

# The Impact of Community Information Centres on Community Development in Akoko North West Local Government of Ondo State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study discussed the impact of community information centres on community development in four communities in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The study employed survey research method, using mainly questionnaire. Copies of questionnaire were distributed to a total of 200 respondents. The entire questionnaire were effectively completed and retrieved. Teachers, traders, farmers, fish sellers, civil servants, students among others were respondents. At the end of the study, it was discovered that availability of community information services were rare in the communities, thus the dwellers were unaware of the great potentials inherent in the utilization of the centres. It was further discovered that the communities yearn for provision of well stocked community information centres with a view to empowering, changing and transforming their life socially, economically, technologically, educationally, politically for the better.

**Keywords:** Impact, Community Information Centre, Community Development, Empowerment.

## Introduction

The existence of community information centers as vehicles to facilitate the process of empowerment, social change and transformation of communities cannot be over emphasized. The goal of community information centres is to empower people of a given community. Empowerment in this context means involving the community in developing collection of appropriate information resources based upon the community needs, impacting information skills and involving the community itself in the running of information centres. Kantumaya (1992) said that information is power. Community Information Centres have established themselves as indispensable elements in the life of the community people in Britain and America.

According to a statement from the Community Development Foundation (2008), Community development is structured intervention that gives communities greater control over the conditions that affect their lives. Osayande(2011) stressed that development is often applied to such phenomena as change, progress, growth, industrialization, and modernization. According to him development is a goal that every individual, social groups, community, or nation strive to achieve.

The premise of the study is that promoting the establishment of community information centres will impact positively and accelerate community development in the sense that they will become influential factors, which serve as agents of social, educational, economic, industrial, technological, agricultural, political, cultural and recreational development of communities understudied.

## Statement of the Problem

Community Information Centres appear very rare or not available in Akoko North West Local Government communities of Ondo State, Nigeria, thus making people seem not to recognize their impact and efficacy. The peoples' ignorance in making effort to acquire such centres and services is hampering their social, educational, economical, technological transformation and development.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study are:

- (i) To investigate the information needs of the people in the communities.
- (ii) To identify the impact the availability of the centres will have in community development.
- (iii) To identify the problems of providing information services in the communities with a view to recommending solutions to them.

## Research Questions

- (i) What are the information needs of the People in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria?

- (ii) What are the sources of obtaining information for their personal and community development needs ?
- (iii) What impact does community information centres have on community development?
- (iv) What are the problems of providing community information centres in the communities?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Uhegbu(2006) referred community information centre to a place where people in communities may gather to listen to stories, watch films or seek an understanding of their environment and their problems. Natal Resource Forum (1992) described it as a space or building in which human and other (information) resources in variety of media such as, books, journals, newspapers, films, slides, video and audio cassettes, three dimensional objects etc., and (also) equipment such as, recorders, cameras, computers, photocopiers, printers, fax machines etc., are arranged or made accessible in appropriate manner for empowering people through information dissemination, production, skills and resource sharing.

Parkdale Community Information Centre (2013) added that it is a place dedicated to keeping up-to-date information on thousands of community programs, services and organization within the region. Furthermore, it is established to meet the diverse and changing needs of the community people through the delivery of accessible, effective programs and services. Also, Sunshine Coast Community Resource Centre (2013) saw it as a place committed to building a better world- working at all levels from local to global, sharing important information, connecting people, and catalyzing the development of healthy self-reliant communities. It is aimed at creating peace, harmony and abundant, dignified life for all. The mission is to inform, educate, refer, and empower the community through provision of enquiry services; community Information directories; basic needs guide- a guide to navigating the many services available in the region for people and print ready and multimedia resources on a wide variety of information.

Social Planning Council of Kitchener (2013) lists its services as “Internet access ; Work space; Small group meetings; Workshops and training; Information and referral counseling; Community information and social service systems; Social Data Studios; Technology training for adults and seniors; Cybercamps for children and youth; Publications and resources; Listserv and broadcasts; Enquiry counseling and consultation service; Community engagement and development services; Communication and advocacy service” Therefore, establishment of community information centres can be the most effective way to ensure the free flow access to information and empowerment of disadvantaged communities by providing relevant information in a user-friendly system (Human Sciences Research Council(2013).

Information centres are components of information systems. Adeyemi(1991) defined information system as a set of resource-men, materials and procedure, designed to attain information goals within particular socio-economic environments which produce and utilize the system as a tool for development.

