

Rural Reporting: Right; Not Privilege

BY

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Abstract

This study **“Rural Reporting: Right or Privilege”** was carried out to ascertain whether rural reporting is a right or privilege. Rural areas, particularly in the Niger Delta environment are grossly under-developed. Research has however shown that communication can play a vital role in changing for the better, the social, political, economic and cultural perspectives of the rural people who constitute the majority in Niger Delta environment. Also added to this is the fact that every individual has a need to communicate, and that events and people resident in the rural areas should be reported if the people lack the ability to do so themselves. Against this background, the researchers conducted a descriptive participatory survey where the features and characteristics of the rural areas in nine (9) communities in the Niger Delta were observed. Similarly, content analyses of a national television station, the NTA, and a privately owned radio station, 92.3 Nigeria Info was carried out. The findings revealed that the rural areas in the Niger Delta region are under reported in the mass media. Even when the data showed that some events in the rural communities could be weaved into top news stories and headlines. The paper concludes that rural reporting is a right and not a privilege and advocates the need for the reporters and media organizations in the urban centres to make efforts to report the rural areas. The paper also advocates that development experts and their establishments should assist the rural people to report events that concern them (rural people) by themselves to promote accuracy. This will prevent distortion and promote landmark innovation, initiatives and change that could emerge from the rural areas.

Keywords: Rural, Reporting, Right and Privilege, Mass Media.

Introduction

Communication has been identified as a vital means of development and the level of development in a given society depends on its effective application and delivery. In the same vein, the media have been assigned key responsibilities that include the dissemination of development driven messages to society and that people who need them. Essentially, a majority of these live in the rural areas. It is therefore, logical and of the essence that the rural areas which are made up of communities that are isolated and self-sufficient should be accorded priority in media reporting. More also, the categories of people who live in these areas need to be informed, educated, enlightened, persuaded and encouraged to accept changes and positive initiatives that can significantly improve their living standards.

Moemeka (2009) defines a rural community as an

area with members of families residing, which is relatively small, within which the people have developed a socio cultural characteristics with collective identification, by means of which they solve problems arising from sharing a specific area (Moemeka, 2009,p.21)

It is these socio cultural characteristics that discriminate rural areas from other forms or categories of settlements. The events that take place in these areas need to be reported to the rural people as well as to others in urban societies for the purpose of general political, economic, democratic and socio cultural development. For these reasons and on behalf of the media organizations,, the reporters write and report news, current affairs, documentaries, features, jingles, drama, and even advertisement.

Certainly, a reporter cannot report, or would have nothing to report when there are no events and audiences to assimilate the contents of things or events broadcast or published. Three major characteristics define media massages. One, there must be an event; two, there must be a journalist (or someone) to report the event, and three; there must be an audience to

report to. The last description is one of the responsibilities of the journalist or reporter expected of him by the people. That is, the right (of the people) to have access to information. When and where a journalist or the mass media's reporters in any form whatsoever, withhold information from the people, especially, when the mainstream of the people are in the rural area, then the moral code, principles or ethics of the journalism profession and obligation given to him has been neglected.. Obviously, development issues are prevalent in developing countries such as the rural areas. This implies that the rural area has more events to report. Consequently therefore, if the rural areas have more events, more population (audience) why should the reporter abandon his/her responsibility of disseminating media contents to the people who deserve such right? This paper, attempts to examine rural reporting and to ascertain whether it should be viewed as a right or a privilege.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, there have been calls for increase rural reporting by development communication and media scholars and practitioners. The reason is not for fetched from the fact that the rural areas especially of the Niger Delta region have the larger percent of population of settlement in Nigeria. The definition of the rural area indicates that there are events as well as challenges if reported and attended to by media reports could enhance their wellbeing and development in all its ramifications.

It is the concern of this paper to identify whether it is a right or a privilege for the rural communities to be reported; and why such a right or a privilege is not being enjoyed, even when there are events and people in the rural areas that could make news worthy stories.

