

**Participatory Communication as a tool in all-inclusive grassroots governance: A study of Selected Community Development Associations (CDAs) in Lagos and Ogun States.**

**By Bolu John Folayan, PhD**

**And**

**Oluwaseun Dokunmu**

***Department of Mass Communication  
The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro  
Ogun State Nigeria.***

**ABSTRACT**

*Communication for development (the sharing of information, ideas, knowledge and meanings to enhance the well-being of a people) takes at least three forms: **Top-down** (a development catalyst disseminates communication from development agencies to the people); **Bottom-up** (the people are the agents of development and development agencies only prime the people up) and **Cyclical or Participatory** (both the people and development agencies are partners and catalysts for development. The researchers, in this study, investigated the programmes and communication techniques of 25 Community Development Associations (CDA) in Lagos and Ogun States of Nigeria for six months. The investigation enabled them draw correlations between the communication paradigms of the CDAs and their development strides. They found that CDAs demonstrated huge potentials to serve as pillars of development and grassroots governance. They also found great potentials for CDAs to generate incomes for their projects but that such potentials would be better harnessed if leaders (or members) of the CDAs had development communication proficiency.*

**KEYTERMS**

Participatory communication, All-inclusive Grassroots Governance, Community Development, and Community Development Association.

## INTRODUCTION

*Community development* seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills they need to effect change within their communities. These skills are often created through the formation of social groups working for a common agenda. *All-inclusive governance* is a system of governance and practice characterized by accountability, responsiveness of key stakeholders to societal development propelled by instituted political authority.

A very familiar definition of democracy known to scholarship is “government *of* the people, *by* the people, *for* the people.” The three prepositions that tie this apt definition (‘of’, ‘by’ and ‘for’) form the tripod on which *participatory communication* rests. Participatory communication incorporates the involved of local communities in resolving their challenges by them being able to individually and collectively speak their word. As Servaes and Malikhao have noted, “in order to share information, knowledge, trust, commitment, and a right attitude in development projects, participation is very important in any decision-making process for development.” (Servaes and Malikaho, 2003: p.).

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing African nations today is governance. Good Governance is one development catalyst that is in short supply in Africa. Political scientists, economists, philosophers, rights groups, and scientists have put hands on the plough in this regard. The communication field too, for decades, has been in the forefront, proffering ideas on how to attain good governance and consequently, development in Africa. This sub-field of the communication discipline, known as *development communication (or communication for development)*, has grown in leaps and bounds since the 1930s to date. This paper focuses on how Community Development Associations can contribute to effective governance and accelerate development, using participatory communication principles.

The Community Development Challenge Report, produced by a working party comprising leading UK organisations in the field defines community development as “a set of values and practices which plays a special role in overcoming poverty and disadvantage, knitting society together at the grassroots and deepening democracy.” (Gbesan and Badejo, 1991:p.23).

In the Nigerian context, community development is the process by which efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities. People of like-minds (united by common goals in their professions, where they reside, etc.,) form groups known as community development associations. Unlike social clubs and professional clubs, the primary aim of a community development association is facilitate development, working in concert with or independently of government. Such associations identify their felt-needs and pursue them concretely and corporately through community action.

The typical community development association (CDA) serves as opportunity for the people to meet regularly and consider problems and needs of the community, generate resources internally and externally and solve those problems. Many of these CDAs initiate new projects and manage the facilities around them (such as electricity transformers, security patrols to ensure safety of lives and properties, etc.)

The growth of CDAs in Lagos and Ogun States became rapid, ironically during the military administrations of the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the CDAs sprang up as a result of the communities having been abandoned by the governments. The people felt they had to carry their destinies in their own hands. However, having seen the tremendous contributions of the CDAs, the government (notably the Col. Raji Rasaki and Mohammed Marwa led leadership in Lagos State) introduced the policy of giving matching grants. Any CDA capable of providing 20-30 per cent of any project in its community was given the balance of 80-70 per cent by the government. This stimulated the rapid growth of CDAs. Eventually, the Ministries of Local Governments began to properly recognize the CDAs. The Olugbenga Daniel Administration and Babatunde Fashola Administrations (both democratic dispensations) in fact introduced policies of handing over community-based projects such as boreholes, town-halls, rural electrification, to CDAs for maintenance.