Idike (1997) asserted that a community is any area with a populations of 20,000 people or below. It is any area whose inhabitants, man and natural resources are in cooperation in an attempt to activate the hard barriers of government policies which barely acknowledges their existence. Allen (1992) on the other hand sees community areas as those parts of the country where people and activities are widely spaced. By implication, such a place will be deprived, isolated and hence life generally will be boring. Areas with low level of literacy or high level of illiteracy; limited educational and economic (including jobs) opportunities; strong cultural, tribal and religions adherence; absence of large business and commercial institutions; and limited social facilities e.g. electricity supply, infrastructures educational institutions, communication system etc. may be regarded as communities

A UK Wide Development Network(2008) wrote that Community development is all about developing the power, skills, knowledge and experience of people as individuals and in groups, thus making them to undertake initiatives of their own to combat social, economic, political and environmental problems, and enabling them to fully participate in a truly democratic process. Anyawu(1999) posited that community development is the process in life of a community, by which the people plan and act together for the satisfaction of their felt needs. Human Sciences Research Council (2013) gave community qualitative indicators as marginalized, underserved, high rate of illiteracy and severely proscribed access to information. Community Information Centres provide access to information and resources to the people needs, developmental programmes and empowerment to initiate and execute self- help projects so as to enhance meaningful development.

Mchombu (1992) identified information needs of the community people as adult literacy, agriculture, home crafts, health/hygiene, leadership, government/party policies, vocational trades, Islamic and Christian education. Muela(2011) and Arizona Community Information and Referral Services(2013) listed community information needs as applied to their communities thus:

- i. Territorial and uses of land e.g. housing for poor and working classes, expansion and building of schools etc.
- ii. Poverty, social and economic inequalities(e.g. unemployment, debts and crimes)
- iii. Health(e.g. drug addiction, lack of green public places, playgrounds, sports and leisure facilities)
- iv. Politics(e.g inadequate allocation of funding for community projects)
- v. Culture(e.g. multicultural, ethnic, religions, national tribalism)
- vi. Transport(e.g. transport for elderly, school pupils and students)
- vii. Education
- Viii. Communication

Aboyade (1987) also identified the information needs of the community on multiplicity of issues listed below.

- i. Their health e.g. treatment of malaria fever, antenatal and post natal care, nutrition of the young and old, care of infertility etc.
- ii. Problems of daily existence of water supply electricity, good roads, employment opportunities etc.
- iii. Occupation, like the supply of fertilizer supply of other farm inputs, new methods of cultivation, income generating ventures etc.
- iv. Education of youth and adults propagation of policies, eradication of illiteracy etc.

Others include money, banking and finance; land tenure, property ownership and environment; taxation and public revenue; government, law and legal issues and public policy; corporations and centralization of power; and technology choices

The impact of information centres on community development is crucial to national development in view of numerous problems such as rising unemployment, malnutrition and starvation, social divisions, and rivalries, rural-urban migration and ill-health, ignorance and illiteracy, lack of exposure to current information technology and a host of others. Adewusi (2005) found out that the term “Community Information” was first coined in United States to describe the services set up in response to the Kahn report which shows that in 1960s, a number of libraries set up information and referral services as a result of America War on Poverty Programme. The aims of these special services were to link client with a problem to appropriate agency that could answer his or her needs and to supply the service providers with feedback from users. It was found out that community information services were used as a major strategy to eradicate poverty and develop their communities.

Information is crucial to community people because it will make them have better understanding and appreciative of government policies and programmes. It encourages closer link between the initiators and beneficiaries of the developmental efforts. This is why Idoka (2003) asserted that nothing is important for mankind than to bring within reach all what can widen his horizon, making discoveries and literary transformation that can make the individual a more valuable member of the society. Availability and utilization of information help people to know their entitlements to social benefits and sources of support to overcome community problems.

Adewusi (2005) stressed that when one is informed one possesses power and ability to try impossibilities. Aboyade (1987) added that the communities need to be informed about the global trends and how the trends could motivate or engineer them to do things for themselves and to get them into this frame of mind, information must reach people at all levels as to the new desired goals and objectives for social transformation, and as to what is required of them to achieve them. Harande (2009) explained that lack of development has positive correlation with the negative consequences such as exodus of community dwellers to urban area, with resulting problems of unemployment, crimes, prostitution, child labour, insecurity, money laundering, bribery, poverty, proliferation of shanty living areas, spread of disease, and over stretching of the facilities and infrastructure in the urban areas. Any nation that neglects the development and empowerment of the rural communities should not expect meaningful development.

Kamba (2009) stressed that societal needs are satisfied through various kinds of activities, each of which requires information as an input. According to him, Information is today conceived as an important resource that contributes towards the development of a nation especially in the area of current information explosion. It

provides for the development of knowledge, the foundation for innovations, the resources for informed citizenry and thus becomes a vital key commodity for the progress of any community or society. McAnany (1978) shared the opinion that for any community to function, minimum stock of usable information is essential. Every society needs to acquire, organize, store, disseminate and exchange this basic stock of information which is central to the solution of any society's economic and social problems.

