

*Research Article*

## Understanding Development Communication: A Review of Selected Literature

### ABSTRACT

Communication is critical in any development process. Beyond its role as an empowerment tool, communication is used to promote people's participation in development activities. Particularly, citizens rely on knowledge and information in order to successfully respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic, cultural, political and technological changes. However, for knowledge and information to be useful in the development process, they must be effectively communicated to people. This brings to the fore the compelling relevance of development communication in development discourse. Though development communication is indispensable in sustainable development drive, many people still struggle to appreciate its underlying philosophical underpinnings, conceptual intentions, core principles and methodologies, hence their failure to make the concept practically relevant in development practice. Besides, the poor appreciation of the underpinnings of development communication contributes to the exclusion and isolation of many people especially the rural people from the process of development. What is more, the ever-increasing demand on the part of the citizenry for participatory development coupled with the significant advancement in technologies and globalization means that concerted efforts ought to be put in place by all development stakeholders including governments, research institutions, researchers, and civil society organisations to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of development communication. To achieve this, however, requires an increased discussion on what really constitutes development communication and also generation of a sustained interest and commitment by all stakeholders to the cause of development communication, bearing in mind its unique principles and methodologies. Any confusion in theorizing and conceptualization of development communication potentially contributes to the seemingly unending complexity associated with efforts towards achieving sustainable development. It is in this regard that this paper contributes to the efforts to help bring clarity to the concept of development communication through a review of some existing literature.

**Keywords:** Development communication, change, communication, participation, stakeholders

### INTRODUCTION

Development and communication have become twin sisters especially in development discourse. Effective development cannot occur in the absence of effective communication. Likewise, effective communication is an indication that development efforts are yielding results. Thus, communication is an integral part of development efforts.<sup>2</sup> Despite the mutual relationship between these two concepts, there is a growing concern that the place of communication in development has not been well understood especially in developing countries. Varying opinions exist on how communication should be used to as a tool to promote development especially in the developing world. Key players in the development landscape - government bodies, donor agencies, research

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<sup>2</sup> C. N. Anyanwu. Introduction to Community Development. (Ibadan: Abesther Educational Publishers, 1999)

institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community-based organisations (CBOs) - all have their own perceptions and views about the role and purpose of communication in the context of development. This diversity compounds the arguably poor understanding of the role of communication in development discourse.<sup>3</sup>

There is therefore the need to ensure that more measures are put in place to broaden people's understanding of the relationship between development and communication. It is particularly critical for stakeholders in the field of development to help strengthen an awareness and appreciation of what each of these two concepts means. Failure to do this will reduce development communication into the arena of a rhetoric.

Despite the above recognition, efforts at improving the conceptual intentions of development communication have not yielded the desired results especially in developing nations. The challenge is even more crucial in Africa because in the views of Dervin, as cited in Imoh, the conceptual understanding of development communication is hindered in the continent and this is evident in the fact that development communicators still struggle to understand how people perceive development programmes, the problems they face, the personal obstacles and actions the people take to cope with, overcome or succumb to them.<sup>4</sup> For instance, despite various training experiences on development communication, also called communication for development (C4D), in the Near East region, research has revealed that there is still a poor understanding of the concept and what it should be used for. In the Near East, development communication is often merely perceived as a tool used to facilitate information gathering or pure dissemination; an obviously very narrow understanding of the concept.<sup>5</sup> Also, in places such as Ghana and Nigeria, the field of C4D appears to be characterized by some confusion which does not help to strengthen the theoretical and conceptual aspects of C4D.<sup>6</sup> In her study in Ghana, Owusu discovered that development communication is not adequately understood and applied in development practice in the country.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, scholars including Ramirez and Quarry found that despite over 30 years of efforts by communication practitioners, most people in key decision-making positions in governments and donor agencies in developing countries still lack a clear idea of what C4D is about or what it stands for.<sup>8</sup> Particularly, in the Near East, FAO observed that a widespread lack of knowledge and understanding exists in relation to C4D. FAO also found that interest by decision-makers in the importance of C4D is very low. In Egypt for instance, the term C4D is poorly understood due to difficulty in operationalizing the concept of participation.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, this situation tends to hamper attention received by C4D which exacerbates the poor understanding of the concept and what its core issues are. What is more, the over-arching influence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) means that a deeper understanding of C4D is required in ensuring that the dream of achieving democratic governments especially in Africa becomes a reality. Again, the ever-increasing development of especially social media propelled by the dramatic technological advances implies that more clarity is needed regarding the concept of development communication for the greater good of society. Against this backdrop, this paper, in five parts, helps to bring clarity to the concept of C4D through a review of some existing literature. The first part is the introduction which focuses on the link between development and communication, and the state of affairs. The second part looks at the meaning of the concepts of development and communication whilst the third part conceptualizes development communication. The fourth part focuses on typologies of communication, with the final part concluding the paper by highlighting the pertinent issues for consideration by development stakeholders and researchers.