This paper is based on an investigation into the activities of 25 Community Development Associations (CDAs) in Lagos and Ogun State. We sought and found answers to three basic questions:

1. To what extent is the participatory communication paradigm deployed in the Lagos and Ogun States?
2. What limitations hinder the adoption and effective use of participatory communication techniques among Community Development Associations in Lagos and Ogun States?
3. How effective is participatory communication in the implementation of Community Development Associations' interventions.

#### **A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The idea of transforming governance through interactivity – collective behaviour, resource mobilization and empowerment - has been profoundly pontificated in political communication and social development literature. In political science, democracy, originally proposed as government by the representatives of the people, has been explicated to include the government not only being run by representatives of the people, but that the government must be 'responsive' to the people. At the turn of the 20th century, political pundits raised the bar: democracy must exemplify all-inclusiveness. According to Fagbohun, an all-inclusive government must be transparent and open, create access to information, engage the citizens through continuous and constructive dialogue and joint deliberation; collaborate across the policy-making process, including budgeting, focus on financial accountability and compliance checks in reporting practices and predicated on the rule of law and effective policy enforcement.(Fagbohun, 2016).

The general typology of so-called *development communication* paradigms (empowerment, modernization, oramedia, edutainment, communication for social change, behaviour change communication, social marketing etc.) can be broadly classified into two: the **Diffusion Model** and the **Participatory Model**. (Hemer & Tufte, 2003).

The Diffusion Model grew from the works of American scholar Everett Rogers. Rogers postulated that development takes place through a process of diffusion whereby individuals move from a traditional way of life to a different, more technically developed and more rapidly changing way of life. The theory predicts that media as well as interpersonal contact provide information and influence opinion and judgment through five stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation/reinforcement.

The key assumption of the theories predicated on the diffusion model is that lack of development is caused mainly by ignorance or lack of (the right) information by the people. The way to bring about development, therefore, is provide mass media infrastructure and use the mass media to spread awareness and new possibilities, make clarifications, etc. The government and its agencies, in this typically vertical communication process, mainly have to transfer KAPed information (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices) to the people.

On the other hand, the Participatory Model democratizes the communication process. Note Servaes and Malikhao (2003:p. ):

*There is a valid reason why we have two ears, but only one mouth. Communication between people thrives not on the ability to talk fast, but the ability to listen well. People are 'voiceless' not because they have nothing to say, but because nobody cares to listen to them. Authentic listening fosters trust much than incessant talking.*

*Participation, which necessitates listening, and moreover, trust, will help reduce the social distance between communicators and receivers, between teachers and learners, between leaders and followers as well as facilitate a more equitable exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences. However, the need to listen is not limited to those at the receiving end. It must involve the governments as well as the citizens, the poor as well as the rich, the planners and administrators as well as their targets.*

There are two major approaches to participatory communication – the dialogical pedagogy (Freire, 1973, 1993) and the SAP Model – Self-management, Access and Participation.

The Freirian model posits that subjugated people must be treated as fully human subjects in any political process. It is a process that demands respect for otherness and robust dialogue to solve human problems and challenges. The SAP model came about of the Belgrade Conference organized by UNESCO in 1977. Under the model Access refers to the use of the media for public service; Participation implies a higher level of public involvement – they must be involved in decision-making processes and planning, not just consultation or representation; Self-management, the most advanced form of participation rests squarely in the hands of the public.

The key assumption under the participatory communication model is that lack of development in a society is caused by structural inequalities and alienation of local knowledge in governance. What to do in this circumstance is to democratize the communication process: share/exchange information, share/exchange knowledge; share/exchange trust; share commitment/attitude (Folayan, 2016)

Longest has proposed an interdisciplinary centre or institute for community development to coordinate the activities of CDAs and invigorate them for developing the society. The Institute's mandate would include providing: (1) a unit for coordinating, planning, and programming community development extension, research, and teaching programs; (2) sufficient resources of personnel and programs to attract outside funding; (3) a unit for planning long-range policy, staffing patterns, etc.; (4) a unit which can provide a coherent and coordinated liaison with the other states and with the Regional Centers for Rural Development; (5) a unit for developing cooperative and coordinated programming with Federal, state, regional, and local agencies; and (6) a unit for planning and sponsoring training for graduate students, extension agents, and other agency personnel working in community development research and extension. (Longest, 1973).