It is therefore identified as a problem why the rural areas of the Niger Delta region are not reported or under reported. What are the problems of the rural areas and what are the factors limiting them from reporting events by themselves? Within a right or a privilege, why are the media

organisations in the urban centres under reporting the rural communities. These are the problems that this paper attempts to solve.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain whether rural reporting is a right or a privilege, and to advocate the need for adequate balance and an increase in reporting events in the rural areas.

Specific Objectives

1. To ascertain if there is sufficient reporting of events of the rural people and communities in the Niger Delta region.
2. To determine the issues in the rural areas that are news worthy.
3. To establish the challenges confronting rural reporting in the Niger Delta region.

Research Questions

1. How sufficient is the reporting of the events and people in the rural areas?
2. What are the news worthy issues in the rural areas of the Niger Delta region?
3. What are the challenges confronting rural reporting in the Niger Delta region?

Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinning

The development of the rural areas that have a larger percentage of the population cannot be over-emphasised because it will ultimately impact on the pace of national development and communication is of the essence here.. As assents by Alumuku (2006):

Communication can help to design projects that take properly into account the perceptions and capacities of the intended beneficiaries, thereby gaining their participation. In particular, communication can also shift the emphasis

away from “top – down” approaches in which development specialists prescribe medicines to cure the maladies of rural poverty, as might a veterinarian dealing with a head of cows. In this process, it can facilitate knowledge sharing as an avenue to helping people make informed decisions concerning adaptation, or even rejection, of proposed innovation (Alumuku, 2006 p.94).

In line with Alumuku’s assertion, communication can also facilitate or create situations which, through dialogue, open the door to the participation of rural people in situation analysis, developmental planning and management and decision making. In other words, through rural reporting and participatory communication, tremendous knowledge and information about the advancement of the rural society can be achieved.

Statistics as presented by McAnany (2004) have shown that more than 80 per cent of rural settlements are mostly in African nations, including Nigeria, and are mostly in remote and pristine conditions (McAnany,2004, p17). Yet news reporting on the average appears to be centred on the urban and metropolitan cities which are mostly populated by the elitist and privileged class.

Dare (2012) also observes that:

the lack of effective communication mechanism at the grassroots has been a calculated strategy by the elitist class to undermine the potentialities and practical engagement of rural dwellers in the process of **development” (Dare, 2012 p. 163).**

The concept of rural reporting is intended with development journalism that may have received its earliest formation in the Philippines, and was anchored on what McQuail (1994, p.131) has called development media theory. Under this Development Communication Theory, the media and reporters in developing countries should accept the primacy of national

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development goals from the rural communities and should express solidarity with the aspirations of other developing countries.

As stated by Ogan so many stories were set by possibilities that by 1973, rural reporting for development has been constituted into an academic specialism at the University of the Philippines at Los Bansa, (Ogan 1980). Rural reporting for development was to set the goals of development and draw the appropriate plans, and the press was to assist in accomplishing the goals. Thus, rural reporting, development journalism, development communication or development support communication are all matter of nomenclature with the meaning not being precise. But the duty of a reporter covering the development beat as pointed out by the United Nations Development Programme, Narinder Aggarwala in Olatunji (2012) is to:

Critically examine, evaluate and report on the relevance of a development project to national and local needs, difference between a planed scheme and its actual implementation, and the difference between its impact on people as claimed by the government and as it actually is (Olatunji 2012, p.144).

Thus rural reporting or development journalism is the direct opposite of government managed news, owing to the fact that the media houses are located in the urban cities. Rural journalism or reporting is journalism designed to inform the public policy process by identifying and publicizing differences between promise and performance in the conduct of public affairs. Rural reporting should be practiced everywhere, it would seem to be especially appropriate in the rural areas of developing countries where the huge gap between promise and performance often breeds frustration and instability.

