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Provision and Use of Community-based Library and Information Services: a Case Study of Asa Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the use of community-based library and information services in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data using frequency, tables and percentages. The instruments used in collecting data were a combination of questionnaire, interview and observation. Three hundred (300) copies of questionnaire were administered to randomly selected respondents from ten (10) communities (Afon, Aboto-oja, Ballah, Alapa, Laduba, Ogbondoroko, Olowu oko, Lasoju, Igbo Aran and Elebute) in Asa Local Government and two hundred and sixty-eight (268) copies representing (89.3%) were returned and found useful. The major findings from the study are that: the majority of the community dwellers were farmers (44.8%) and government workers (22.4%) and they needed information on agriculture and personal development respectively. The majority (40.3%)) of the community dwellers obtained their needed information mainly from Radio/Television broadcast.

Keywords: Rural dwellers, community-based library, information needs, community-based library services, Asa Local Government

INTRODUCTION

Information provision to the rural dwellers in Nigeria has suffered a complete neglect over a long time and it has led to the situation whereby the rural populace are information starved. Obviously, the rural populace suffers from acute low productivity, social and economic regression due to ignorance, which is also a direct consequence of either inadequate or lack of information provision to them. The only information outfits over time that are available to the Nigerian rural dwellers are radio and television. The community dwellers due to inadequate provision of public services such as health care services, library and information services, etc usually have the need to travel to cities for them to obtain wider access. Travel, however, may not be an easy option, due to low income.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2007) rural society is a society in which there is low ratio of inhabitants to open land and in which the most important economic activities are the production of foodstuffs, fibers and raw materials. However, the poor socio-economic conditions of community dwellers could be improved with the provision of community-based library and information services. One of the surest ways of raising the standard of life in the rural areas is the provision of useful and reliable information through library services.

A community-based library is basically concerned with the provision of problem-solving information to the community dwellers. According to the South African Community Library and Information Services Bill, community-based library and information services (CIS) is defined as library and information services established, funded or maintained by a province or municipality to provide library and information services to the public or community dwellers (South Africa Government Gazette, 2010). Community-based library and information services involves provision of citizen action information needed for effective participation as individuals or as members of a group in the social, political, legal, and economic process. Community-based library and information services assist individuals and groups with daily problem-solving and with participation in the democratic process. In this vein, effective provision of community-based library and information services in Nigeria's rural communities has the potential of providing the people's information needs promptly in the proper language and format.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF ASA LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Asa Local Government is one of the oldest in Kwara State, Nigeria. It was created in 1976 with it's headquarter in Afon. The Local Government Area has 12 wards and shares boundary with Osun State in several locations. It has an area of 1,286 km2 and a population of 1,26,435 at the 2006 population census. (National Population Commission, 2006). The categories of people living in the rural areas of Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State include farmers, hunters, petty traders, teachers, cattle-rearers, Local health workers, Local Government workers, artisans, politicians, students, etc. The rural communities in the Local Government Area include: Afon, Igbo-Nla, Igbo-Aran, Oguntoyinbo, Otte-Oja, Aboto-Oja, Okeso, Ballah, Alapa, Laduba, Ogbondoroko, Olowu Oko, Lasoju, Igbo Aran, Eiyenkorin, Budo Egba, Ilaji Garuba, Idiapa Sadadi, Ago Oja, Ila Oja, Faje, Budo Are, Aladera Magaji, Akunyun and Elebute. Others are: Iyana Alakuko, Gaa-Lamba, Okepete, Pampo, Apata Ajele, Ogiri, Onile Aro, Ajuwon, Efue, Gaa Abuyanrin, Berikodo Dongari, Gbaja, Ologbo, Agboyi, Ilaji Owode, Owode Alagbon, Oniyere, Ajagusi, Budo Adio,Onikeke, Yede, Oja Iya, Kupola, Awe, Agbonna, Jagun and Agbolu. Yoruba and Fulani are the major languages of the people of the Local Government Area. The major economic activities of the people are farming, trading, carving, cattle rearing, hunting, and garri processing. The major festivals include; Egungun Festival and Alagbe Acrobat. (www.kwarastate.gov.ng/asa/lga, 2011).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Information is indispensable in human life, hence a basic human need, which has an over-riding significance to all and sundry. However, people living in the rural communities of Nigeria need information as urban dwellers. It is generally believed that community-based libraries if exist, suffer the most neglect in terms of funding. Yet, provision of needed information at the right time and format to the rural dwellers is central. However, since the creation of Asa Local Government, much has not been done on the information needs of the people living in its rural areas and library and information services available to them. Thus, the situation calls for a research. This study, however, intends to identify the information needs of rural dwellers in this area and to find out what information services are available to them. This study is considered significant in view of the fact that the

findings will assist the community-based information service providers to plan and cater for the diversified information needs of community dwellers in terms of better library and information service delivery. The findings of the study will also help the community dwellers to be aware of what information services are available to them so as to make better use of them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

i. to identify the information needs of the community dwellers in Asa Local Government
ii. to find out what information services are available to the community dwellers
iii. to determine the extent to which the community-based information service providers meet the needs of the community dwellers
iv. to examine the challenges of community-based library and information services provision to rural dwellers with a view to proffering solutions