### Research Methodology

The research design is survey design. The populations for the study consist of 200 people from four selected communities in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State. The communities are Oke Agbe-Akoko, Ogbagi- Akoko, Arigidi-Akoko and Ikaram\_Akoko. The population consists of the people in the community irrespective of their trades and occupations. Samples of 200 people made up of 50 people from each community were used as at the time of this study. Thus 50 people were randomly picked from each community.

The research instrument used for this study was mainly Questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 12 questions bordering on information needs of the people, the impact of information services on community development and problems associated with provision of community information centres. The study adopted a simple method of data collection which entailed meeting respondents directly and putting them through when attempting to provide data through the questions. The data collected for the purpose of the study were analyzed based on simple percentage scores.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

#### Research question 1:

Do you agree that the following are information needs of your community?

Table 1

NOS	NEEDS	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Undecided	%	Disagree	%
1	Poverty/Social/Economic/ equity issues	20	10	160	80	-	-	20	10
2	Agriculture	100	50	52	26	34	17	14	7
3	Voc. Crafts/Trades	-	-	150	75	-	-	50	25
4	Health/Hygiene	86	43	70	35	44	22	-	-
5	Leadership/ Politics/Govt.	150	75	40	20	10	5	-	-
6	Education	130	65	20	10	-	0	50	25
7	Legal issues	-	0	166	83	34	17	-	-
8	Training/Workshop	56	28	28	14	18	9	93	47
9	Employment	76	38	56	28	52	26	16	8
10	Religion/Culture	-	0	-	0	20	10	180	90
12	Financial assistance	-	0	16	8	22	11	162	81

Table 1 shows that 10% of the respondents strongly need information on poverty/social/economic and equity issues and 80% agree while 10% disagree. 50% strongly agree that they need information on agriculture while 26% agree, 17% undecided and 7% disagree. On vocational craft and trades, 75% agree and 25% disagree that they need information on them. On health\hygiene, 43% agree while 35 undecided and 22% disagree that they need information on health\hygiene. The table however shows that 75% strongly agree, 20% agree and 5% disagree that they need information on leadership/ politics/government. 65% strongly agree, 10% agree and 25% disagree that they need information on education. 83% agree and 17% undecided on the information need on legal issues while 28% strongly agree that they need information on workshops and trainings, 14% agree, 9% undecided and 47% disagree. 38% strongly agree, 28% agree that they need information on employment, 26% and 8% undecided and disagree respectively. On religion/culture 10% and 90% undecided and disagree respectively that they need information on it. Finally, on financial assistance, 8%, 11% and 81% agree, undecided and disagree respectively.

**Research question 2:**

Do you agree that you obtain information for your personal and community development needs from the following sources?

**Table 2**

SOURCES	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Undecided	%	Disagree	%
Newspapers	30	15	56	28	28	14	86	43
Radio and TV	200	100	-	0	-	0	-	0
Billboard/Posters/leaflets	-	0	-	0	22	11	178	89
Books/Journals//research/projects reports and works	36	18	20	10	20	10	124	62
Community Information Centres	-	0	-	0	8	4	192	96
Videos/Films/models and Games	8	4	18	9	22	11	152	76
Internet/electronic resources	-	0	72	36	58	29	70	35
Markets/traditional leaders/friends/opinion and political activists/worship places	66	33	50	25	84	42	-	0

Table 2 shows that 15% of the respondents strongly agree, 28% agree and 14% undecided that they obtained information through Newspapers, while 43% disagree. 100% strongly agree that they obtained information through radio and television. 11 undecided and 89% disagreed that they obtained information through bill boards and posters. Also 18% strongly agree, 10% agree, and 10% undecided that they obtained information through books/ journals/research/projects/ reports works while 62% disagree. On Community Information Centres 4% of the respondents undecided and 96% disagree. 4% strongly agree, 9% agree, 11% undecided while 76% disagree on videos/films/models and games. However, 36% agree that they obtained information from internet/mobile phones/electronic sources while 29% undecided and 35% disagree. On markets, friends, traditional leaders, political activists and worship places 33% strongly agree, 25% agree and 42% undecided that they obtained information from these sources.