The emphasis on rural journalism for development in the just beginning countries was also a reaction to, indeed a rejection of the news philosophy of major mass media organization news that originate from the urban

cities. This is a situation very much align to what happened in the 1970s and 1980s when the developing world assessed major Western news agencies in the debate on a new world information order of reporting the Third World. Rosenblom (1978). Smith, (1980) remark that:

The Third World Countries have accused the Western news agencies of reporting them (the third world) mainly, if not exclusively, in terms of coops, earthquakes, famine and epidemics and of presenting the third world people though a monopoly on the gathering and dissemination of global news (in Moemeka, 2012,p.149).

This situation is what the former UNESCO Director General, Ahmadu **Mahtar M”Bow referred to as “mutilated images of themselves”**. This became prevalent in the developing world when the media houses began to broadcast and publish events that occurred only in the urban centres but totally neglected or hugely underreported events in the rural areas. Today, it is no longer the case of underreporting or mutilated images of the third world countries by the major Western news agencies, but the case of the media in the urban cities of developing countries underreporting and mutilating the images of their rural communities. In line with what the British media scholar Phil Harris said in (Dare 2012), while making a case for the practice of rural or development journalism thus:

Five people die of cholera in Africa and the full gory details are plastered over the front pages of practically every newspaper around the world. A third world village inaugurates a new system of primary health care based on the real needs of the rural community and the event passes without notice (Dare 2012, P.165)

Something is certainly wrong when the negative events reported about the rural communities outweigh the positive in the consciousness of the news reporter. The rural communities produce over 80 per cent of the food

consumed by the urban populace and the most nutritious and freshness of such food can only be gotten from the rural areas. The rural communities as with the case of the Niger Delta in Nigeria play host to several multinational oil and gas companies that are into the exploration of crude oil and gas that contributes substantially to the economic growth and development of Nigeria in particular and other developing countries in general.

Considerably is the fact that the rural communities in developing countries, Nigeria especially, contribute appreciably in deciding the leadership of the country. Due to that high population of the rural area, the faith of politicians veering for elective positions usually hung on, they hook or crook the votes of the electorates in the rural areas to win elections. All these are events that can make news for the rural reporter but ignored. Even when they are reported, the mass media presents it in the angle and favour of the people and cities in the urban neighbourhood.

The concept of rural reporting found researches anchor in the works of some of the leading communication scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, among whom are Lerner (1963), Pye (1963) and Schramn (1964). They theorized that exposure to information would kindle aspirations, promote mobility and lead ultimately to modernization. Through their influence, UNESCO came to assign to the news media a pivotal role in rural reporting for development. UNESCO had prescribed as minimal media requirements for daily newspapers, five radio receivers and two cinema seats (Schamn, 1964), and its communicators, according to James Sewell, (1975) **'tried their hands at the art of postulating** a theory of development by communications.

While this UNESCO conditions may have been meant by urban cities in developing countries, the same cannot be said to hold in the rural areas. The faith of the rural people have been left under the influence of opinion leadership who Schamn (1964), Lazarus Frell (1911) and Baran (2004)

theorized that are early knowers and have access to the media. According to these researchers:

These are people with greater experience to mass media channels than others where they lead, and they are those with the ability to create ideas that can be send across via their personal messages to their followers (Baran 2004).

These scholars have concluded that access to the media should be regarded as evidence or proof of exposure to mass communication channels which was in turn regarded as an attribute of the opinion leader that can push for rural development. But in the rural areas today, that an individual is accessible to the media does not make him an opinion leader. This is true because people purchase media channels for different purposes ranging from entertainment, to sports, etc. Again, due to the peculiar situation of the rural area, a television set may just be a piece of furniture that is not put to use due to the fault on the set or lack of electricity. It may even be because of the nature of the work done that could not enable them to attend to the emotional media. Thus, it may not be totally correct as postulated by the scholars mentioned above that the role of opinion leadership in the rural areas is sufficient to mobilize the rural people for advancement and social, economic and political change. A communication structure that is developed or designed to rely on opinion leaders for the supply of the information need of the rural people will certainly fail and would become of little or no effect.