## CONCEPTUALIZING DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION

To start with, development means different things to different people. In an attempt to contribute to the debates on development, Edwards defines development as the deliberate process of reducing material wants and the enhancement of people's ability to live a life they consider good across the widest possible range in a population.<sup>10</sup>

Here, the focus is on reduction in material wants and the improved ability of people to live. Thus, in the view of Edward, development cannot be assumed to have taken place without regard to material wants and the capacity of people to live a life. Development is also explained as the qualitative and structural changes in the cultural, social, economic, political, and ecological aspects of a people (Bassand, cited in Nemes).<sup>11</sup> This definition suggests that for a community or a nation to claim to have developed, its people need to witness both qualitative and quantitative changes in cultural,

<sup>3</sup> M. O. Adedokun, C. W. Adeyemo, & E. O. Olorunsola, *The Impact of Communication on Community Development*. (Ekiti Ado-Ekiti: Nigeria: Institute of Education University of Ado) 2010.

<sup>4</sup> G. O. Imoh, "Application of Development Communication in Africa's Rural Development-Need for a Paradigm Shift". *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1, no. 4 (2013): 15-33

<sup>5</sup> FAO, *Tracking initiatives in communication for development in the Near East*. (FAO: Rome, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> A. Alhassan, "Development Communication Policy and Economic Fundamentalism." (Ph.D., Dissertation, University of Tampere, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> E. Owusu, "The role of communication in sustaining development projects. The Case of Ejura Sekyedumase Municipality, Ghana." (MSc, KNUST, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> R. Ramirez and W. Quarry. *Communication for Development, a Medium for Innovation in Natural Resource Management*. (FAO and IDRC), 2004.

<sup>9</sup> FAO, *Communication for Rural Development in Mexico*. (Rome: Development Communication Case Study, vol. 15), 1996.

<sup>10</sup> M. Edwards, *Future Positive: International Co-operation in the 21st Century*. (London: Earthscan 1999)

<sup>11</sup> G. Nemes, *Integrated rural development: The concept and its operation*. Discussion Papers. (Budapest: Institute of Economics Hungarian Academy of Sciences), 2005.

social, economic, political, and ecological lives. Any attempt to focus on one of these aspects to the neglect of the others is problematic in terms of understanding the concept of development. Besides, Zakaria sees development as a change process that brings about improvement or growth in the social, economic and political lives of individuals. Beyond agreeing to Bassand's conception of development, Zakaria believes that development involves planning. Planning in this sense refers to all legitimate processes and efforts employed by stakeholders to bring about change.<sup>12</sup>

Further, development is a participatory process of social change in a society, aimed at bringing about both social and material advancement, including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities for the majority of people through their gaining greater control over their environment.<sup>13</sup> Rogers' definition highlights the importance of stakeholder participation in ensuring not only material wants but also social enhancement of people. This means that whatever techniques are used by stakeholders to embark on development projects, the end result should be about a change in the material, social and environmental aspects of the people. Besides, Stiglitz, as cited in Odoom, explains development as a transformation of society, a movement from traditional relations, traditional ways of thinking, and traditional methods of production to more modern ways.<sup>14</sup> Stiglitz's definition shows that development is about a transformation from primitivism to modernism. Thus, as long as people continue to wallow in traditional ways of doing things they cannot be said to have witnessed development. This requires institutionally more modern and technologically more efficient means of doing things.<sup>15</sup>

However, in an effort to extend Stiglitz's definition, Servaes contends that development should be seen as a multi-dimensional process involving key changes in social structures, popular attitudes and a national condition of life from unsatisfactory to satisfactory. Servaes adds that satisfaction means materially well to do and spiritually happy or content with what one or a country has got.<sup>16</sup> Sen conceives development as a process of expanding people's capabilities and freedoms. The capabilities include health, literacy, self-respect and political participation.

