and inadequate personnel.

CONCLUSION

From all indications, it can be concluded that the information officers in rural communities in Delta and Ondo state are committed to their assignment but they are experiencing some challenges. The study points out that the kind of information they provided for rural development. And also various channels were used by them (information officers to reach out to rural community dwellers). For information officers to be efficient and effective in their services to the rural community, they sought and disseminate information through ICT facilities. However, they encountered obstacles in the process of discharging their duties, such obstacles are; language barrier, inadequate funds, lack of information infrastructure, slow internet response, erratic power supply and inadequate personnel etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are hereby made.

- Government should provide funds for information services in rural areas so that information will be adequately provided by the information officers for rural dwellers to enhance development. There should be budgetary allocations for this purpose among the three tiers of government.
- Government policies should be well implemented in these rural communities by information officers in order to facilitate development because this is where true development starts.

- Arrangement should be made by the government to teach and educate information officers on the language spoken by rural communities where development is eminent. So as to address language barrier.
- Government should provide adequate information infrastructure for rural communities since this will go a long way to boost the development process such as libraries and other forms of information centre.
- Adequate and permanent solution should be proffer by government to eliminate or reduce the problem of erratic power supply, poor network and bandwidth so as to create room for meaningful development in these rural communities and help in preventing rural- urban migration.
- Government, non-governmental organization and illustrious sons and daughters of these communities should organize adult education centre in order to reduce the problem of language barrier.
- More information officers should be posted to the rural communities and there should be frequent training and retraining programme to equip the information officers in rural areas with the requisite skills and knowledge.

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