The definition of the rural community as determined by its characteristics indicates that the rural areas have sufficient challenges and newsworthy events that could make them report their own events or attract the reporters attached to urban based media to report them. The rural people have the right to information as well as freedom of expression of opinion. In one way or the other, rural reporting is a right, perhaps the contention may only be rural reporting by who? Is it by the rural people themselves or by the reporter or media in urban centres? The characteristics of the

rural society and people as obtained from available data gathered in this survey proffer solution to the above dilemma.

Methodology

This work is a survey, and also employed content analysis as its research design. The survey was carried out to ascertain the peculiarity of the rural communities in selected rural communities in the Niger Delta, while the content analysis of the programmes on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), and a private radio station, 92.3 Nigeria Info, all in the Niger Delta were made to determine the extent of rural coverage and rural reporting.

Three rural communities each drawn from three states of the Niger Delta region were examined from the region making a total of nine (9) rural communities. The states include Akwa Ibom, Delta and Rivers. The nine communities were selected randomly using the purposive sampling method. The study is a descriptive participation survey that took the researchers to these communities where observations were made for over a period of three (3) years.

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Data Presentation and Analysis

The data gathered were presented in the tables bellow and analysed thereafter:

Number of communities	Characteristics of Rural communities	News Worthy	Percent age
Observed in all 9 rural communities sampled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of literacy • Crude technology • Mostly farmers • Lack basic social amenities • Land dispute frequent • Prone to traditional believe • Generally poor • Conscious of good moral values • Conflict are resolved traditionally • More fatalistic and suspicious • Rely less on media of mass communication • Cherish extended family ties • Traditional means of entertainment • Marriages are sometimes arranged • Traditional houses • Gullible and easily manipulated • Prone to diseases • Like to observe traditional festivals and rely on local drinks 	All issues have the potentials for news worthiness	100%

Table 1 showing the characteristics of the rural areas with news worthy issues drawn from the 9 rural communities investigated

Table Two A showing the NTA Programme Schedule to ascertain programmes allotted to the rural communities.