PAPER DELIVERED AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE SCHOOL OF PURE & APPLIED SCIENCES & THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, ILARO, 2018

Studies based on participatory techniques have been widely reported in development communication literature. Dickson, in a review of several of such studies, found evidence of success in use of such techniques. For instance, a study of participatory projects among Canadian Aboriginal women found that women participated in meetings, planning committees, workshops and consultations with government organizations concerning health education and services and that these positively enhanced project outcomes. (Dickson, 2000, p.127). In another study, a case study on process indicators, Huesca found that participatory techniques helped to rapidly expand partnerships. (Huesca, 2003).

More recent studies by Akinsorotan and Olujide (2006) found that CDA members rely solely on their own efforts to provide some basic amenities for the community because 62.0 percent and 72.0 percent indicated that no external assistance was obtained for projects executed in the community, respectively. Yet, finance was a major problem as most members could hardly contribute the N200:00k (Two hundred naira monthly subscription/membership fee). The CDAs should work closely with the community development staff in their community to channel their problems and requests to both the local and state governments. The researchers recommend that local and state governments should identify with CDAs, streamline their activities and provide adequate supervision, coordination, motivation, monitoring, and evaluation of their projects through appropriate government personnel in order to complement government efforts in developing especially the rural areas.

**METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative design framework was used to gather data for this study. The researchers took a *purposive sample* of 25 CDAs in the two states, guided by Ofo’s recommendation that this sampling frame is suitable when the researcher picks sample to satisfy specific needs. We wanted a sample that typifies CDAs in the low and middle-income areas of both states (where there was a dire need for infrastructure and other developmental necessities).

We used the *questionnaire* and *participant observation* as our research instruments. The researchers attended monthly meetings of four randomly-selected CDAs (two from each state) four times, over a period of six months.

**FINDINGS**

A total of 25 (twenty-five) copies of structured questionnaires were administered to the selected CDAs with the aim of finding out majorly the extent to which the participatory communication paradigm deployed in the Lagos and limitations that hinder the adoption and effective use of participatory communication techniques among Community Development Associations in Lagos and Ogun States?

*Profile of CDAs*

Twelve of the CDAs studied were drawn from Lagos State while 13 were picked from Ogun States. The local government areas from where the samples were taken had poor or average infrastructure such as roads, water, electricity, sanitation, etc., which, in our view, should be a compelling need for active CDAs to complement (or even stand in the gap for) local and state governments in meeting basic needs of the people. (See Tables 1).

Table 1: Local Government Spread of CDAs

Local Government Areas	Frequency (%)
Alimoso	8 (32)
Egbe Idimu	4 (16)
Abeokuta South	4 (16)
Abeokuta North	4 (16)

Yewa South	2 (8)
Obafemi-Owode	3 (12)
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 (100%)</b>

#### *Incomes of CDAs*

The 25 CDAs generated about N98 million (\$280,000=) yearly on the average, as can be inferred from Table 2. The minimum income generated by a CDA was N600,000= (\$1,700=) yearly while the maximum was N7million (\$20,000=) yearly. At least 22 CDAs earned almost N2million (\$5,700=) each as annual average income. Such funds could do quite a lot in meeting the common needs of the community, especially in a situation where the needs had been neglected by the government.

*Table 2: Average income of CDAs*

<b>Income Per Annum (N)</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
600,000	3 (12)
601,500- 1,900,000	8 (32)
2,000,000- 3,900,000	4 (16)
4,000,000 – 5,500,000	4 (16)
5,600,000- 7,000,000	4 (16)
Above 7,000,000	2 (8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 (100%)</b>

Most of the incomes of CDAs came from dues, levies and voluntary donations. Members of the CDAs (house owners and tenants) paid monthly dues (which ranged from N2,000= (N5,000 (\$5.7-\$20) for landlords or house-owners to N500- N1,000 (\$1.5 - \$2.8); for tenants. Annual levies were paid by landlords although the tenants also paid levies indirectly (such, having been incorporated mostly into their annual rents). However, both landlords and tenants paid “special levies” – levies raised to solve specific problems such as electric transformer theft replacement, collapsed drainage repairs, etc.