Ribeiro sees development as a process of ensuring well-being, progress, economic and human growth or ecological balance.<sup>17</sup> Arguably Ribeiro's position on the importance of material wants in development is in line with what has been expressed by Rogers and Edwards. Nevertheless, Ribeiro calls for attention to be paid in safeguarding the ecology or environment; a position which has been echoed by Bassand, as cited in Nemes. Umebali and Akubuilo defined development as involving multi-dimensional alterations in structures, attitude and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth; the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. In effect, development involves economic growth, equality or social justice component, and socio-economic transformations which are all on a self-sustaining basis.<sup>18</sup> One common position in Ribeiro and Umebali and Akubuilo's definitions is the alteration in the economic growth of a people. However, whilst Ribeiro is emphatic that ecological balance is key in development, Umebali and Akubuilo are silent on that. Similarly, whilst Umebali and Akubuilo submit that equality and social justice are vital in any meaningful development, Ribeiro does not seem to have presented a strong position on these ingredients. Umebali and Akubuilo again reinforce Servaes' point that improved structures and attitudinal changes are critical aspects of development. Servaes further conceives development as relating to organic, immanent, direct, cumulative, irreversible and goal-oriented. With this, Servaes tends to equate development to modernization.

To vitiate the equalization between development and modernization, Luke points out that the two terms are the latest sophistication employed in imperialist parlance to describe the post-war social formation.<sup>19</sup> Luke argues that colonialism, westernization, Christianization and civilizing mission were terms coined by European nations to describe and justify their imperialist interventions in African, Asian and Latin American nations. The seemingly unending calls for self-government in most of these nations coupled with the untold consequences of colonialism and slave trade led to a reluctant relegation of terms such as colonialism, westernization and Christianization to the background, with development and modernization becoming the new terms to replace the discredited ones. It is widely believed that elements of modernization and modernity can be found in any nation and do not need to be associated with any single culture or political region in order to have meaning. Despite this recognition, Alhassan asserts that it is very problematic to view development as modernization since the two concepts do not adequately convey the same meaning. Alhassan's fear is borne out of his conviction that, by far, modernization has been a transfer of Euro-American

<sup>12</sup> J. Zakaria, "An evaluation of NGO-led development interventions and their sustainable management in the Savelugu-Nantong District." (MSc., KNUST, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> E. Rogers, ed., *Communication and Development: Critical Perspectives*. (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1976).

<sup>14</sup> D. Odoom, "The Impact of Cocoa Life Project Interventions of World Vision Ghana on Beneficiaries in the Wassa East District, Western Region." (Ph.D., University of Cape Coast, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> J. Servaes, *Communication for Development: One World, Multiple Cultures*. (Cresskill: Hampton Press), 1999.

<sup>16</sup> M. T. F. Ribeiro, *Notas de aula do curso de doutorado em administração [Notas de aula]*. Escola de Administração, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, Bahia, Brasil, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> A. K. Sen, "Development as Capability Expansion". In J. DeFilippis & S. Saegert, *The Community Development Reader* (2nd Edition), 320-323. (London: Routledge), 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Umebali, E. E. and Akubuilo, C. J. C. . *Principles of rural development. Readings in Cooperative Economics and Management*. (Lagos: Computer Edge Publishers). 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Luke, T. W. *Social Theory and Modernity: Critique, Dissent and Revolution*. (Newbury Park: Sage), 1990.

experience or progress to the materially less developed parts of the world. Yet, he acknowledges modernization as crucial in the development discourse since it enables the individual of the traditional society whose sense of the universe is clutched to the village life to see him/herself as a member of the nation which in turn belongs to comity of modern nations. Also, implicit in Alhassan's worry, perhaps, has to do with the seeming over-inflated value of materialism in conceptualizing development. . This author tends to favour Alhassan's criticism of relying on modernization as a key indicator of development, but also shares in his view that elements of modernization are vital in appreciating whether or not development has taken place in a given society. Development cannot occur in abstract mundane and antiquated terms; it must visibly show a certain movement from old ways of doing things to new ways of doing the same things in a better manner.