NIGERIAN TELEVISION AUTHORITY

2nd Quarter 2015-Network Schedule...April 2015

TIME	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	TIME						
6:00-6:30	Life Stories	Heritage	Boundaries & Transits	Visual Impressions-R	Guest Chef -R	NTA Classic	Spoken Word-R1	6:00 - 6:30						
6:30-7:00	WEEKEND DEAL	Dateline 360	Moment for Thought	The Scale	Senate 109	Nigeria Today	WEEKEND DEAL	6:30 - 7:00						
7:00-7:05		WEEKEND DEAL	GOOD MORNING NIGERIA					WEEKEND DEAL	7:00 - 7:05					
7:05-7:30			WEEKEND DEAL	GOOD MORNING NIGERIA					WEEKEND DEAL	7:05 - 7:30				
7:30-8:00				WEEKEND DEAL	GOOD MORNING NIGERIA					WEEKEND DEAL	7:30 - 8:00			
8:00-8:30					GOOD MORNING NIGERIA						WEEKEND DEAL	8:00 - 8:30		
8:30-9:00	Stations/Zones	The Scale	Sportsreel	Explore Nigeria	Sportsreel	Insight	Work It Out	8:30 - 9:00						
9:00-9:30	Stations/Zones	Why Nigeria Matters-R	Discovery 234-R	Young Boss	Health Report	Nickelodeon	Nickelodeon	9:00 - 9:30						
9:30-10:00	Tales By Moonlight-R	Moment for Thought-R	Local Colour	My Music & I	Periscope	AM Express Reloaded	Click Clap	9:30 - 10:00						
10:00-10:30	Heritage	Global Parliament	Business & Economy	Stations/Zones	From National Assembly (Live)	Entertainment 1/2hr	Footprints	10:00 - 10:30						
10:30-11:00	Ecovas Today	Property & Style	Visual Impressions	From National Assembly (Live)	From National Assembly (Live)	Reflections	Insurance & Claims	10:30 - 11:00						
11:00-11:30	Sesame Square	Panorama	Panorama	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Panorama	Hot Sports	11:00 - 11:30						
11:30-12:00	Super Book	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Rogo at Large	My Music & I	12:00 - 12:30						
12:00-12:30	Pension Matters	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Sport Chor	Ultimate Soccer Experience	12:30 - 1:00						
1:00-1:30	Stations/Zones	The Correspondents	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Environmental Matters	Stations/Zones	1:00 - 1:30						
1:30-2:00	Stations/Zones	Young Hearts	Senate 109	One on One	Platform	Political Update	Basketball Show	1:30 - 2:00						
2:00-2:30	Inside Sports	Boundaries & Transits	DIGI TV	Football Classic	Spoken Word	Click Clap -R	Nigerian Idol	2:00 - 2:30						
2:30-3:00	DIGI TV-R	Voyage of Discovery	Rogo at Large-R	Emergency Update with NEMA	Imo Diary	The Street2	Sport World	2:30 - 3:00						
3:00-3:30	Take A Step	N A T I O N W I D E					Sport World	Sport World	3:00 - 3:30					
3:30-4:00	Stations/Zones	Nickelodeon	Nickelodeon	The Street	Nickelodeon	Guest Chef -R	Sport World	3:30 - 4:00						
4:00-4:30	Nigerian Idol	Young Inventors	Fun Bus	Sesame Square	Work It Out	Tales By Moonlight	Discovery 234-R	4:00 - 4:30						
4:30-5:00	Nigerian Idol	CBN	Food & Drug	Lalola	Nigeria Content Weekly	Lalola	Discovery 234-R	4:30 - 5:00						
5:00-5:30	Guest Chef	Centre of Unity	Power Wheel	MDO	Towards A Greater Nation	Oil & Gas Forum	Telecom Today	5:00 - 5:30						
5:30-6:00	ICPC	News at Seven	News at Seven	News at Seven	News at Seven	News at Seven	Mother Care	5:30 - 6:00						
6:00-6:30	News at Seven	Stations/Zones	Change Train	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	News at Seven	6:00 - 6:30						
6:30-7:00	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Change Train	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	6:30 - 7:00						
7:00-7:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Happy Family	This Life	Jennifer's Diary	Super Story	Yr Products & You	Stations/Zones	7:00 - 7:30						
7:30-8:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	LIAC 1/2hr	Oasis	Life Stories	Super Story	No Ordinary Day	Stations/Zones	7:30 - 8:00						
8:00-8:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	NTA News	NTA News	NTA News Extra	NTA News	NTA News	Stations/Zones	8:00 - 8:30						
8:30-9:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	NTA News	NTA News	NTA News Extra	NTA News	NTA News	Stations/Zones	8:30 - 9:00						
9:00-9:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Powerlinks	Dateline 360	NTA News Extra	NTA News	NTA News	Stations/Zones	9:00 - 9:30						
9:30-10:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Why Nigeria Matters	Why Nigeria Matters	Nigerian Movies Today	Nowhere to be Found	Cracking the Wall	Stations/Zones	9:30 - 10:00						
10:00-10:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	People & Events	MTV Base	House Ticket	Business Weekly	Moment for Thought	Stations/Zones	10:00 - 10:30						
10:30-11:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	MTV Base	MTV Base	Spotlight	Spotlight	Weekend Deal	Stations/Zones	10:30 - 11:00						
11:00-11:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Weekend Deal -R	Stations/Zones	11:00 - 11:30						
11:30-12:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	O N E O' C L O C K L I V E					Weekend Deal -R	Stations/Zones	11:30 - 12:00					
12:00-12:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	12:00 - 12:30						
12:30-1:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	12:30 - 1:00						
1:00-1:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	1:00 - 1:30						
1:30-2:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	1:30 - 2:00						
2:00-2:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	2:00 - 2:30						
2:30-3:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	2:30 - 3:00						
3:00-3:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	3:00 - 3:30						
3:30-4:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	3:30 - 4:00						
4:00-4:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	4:00 - 4:30						
4:30-5:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	4:30 - 5:00						
5:00-5:30	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	5:00 - 5:30						
5:30-6:00	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	Stations/Zones	5:30 - 6:00						

TABLE 2B showing the 92.3 Nig. Info. Fm. Station Programme Schedule to ascertain programmes allotted to the rural communities.