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The rural populace in Nigeria represents the constituency of the bulk of victims of inaccessibility to such urban amenities as good network of road, pipe-borne water, electricity, good shelter and health facilities. According to Harrande (2009), poverty and illiteracy are the major barriers to rural development. He stated that the government should take the blame completely, because it is the right of every citizen to enjoy the wealth, resources, and services rendered by the government of the country without any discrimination or neglect. Progressive changes, according to Harande (2009), depends on the nature of information consumed. Olajide (2008) reported that the information needs of rural dwellers include information needs on agriculture, health, politics, education and employment.

Meanwhile, Harande (2009) reiterated that prosperity, progress, and development of any nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information. However, the fundamental aim of community-based libraries according to Olowu (2004) is to provide timely, accurate, pertinent, and reliable information for the rural dwellers. Popoola (2008) noted that information availability does not mean accessibility and utilization. Kumar (2008) emphasized that a community library can play

an important role in helping different sectors of the community. He wrote that a community library can help farmers to improve production, enable businessman to improve business prospects, create in children a love of reading, which can lead to formation of reading habits at an early stage. It can help students of all ages and can provide job information for those who are unemployed. Elderly people, poor and handicapped persons can also be served by it.

It is noteworthy that community-based library and information services in Nigeria are still very limited. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), for public libraries (community-based libraries) to flourish in any society, the economy must be sufficiently bright to motivate the government to commit funds to library development. The community library and information services providers must in fact take cue from existing gaps and deficiencies in rural community information transfer going on presently. According to Saleh (2011), in every society, a library is established as a social institution with the sole responsibility of selecting, acquiring, organizing, interpreting and disseminating information. It reflects the intellectual development, educational and cultural needs and aspirations of the society and therefore it remains the greatest treasures of human intellect serving as a communication link between knowledge and its users. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) noted that the establishment of any (community) library is predicated upon two fundamental assumptions namely, that the authorities setting it up are prepared to see to its continued existence by adequate financial support and that the people whom the library serve appreciate its informational and educational values. According to Abdulkarim (2010), the (community) libraries are expected to play an indispensable role in the life of the community they serve, some of which are: promotion of reading culture, provision of good information and reference centre for the masses, building of collection that relates to local interest, and offering of different kinds of services to users such as; reference, extension, audiovisual and training services. Going by the foregoing roles and functions of the community libraries, the question now is that are community libraries in Nigeria meeting up to expectations and providing the necessary services to the rural dwellers?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

Social survey research was adopted for this study.

Population of the study

The targeted population of the study comprised the rural dwellers living in major communities within Asa Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Sample and sampling procedure

A purposive sampling procedure was used to select ten (10) major communities in Asa Local Government and they were used for the study. These communities are: Afon, Aboto-oja, Ballah, Alapa, Laduba, Ogbondoroko, Olowu oko, Lasoju, Igbo Aran and Elebute. Through a simple random sampling, a total of 30 respondents were taken from each of the ten communities that participated in the study and this gave a total of 300 participants.

Instrument for data collection

The Community-based Library and Information Services Assessment Questionnaire (CLISAQ) was the main instrument used for data collection from randomly selected rural dwellers. This was designed based on the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was in five sections, containing nine (9) question items. The first section was designed to gather personal and demographic information of the respondents, the second and third sections were designed to seek information on respondents' information needs and sources of meeting the needs respectively. Section four was designed to collect information on the availability and use of community-based library while section five was designed to gather information on the challenges facing the respondents in accessing their needed information. While a test retest method was used to measure the performance of the instrument and it provided a reliability coefficient of 0.82, the instrument was complemented with a structured interview, conducted with the respondents; responses were voice recorded based on respondents' acceptance of the arrangement and these were later transcribed into a meaningful content.

Administration

In each of the ten communities, one research assistant was employed to help in data collection. The researchers and research assistant for each community administered the questionnaire. Data from each community was collected on different days and data gathering for the whole study lasted for two weeks. Two hundred and sixty-eight (268)

copies of the questionnaire representing (89.3%) were returned and found useful.

Methods of data analysis

Two hundred and sixty-eight (268) copies of the questionnaire representing (89.3%) were returned and found useful. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data using frequency, tables and percentages.