Todaro and Smith, as cited in Odoom, state that development is both a physical reality and a state of mind in which society secures the means of obtaining a better life. Through this process, the society ensures growth in wealth acquisition and mental enrichment as well as betterment of quality living conditions of all the people. Society uses various economic, social, cultural and institutional processes as the means to acquiring better living conditions. Todaro and Smith's definition highlights three main issues. Firstly, development means increased availability and distribution of basic goods such as food, shelter, health and security required for human life-sustenance. Secondly, development means improvement in the standard of living with respect to social issues such as households and national income, education, and cultural values for the enhancement of individual and national material wellbeing and self-esteem. Thirdly, development aims at expanding the range of available individuals and national economic and social choices by freeing them from servitude as a result of certain forces such as ignorance, and human misery on one hand, and dependence from the people and national states on the other hand.<sup>20</sup>

From the foregoing definitions, it can be stated that through development, peoples' standard of living such as incomes, consumption, food, and medical services are raised. This helps to sustain the lives of people. Also, development is about the creation of conditions conducive for the enhancement of peoples' self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which facilitate human dignity, respect and self-worth. Further, development seeks to increase peoples' freedom to choose by widening the range of their choice variables such as goods and services for the enhancement of their dignity and self-worth. Besides, development is an all-encompassing process aimed at improving the material and psychological well-being of a people. It is about transformation of structures, attitudes and institutions as well as environmental well-being of a people attained in a more sustainable way. The multifaceted nature of development means that concerted efforts are required in appreciating its practical manifestations. Development policy makers need to be aware of a variety of issues across the various sectors of society so as to fully understand the core elements required to cause progress in society.

The term 'communication' means several things to different scholars. For example, Clevergeras as cited in Owusu, explained communication as any dynamic process of sharing information. This means that communication relates to sharing information through a more dynamic means.<sup>21</sup> In the view of Mefalopulos, communication refers to the process of transmitting of information and messages. Bertalanffy, as cited in Owusu, maintains that communication is often about the flow of information within a given system. In support of Bertalanffy's definition, O'Reilly and Pondy as cited in Owusu, defined communication as the sharing of information between two or more individuals or groups to reach a common understanding. Beyond agreeing with the above authors, Warnock et al. introduced a new dimension by asserting that communication is the ability to give information, to make one's voice heard and to participate in discussion and debate.<sup>22</sup> On the part of Keyton, communication is the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one individual to another.<sup>23</sup> The term communication is commonly associated with either boosting an institutional profile or facilitating information flows within an organisation.

It should be stressed that "*Communications*" and "*communication*" are not the same thing. Communication often refers to the process of communication, emphasizing its dialogical and analytical functions rather than its informative nature and media products. Communications refers mainly to activities and products, including information technologies, media products, and services (the internet, satellites, broadcasts, and so forth). This distinction is significant at the theoretical, methodological, and operational levels. Again, a sharp difference exists between everyday communication and professional communication. A person who communicates well is not necessarily a person who can make effective and professional use of communication. Though every human being is a born communicator, not everyone can communicate strategically, using the knowledge of principles and experience in practical applications. A professional (development) communicator understands relevant theories, principles, methodologies and practices of C4D and is capable of designing effective strategies drawn from the full range of communication approaches and