ON AIR SCHEDULE FOR JUNE 6TH - 12TH, 2016													
TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	TIME	SATURDAY	SUNDAY					
5:00 AM	MORNING CROSSFIRE DANIEL & YOP	5:00 AM	MORNING CROSSFIRE DANIEL	MORNING CROSSFIRE KOFI									
6:00 AM													
7:00 AM						MORNING CROSSFIRE JOY	MORNING CROSSFIRE DAYO						
8:00 AM													
10:00 AM	MIDDAY DIALOGUE	10:00 AM	FOOTBALL FRENZY	FOOTBALL FRENZY									
11:00 AM													
12:00 PM													
1:00 PM													
1:00 PM	HARD FACTS	1:00 PM	LET'S TALK MARYANN	ART & SOUL ADOBA									
3:00 PM													
4:00 PM													
5:00 PM													
6:00 PM	KOFI	KOFI	KOFI	KOFI	KOFI	6:00 PM	LET'S TALK ETEKAMBA	ART & SOUL YOP					
8:00 PM													
9:00 PM						LET'S TALK DAYO & ENOH	LET'S TALK DAYO & ENOH	LET'S TALK DAYO & ENOH	LET'S TALK DAYO & ENOH	LET'S TALK ENOH & DAYO	8:00 PM	CHAT STATION ENOH	CHAT STATION AUTOMATED
10:00 PM													
11:00 PM	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	Graduate Intern	11:00 PM	CHAT STATION ENOH	CHAT STATION AUTOMATED					
1:00 AM													
2:00 AM													
3:00 AM													
4:00 AM	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	Graduate Intern	2:00 AM	CHAT STATION ENOH	CHAT STATION AUTOMATED					
3:00 AM													
4:00 AM	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	CHAT STATION ETEKAMBA	Graduate Intern	3:00 AM	CHAT STATION ENOH	CHAT STATION AUTOMATED					
5:00 AM													

4.1.1 Analysis, Discussion of Findings and Application to Research Questions

This section presents the data collected through observation method. This method for analysing descriptive data will be done through a content analysis of the data collected. The data presented were analysed and respondents provided the answers to the research questions used.

From the available data in table one, it can be deduced that all the events and issues in the nine (9) rural areas sampled are sufficient to make news that are worthy of reporting. This represents 100(%) per cent of the total events observed and the application of Research Question 2. What are the news worthy issues in the rural areas of the Niger Delta region? News worthy issues or events in the rural areas can best be understood or appreciated if the major characteristics of the rural area are observed and as reflecting the outcome of the data presented in table one.

The tables two a and b above showed the programme schedule of the NTA and that of a privately owned broadcast media outfit in the Niger Delta. The NTA is a state owned and its signals cover every part of the Niger Delta. The NTA has over 253 programmes running at both the network and local stations. Of this programmes, 200 were sampled to ascertain whether they have rural implications. In the same vein, the Nigeria Info FM station has 36 programmes on their programme schedules, and see all 36 programmes were analysed to establish whether they are rural focused.

From the programme schedules of both the radio and television stations surveyed, it can be deduced that of its 200 programmes assessed, the NTA has only 10 programmes that are rural based. This figure represents 5% of the total programmes analysed. For the radio station, No programme name or title reflects rural philosophy. However, because the radio station is an all talk, news and sports station, there is strong evidence or fact that a few hours of their total broadcast time that falls between 20 – 25 hours a week are allotted to rural issues, out of the total hours of 168 in the week. This represent between 10-15 per cent of the total hours of 168. This is the

application of Research Question 1 which seeks to establish how sufficient is the reporting of events and people in the rural areas of the Niger Delta.