No	IMPACTS OF INFORMATION CENTRES	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Disagree	%
1	Skill Acquisition/Technology Choices	134	67	22	11	8	4	36	18
2	Business Opportunity	80	40	40	20	50	25	30	15
3	Financial Assistance/Breakthrough	136	68	10	5	20	10	34	17
4	Education/Current Affairs	200	100	-	0	-	0	-	0
5	Trading/Farming	60	30	100	50	26	13	14	7
6	Government/Public Policy	-	0	32	16	72	36	96	48
7	Leisure/ Recreation/Health	-	0	120	60	34	17	46	23
8	Employments/Poverty/Economic Inequalities/Urban Migration/Crimes reduction	90	45	62	31	18	9	30	15
9	Legal/Family Issues	86	43	18	9	22	11	74	37

**Research Question 3:**

Do you agree that the following impacts of provision of community information centres will improve your community development?

**Table 3**

Table 3 shows that 67%, 11% and 4% of respondents strongly agree, agree and undecided respectively that provision of community information centres will improve their skill acquisition and technology choices while 18% disagree. Similarly 40%, 20% and 25% strongly agree, agree and undecided respectively that their business opportunity will be improved through provision of community information centers. On financial breakthrough, 5% strongly agree, 60 % agree, 10% undecided while 17% disagree. 100% strongly agree that community information centres will impact on their education. On trading and farming 30% strongly agree 50% agree and 13% undecided while 7% disagree. In the case of government and public policies, 16% agree, 36% fairly agree while 48% disagree. As regards leisure and recreation 60% agree, 17% undecided while 23% disagree. On employment 45% strongly agree, 31% agree and 9% undecided that it would have impact while 15% disagree. Finally, the table shows that 43% strongly agree, 9% agree and 11% undecided that provision of community information centres will improve their legal and family issues while 37% disagree.

**Research question 4:** Do you agree that the following constitute problems to providing information services in your community?

**Table 4**

NO	PROBLEMS	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Undecided	%	Disagree	%
1	Lack of communal efforts	146	73	14	7	8	4	32	16
2	Lack of non- governmental organizations' supports	86	43	32	16	50	25	32	16
3	Lack of philanthropists' assistance	200	100	-	0	-	0	-	0
4	Government insensitivity	126	63	26	13	42	21	06	3
5	Illiteracy/ ignorance of its value and impacts	-	0	170	85	12	6	18	9

Table 4 shows the statistics of problems of providing community information centres. In the table, it was discovered that 73% strongly agree, 7% agree and 4% undecided to lack of communal efforts while 16% disagree. Also 43% strongly agree, 16% agree and 25% undecided to non-governmental organization supports while 16% disagree. On the problem of philanthropists' assistance, 100% strongly agree. However, 63% strongly agree, 13% agree and 21% undecided to the government insensitivity. Finally, 85% agree that illiteracy and ignorance are part of the problems, 6% are undecided and 9% disagree

**Summary**

It was discovered in table 1 that community people often need information on skills acquisition, technology choices, business opportunity, financial assistance, breakthrough, education, current affairs, trading, farming, government, public policy, leisure, recreation, health, employment, poverty, economic inequalities, legal and family issues. The yearning for information by the people agreed with Aboyade (1987) who affirmed that community people require information on multiplicity of issues bothering around their problems of daily existence. This is also corroborated by Kantunaya (1992) that everybody needs information in order to play their respective roles in the society and to leave a meaningful and quality life.

It was also discovered from the study that there were lack of community information centres in the communities thus unavailability of community information centers, made the people unaware of the great potentials inherent in the modern and conventional sources of information. This is clearly evident from responses of the respondents in table 2 as to sources of obtaining information in the communities. This was confirmed by Idoka (2003), who asserted that nothing then is more important for mankind, than to bring within her reach, all what can widen ones horizon, making discoveries and literacy transformation, that can make the individual a more valuable member of the society.

Furthermore, the study revealed that majority of the respondents agree that provision of information centers will have impact in their lives as regard skills acquisition, business opportunity, financial breakthrough, educational advancement, trading, modern farm skills acquisition and so on. This is to confirm that information is essential part of national resources and it is vital for community technological, scientific, education and economic development.

Government insensitivity to the provision and development of community information centers as indicated in table 4 constitutes problems to access to information needs whereas access to information is an essential condition for community development.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study has shown the various information needs of the communities and that community information centres that stock the information resources are not available. The implication of this is that, the communities will be put into utter penury and underdevelopment. Prosperity, progress and development of any community depend upon the community ability to acquire, produce, access and use pertinent information.

Based upon the finding and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Community information centres should be established in each community in Akoko North West Local Government in Ondo State.
2. Communal efforts or cooperation should be garnered in providing information services in the communities.
3. Adequate publicity and awareness services should be mounted to sensitize people about their availability and values to community development.
4. Adequate information materials relevant to the needs of the people like books, journals, magazines, newspapers, audio visuals, photocopying, internet facilities and a host of other information services must be provided.
5. Non-government organizations' and philanthropists' supports and assistance should be solicited in the provision of information services in the communities.

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