RESULTS

Demographic Information of Respondents

There were 180 (67.2%) male respondents and 88 (32.8%) female respondents in the selected sample. Respondents in age bracket 21-30 (30.5%) and 31-40 (40.3%) were in the high side while other age ranges were on the low side. There were 180 (67.2%) married, 70 (26.1%) singles, 10 (3.7%) divorced and 8 (3%) widows. This implies the predominance of the older and married people as constituting the majority of the rural dwellers. The respondent's distribution along educational qualifications indicated that 45% respondents had formal education and 55% had no formal education at all. The majority of the respondents 120 (44.8%) were farmers, 60 (22.4%) were government workers, 36 (13.4%) were students, 24 (8.95%) were traders and 28 (10.4%) were artisans.

Table 1: Information needs of the respondents

Information Needs	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Information on employment	20	7.5
Information on education	22	8.2
Information on sports	17	6.3
Information on personal development	50	18.7
Information on health	32	11.9
Information on politics	15	5.6
Information on security	21	7.8
Information on agricultural programmes	72	26.9
Information on provision of social amenities	19	7.1
Total	**268**	**100**

Table 1 shows that the information needs relating to respondents' agricultural programmes (26.9%), personal development (18.7%) and health (11.9%) indicated their predominance

among the respondents. Other information are: education (8.2%), security (7.8%), employment (7.5%), social amenities (7.1%), sports (6.3%) and politics (5.6%). This further indicates that the farmers who were the majority needed information on agricultural programmes to improve on their farming and cultivation practices in order to have more harvest. Next to it is the information needs on personal development which shows that government workers needed information to attain success in life.

Table 2: Sources of Meeting Respondents' Information Needs

Sources	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Community-based Library	10	3.7
Mobile phone	75	27.9
Radio/Television broadcast	108	40.3
Classroom teacher/school	13	4.9
Traditional rulers	17	6.3
Neighbours and Friends	20	7.5
Mosque	13	4.9
Church	9	3.4
Club and association	3	1.1
Total	268	100

Table 2 shows that radio/television broadcast (40.3%) and mobile phone (27.9%) respectively featured in the response prominently, indicating that community-based library and information service was not popular like the radio/television broadcast as means of satisfying respondents' information needs. This was followed by friends/neighbours (7.5%) and traditional rulers (6.3%). Classroom-teachers and mosque (4.9%) each while community-based library (3.7%). Church (3.4%) while club/association (1.1%). The low response rate for community-based library (3.7%) is however expected given the widely-held belief about the community dwellers probably have a low expectation of the range of public services such as health care services, library and information services, etc, that are available to them locally in Nigeria. Club or association was not considered as an important source of meeting respondents' information needs as shown in the table.

Table 3: Factors Influencing the Choice of Respondents' Information Sources

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Proximity to the information source	24	8.9
Convenience of use of the source	88	32.8
Reliability of the information source	20	7.5
Affordability of the information source	112	41.8
Format of the information source	8	2.9
Adequacy of information source	16	5.9
Total	268	100

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents indicated affordability (41.8%) and convenience of use (32.8%) as the major factors influencing their choice of information source used in meeting their needs. Next to this were proximity (8.9%), reliability (7.5%), adequacy of the information source (5.9%) and format of the source (2.9%). This further indicates that the majority of the respondents who were farmers could afford to get for themselves a mobile phone and used it to satisfy their information needs.

Table 4: Availability of community-based library services

Is there a library in your community?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	240	89.6
Not sure	28	10.4
Total	268	100

Table 4 shows that 240 (89.6%) respondents indicated that there were no community-based libraries at all in their communities. No respondent indicated the availability of community-based library at all in their communities and only 28 (10.4%) respondents indicated that they were not sure of community-based library being in existence. This could be due to negligence of the local and state governments in terms of adequate provision of information to the rural communities.

Table 5: Use of Community-based Library by the respondents

Use of Community-based Library by the Respondents	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Occasionally	19	7.1
Once in two days	0	0
1-3 times a week	0	0
Daily	0	0
Never use it at all	249	92.9
Total	**268**	**100**

Table 5 shows that the majority 249 (92.9%) of the respondents indicated never to have used community-based library at all in fulfilling their varying information needs, 19 representing (7.1%) of the respondents anyway claimed to have visited the community-based library occasionally. This further shows that the community-based library remained unpopular among rural dwellers in meeting their information needs. This could be largely due to the fact that community-based library were not in existence in most of the rural communities.

Table 6: Services that Respondents would wish to see taking place in the community-based library when exist.