#### *Membership size and attendance of meetings*

We found during our attendance of CDA meetings that tenants often did not attend meetings and defaulted heavily in monthly dues. The membership size of a CDA ranged from 180-1,200, depending on the size of the CDA. Meeting attendance averaged 300 weekly. Some CDAs covered 50 houses and several streets; some were constituted from sprawling estates of scores of streets while some represented splinter groups spread over one or two streets.

#### *Extent of to which Participatory Communication Paradigm was deployed in study locations*

Interpersonal/group communication techniques were more frequently used by the CDAs in relating with both the government and local institutions, including their members.

*Table 3: Most-employed communication methods*

<b>Within CDA</b>	<b>Communication with Government (%)</b>	<b>Communication with local community (%)</b>
Interpersonal/Group communication (88%)	62	68
Telephone (10%)	12	20
Print communication (2%)	20	12
Other (0%)	6	-
100%	100%	100%

As presented in Table 3, there was not much difference in which techniques the CDAs used print techniques and telephone/social media techniques of 'local communities' and 'government'. This suggests that the CDAs preferred interpersonal or human communication techniques. Even it required that they had to write formal letters to the governments and members, human interactive communication was used as follow-ups. The print media was not effectively deployed by the CDA.

*Effectiveness of the Participatory Communication Paradigm for CDAs which adopted its use.*

The participatory communication model is usually evaluated on dual focus: (i) *Outcome Indicators* – (What specific development end was achieved e.g. how many transformers were installed? How frequently were drains de-silted?); (ii) *Process Indicators* - (What was the level of participation during interventions, E.g. How many landlords and tenants attended meetings or contributed levies? (Morris, 2003).

In this study, we focused on *process indicators* in determining the effectiveness of participatory communication. As stated earlier, participation by landlords through attendance of meetings was far more (averaged 67%) whereas only 10% of tenant-members attended CDA meetings. However, participation through payment of levies among tenants was better (60%). A tenant explained the reason for this thus:

*“Most of us tenants believe that since we are not landlords, we are only temporary stakeholders in the CDA. So, when we see the problem they want to fix such as electricity, we make contributions. If the problem is about more permanent things, we may not be interested. So, we normally send one of us (tenants in a house) to their (the) meetings to monitor what is happening and then make our views known.”*

*Table 4: Knowledge of Communication for Development Theories*

Communication theories	Knowledge of CDA Leaders		
	Yes % (n)	No % (n)	Totals % (n)
Diffusion of Innovation	36% (9)	64% (16)	100% (25)
Modernisation	32% (8)	68% (17)	100% (25)
Democratic Participant	72% (18)	28% (7)	100% (25)
Empowerment	64% (16)	36% (9)	100% (25)
Advocacy	16% (4)	84% (21)	100% (25)
Bahaviour Change Communication	0% (0)	100% (25)	100% (25)
Communication for Social Change	56% (14)	44% (11)	100% (25)

The field of development communication, in contemporary context, is theory-driven. Scholars and other experts have reported success stories where interventions were theory-driven and research-based. It is therefore expedient for interventionists in development efforts to have knowledge of some tested theories and approaches in this regard. As Table 4 shows, most CDA leadership in this investigation lacked such knowledge, when they were asked to state the meanings of selected seven development communication theories/approaches. At least 60 per cent of CDA leaders had no knowledge of five of the selected seven popular development communication approaches.

It is very likely that if the leadership of the CDAs had good knowledge of (for instance) 'advocacy', 'diffusion of innovation' praxis, they would have been able to record better turn-out at their monthly meetings and generally more participation of tenants.

Making more definitive correlations between the effectiveness of the participatory technique against other techniques would require "outcome indicators" measure against the techniques deployed, which was outside the scope of this study. Data (on attendance of meetings, contributions to levies and dues

and number of projects successfully implemented) suggest, however, that much more would have been done by the CDAs if a greater majority of members were mobilized to be “active” members of the CDAs (Rogers, 1987). More ideas and much more funds would have been generated through such higher attendees and this would have translated to development.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Data generated from this study of 25 CDAs in Lagos and Ogun States, Nigeria, suggest that interactive or cyclical participatory interpersonal/group communication was more frequently used (against other forms of communication such as formal one-way or two-way techniques - formal letter, posters, etc. However, less than 40 per cent of the members of CDAs were “active” – the tenants being the most “inactive”. The challenge of mobilizing inactive members on the one hand, and getting the government and other outside members to partner with the CDAs could be overcome if the leadership for the CDAs acquire reasonably good knowledge of development communication praxis and effectively deploy them. Based on the foregoing, we recommend the following:

- Participatory communication is a pre-requisite for all-inclusive governance and indeed democracy. But there is need to build structures and profiles of institutions that would serve as legs and hands of development. (Fagbohun, 2013, 2016). As Fagbohun has noted: *“Inclusive processes increase the legitimacy of and effectiveness of citizen and civil society groups, and imbue in the citizens a feeling of ownership. On the part of government, engaging fully with the citizens, help them to access knowledge about needs together with potential solutions and their possible impacts.”*  
The CDAs can be one of such effective legs or hands of political institutions. If 25 CDAs in low-income areas could raise and expend almost a hundred million naira in a year, much more could be raised and deployed to developmental projects if the CDAs were well-structured and better-organized.
- Training in participatory communication techniques should be organized for the leadership of CDAs. Participatory communication is much more than robust dialogue. It requires skills and must be theory- and research- driven.
- ‘Communication Platforms’ should be set up by the local and state governments to create interactive vehicles between government (agency) and the CDAs via the social media; e.g. interactive website of Lagos CDAs, *Whatssap* Group of Ogun CDAs, Lagos CDAs *Facebook*, CDA Ogun on *Instagram* etc.
- There should be better or more creative funding of CDAs by State and Local Governments, not necessarily through grants. For example, a CDA in Lagos State constructed a wooden pedestrian bridge over a canal and tolled it. This bridge has now become the CDA’s major source of income, apart from creating employment for 15 community members. CDAs in more affluent communities may thus be able to grow to generate own electricity, potable water, link roads, among other dire needs, in the near future.

### **REFERENCES**

- Akinsorotan, A.O., & Olujide, M.G., (2006). Community Development Associations’ Contributions In Self Help Projects In Lagos State Of Nigeria by *Journal of Central European of Agriculture*, Vol.7. No. 4
- Dickson, G. (2000). Aboriginal grandmothers: Experience with health promotions and participatory action research. *Qualitative Health Research* 10(2), 188-213.
- Fagbohun, Olanrewaju. (2013). Nigeria’s democracy and the crisis of political instability: An audit of electoral system. *The Constitution*, 95 (12), No. 2, June.



- Fagbohun, Olanrewaju. (2016). "All-inclusive government: Lagos state in perspective". Lecture delivered at the Annual Public Lecture of Nigeria Union of Journalists (Lagos Information Chapel), Martinos Centre, Lagos, August 30<sup>th</sup>
- Folayan, Bolu John. (2016). "Role of communication in an all-inclusive government". Paper presented at the Annual Public Lecture of Nigeria Union of Journalists (Lagos Information Chapel), Martinos Centre, Lagos, August 30<sup>th</sup>
- Friere, P. (1973). Education: The practice of freedom. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative.
- Frierie, P. (1993). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Continuum.
- Gbesan, G. & Badejo, D. (ed.) (1991). Handbook on information management: The grassroots challenge. Abeokuta: Fola Bookshops Ltd.
- Hemer, Oscar & Tufte, Thomas. (2003). Media and glocal change: Rethinking communication for development. Goteborg: Nordicom
- Huesca, R. 2003). Communication for social change among Mexican factory workers on the Mexican-United States Border. In Wilkins, K.G. (ed). *Re-Developing communication for social change: Theory, practice and power*. Lanham, MD: Rowman Littlefield.
- Longest, James W . (1973).The Role of Community Development in Rural Development. Paper presented at the Association of Southern Agricultural Workers meetings, Atlanta, Georgia, February 4-7.
- Morris, N. (2003). A comparative analysis of the diffusion and participatory models in development communication. In *Communication Theory*. Vol. 11, No. 2, 225-248.
- Rogers, E.M. (1987). "Communication and development today". Paper presented at the seminar on communication and change: An agenda for the new age of communication. Honolulu, August.
- Servaes, Jan and Malikhao, Patchanee (2003). Participatory communication: A new paradigm? In Oscar Hemer & Thomas Tufte, *Media and glocal change: Rethinking communication for development*. Goteborg: Nordicom