Discussion of Findings

Certainly, the rural areas experience events on a daily basis that could attract the reporter for news reports that could enhance or increase audience interest. The findings in table one showed that issues arising from gross under development of the rural areas, to matters of productivity and innovations that can be tapped are all prevalence in the local communities with breaking news angles. This finding aligned with the result of Peter Golden that states that issues in the rural communities can be woven to conform to current demands of journalism.

If journalist can be more creative, adventurous and result oriented, several events in the rural areas will make top stories in their media outfits. The reporters can adopt several skills to effectively report the rural areas. From the characteristics of the rural dwellers as shown in table one, it can be discerned that they are highly suspicious with several challenges which are identifiable. As such, communication experts should adopt strategies that could enhance their reporting of these problems or challenges (this is the subject matter of Research Question 3).The gap in communication and feedback mechanism between the grassroots and the urban centres can be filled by the dispassionate intervention of journalist to constantly remind the wielders of powers of the promises of their mandate, their social responsibility towards the society and stewardship of management of public funds, as well as commanding government's effort when such obligations are fulfilled.

This mediating role of the rural reporter or media can be a platform of fostering a fledging relationship between the government and the rural areas or grassroots. It is believed that journalistic apathy towards practical engagement and exploration of development potentials, in the rural areas, undermines the moral and professional obligation of the journalist as **society's watch dog**. Thus, in line with Peter Golding advocacy, objective of

this study this work further advocates for a more liberalized advocate approach towards rural reporting with a more reflective from of professional commitment.

Rural dwellers live in bare subsistence and suffer virtual isolation in terms of basic news coverage. Reporters who believe that the rural areas are not news worthy cross over the rural populace and concentrate their news on the already thriving urban areas or centres. The rural areas however provide countless opportunities for news coverage. Rural areas as the data revealed in table 1, are noted for a fledging sense of native heritage and cultural values that could be tapped into news. Using the human interest approach to news reporting, the rural people can be weaved into prominence in news reporting, with the objective of giving the rural people a sense of belonging. This is the substance of research question 3.

What rural reporters need to effectively comb the rural populace for news is empathy. Rural reporters must have a conscientious appeal by feeling the pulse of the rural dwellers to write about them. Their living condition notwithstanding, rural dwellers deserve to be adequately informed and mobilized because they constitute **the bulk of the country's population, and** they need accurate and reliable information to function effectively in our fast growing and technology – driving society. Another means of stimulating interest is the strategy in rural reporting where reporters need to avoid guesses and speculative journalism. They must engage in practical and through investigation of the rural areas and arouse their sensitivity towards issues affecting their wellbeing.

The rural populace has the right to information and since the rural reporter may be of an entirely dissimilar background and orientation from the rural areas he is covering, there is need for in-depth research that will help him to know the information need of the people. The rural reporter must indulge in dogged research and familiarization with the development needs of the rural people.

Conclusion

Considering the fact that the media in urban centres under report the rural areas and the rural reporter relies more on events in the city centres for news, one cannot but conclude that there is a gross imbalance of news coverage between the urban centres and rural areas. This disparity can only be addressed if rural reporters began to report rural events based on the characteristics of the rural areas. More also, when the rural people are more in population and have the right as their urban dwellers, to information, freedom of expression and opinion, that guarantees them (the rural people) the right to report and/or be reported.

Recommendation

The researchers recommended that media in urban cities should allot substantial part of their time to rural events. Reporting the rural area should be taken as a priority and media organizations should train their reporters on how to cover rural events. Development agencies, faith groups and NGOs should encourage and facilitate the rural areas they cover to report events about themselves rather than to wait for the city reporter or media.

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