Library Services	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Helping children to read	5	1.7
Social cultural services	12	4.5
Adult literacy	14	5.2
Workshops for caregivers and teachers	5	1.7
Bookmobile service	4	1.5
Readers' advisory service	15	5.6
Translation service	13	4.9
Referral service	11	4.1
A combination of the above	189	70.5
Total	268	100

Table 6 shows that the majority 189 representing (70.5%) of the respondents indicated that they wanted to see whole lot of typical library services such as readers' advisory service, translation service, adult literacy, social cultural services, etc taking place in their community-based libraries whenever they exist. This could be due to the fact that rural dwellers were said to have been information starved over a long time now. Few respondents totaling 42 representing (15.7%) indicated specific services like translation service, adult literacy and readers' advisory service to part of services they expect to see taking place in the community library. This could be due to the fact that about 55% of the population sample indicated that they had no formal education at all.

Table 7: Challenges facing the respondents in accessing the needed information

Constraints	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Absence of community-based library	185	69
Lack of awareness of available information	22	8.2
Radio/TV programmes not broadcast in local languages	30	11.2
Lack of local information providers	13	4.9
Erratic power supply to listen to Radio/TV broadcast	7	2.6
Absence of GSM service providers	11	4.1
Total	268	100

Table 7 shows that the major constraint that hindered meeting users' information needs was absence of community-based library (69%). Other constraints include radio/television programmes not broadcast in local languages (11.2%), lack of awareness of available information (8.2%), lack of local information providers (4.9%), absence of GSM service providers (4.1%) and inadequate power supply (2.6%).

Table 8: Suggested solutions to the challenges of accessing information

Suggested solutions	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Establishment of Community-based Library	163	60.8
Radio/TV broadcast in local languages	38	14.3
Increase in number of local information providers and caregivers such as health workers, agric extension officers, etc	15	5.6
Creation of awareness on locally available information	14	5.2
Provision of constant power supply	21	7.8
Provision of GSM services	17	6.3
Total	268	100

Table 8 shows that the majority of the respondents 163 (60.8%) suggested the establishment of community-based library as a way of meeting information needs of rural communities. Next to this was the radio/television broadcast in local languages 38 (14.3%), provision of constant power supply 21 (7.8%), provision of GSM services 17 (6.3%), increase the local information providers 15 (5.6%) and creation of awareness on locally available information 14 (5.2%).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings reveal that majority of the respondents were farmers who cultivate land for food production in order to earn livelihood. This confirms the Encyclopedia Britannica (2007) that majority of the people living in rural areas are peasants farmers and in which the most important economic activities are the production of foods, fibres, and raw materials. It is also evident based on the findings that majority of the rural dwellers needed information on agriculture and agrees with the fact that the majority of the rural dwellers (44.8%) are farmers as shown in the demographic composition presented earlier. This is however, in harmony with Olajide (2008) who reported that most rural dwellers in Ekiti State needed information on agriculture. Results of the findings further show that community-based libraries are not in existence in most of the rural villages of Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. This is buttressed by Kamil (2003) who found that rural community dwellers probably have a low expectation of the range of public services such as health care services, library services, etc that are available to them locally. This implies

that rural dwellers sought their needed information through sources other than community-based libraries. Majority of the respondents rely heavily on mass media (radio and television broadcast) and mobile phones to meet their information needs. This finding supports Egbesimba (2009) who reported that radio broadcast have all-pervading popularity as a source of meeting information needs among majority of the rural dwellers.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the use of community-based library and what information services are available to the rural dwellers in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. The study found out that at present the rural communities have been in a state of total and complete neglect in terms of information provision leading to information deprivation. At present, the community dwellers get much of their information from the mass media such as radio and television, they also rely heavily on their mobile phones. However, much of the information gotten from these sources was unsolicited and so cannot meet most of the information needs of the community dwellers. Moreover, it is evident that effective provision of community-based library and information services in Nigeria's rural communities has the potential of providing the people's information needs promptly in the proper language and format.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the surest ways of raising the standard of life in the rural areas is the provision of useful and reliable information through community-based library services. Once the community dwellers are well informed, they will take advantage of scientific and technological breakthrough in improving their standard of living. Based on conclusion drawn above, the following recommendations are made:

- As a matter of necessity and urgency, community-based libraries should be established in every major village of the local government to ensure adequate provision of information which will lead to greater access to information by the rural dwellers.
- When established, community-based libraries should provide services that will meet the information needs and yearnings of the rural dwellers. Such services include translation service, adult literacy, workshops for caregivers and teachers, social cultural services, provision of specific information etc.

- Radio and television programmes meant for rural dwellers should be broadcast in local languages to ensure effective information dissemination.
- Local information providers such as agric extension officers, local health workers, etc should always ensure that information is disseminated to rural dwellers in the proper and appropriate format.
- The information materials and messages from change agents, and so on could be captured by the community-based library and made available to the end users in a local languages on a regular basis.

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