<sup>20</sup> M. P. Todaro, and S. C. Smith, . Economic Development (9th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Addison Wesley, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Mefalopulos, P. Development Communication Source Book: Broadening the Boundaries of Communication. The World Bank, Washington, D. C., 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Warnock, K. Schoemaker, E. and Wilson, M. The case of communication in Sustainable Development. Panos London, White Lion Street London N1 9PD United Kingdom, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> J. Keyton, Communication and Organisational Culture: A Key to Understanding Work Experiences, 2nd ed, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage), 2011

methods to achieve intended objectives. It is of prominence to stress that social change remains one of the key issues of any communication system. Communication systems are indicators of social change; they are also agents of social change. According to scholars such as Alhassan, Mefalopulos and Keyton, often the social change may take place in one direction; from oral to mediated communication system. The traditional society is conversant with the oral system whilst the modern society is inured to the mediated system. Modernization is mainly seen as a communication process. Lerner, a scholar with an influential and potent voice in the field of C4D, believes that modernization is critical in social change. Modernization is also expected to manifest in communication systems. However, to do that requires addressing all the obstacles associated with both local and national cultures which hamper social change.

## MEANING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Development communication is the only way beneficiaries of projects can become the main actors in any successful development programmes.<sup>24</sup> This suggests development communication is indispensable in any meaningful development process. Following the widespread lack of understanding of the concept, it is important that efforts are put in place to help bring clarity to development communication. Development communication is defined as the planned and systematic use of communication through inter-personal channels, ICTs audio-visuals and mass media for social change. Indeed, if development initiatives are to be sustainable, they must start with mechanisms that ensure broad participation by all those who have some interest in the intended change. Where a segment of the society is ignored in the pursuit of development services, the outcomes of such decision may be tragic.

According to the World Bank, as cited in Owusu, development communication refers to the integration of strategic communication in development processes and programmes based on a strong understanding of indigenous realities. This shows that local contexts play a crucial role in development and development communication. Mefalopulos asserts that development programmes and interventions will not result in desired change unless the process is characterized by an ongoing culturally and socially relevant communication dialogue among development service providers and recipients.<sup>25</sup> Owusu defines development communication as a deliberate effort of sharing information using appropriate techniques between stakeholders to reach a common understanding which supports and sustains the goals of social, economic, political and cultural development. This implies that development communication focuses on consciously making efforts to share information between stakeholders using proper techniques and tools with the sole aim of enhancing the social, economic, political, cultural and ecological aspects of people.

Again, C4D is conceived as a social process, intentionally designed to seek a common understanding among all the participants of a development initiative, in order to create a basis for concerted action (FAO).<sup>26</sup> This definition implies that C4D is a process, not an event. C4D aims at achieving a common understanding among stakeholders of development on the kind of efforts required to bring about development. Regardless of the communication techniques and methodologies used in the process of development, it must be stressed that if there is no common understanding among stakeholders then development communication has not been effectively achieved. Servaes defines development communication as the study of social change triggered by the application of communication research, theory, technologies and mechanisms to bring about development.<sup>27</sup> This indicates that development communication concerns the meaningful use of communication methodologies, principles and techniques by stakeholders to bring about improvement in all aspects of people.

The World Bank explains C4D as involving creation of mechanisms to broaden public access to information on reforms; strengthening clients' ability to listen to their constituencies and negotiate with stakeholders.<sup>28</sup> It also involves empowering grassroots organisations to achieve a more participatory process; and undertaking communication activities which are informed by research with the view to enhancing the conditions of people.<sup>29</sup> According to the FAO, C4D deals with a social process based on dialogue using a wide range of tools and methods. It is again about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change.

C4D is a broader concept encompassing information dissemination and stakeholder engagement at all levels of development. It is well-planned communication strategies, processes and methods which can set the stage for mutual dialogue among all players, to facilitate and build partnerships and links that help to effectively address development problems and ensuring their participation at the same time. This calls for the need for all development institutions to

<sup>24</sup> FAO, "Application of ICTs for Enhancement of Extension Linkages, Coordination and Services." (Proceedings of a subregional workshop, Hammamet, Tunisia, FAO: 22–24 November 2004).

<sup>25</sup> P. Mefalopulos, "Theory and practice of participatory communication: The case of the FAO project "Communication for Development in Southern Africa." (Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> FAO. Expert Consultation on Communication for Development. Rome: FAO, 1984.

<sup>27</sup> J. Servaes, *Communication for Development and Social Change*. (UNESCO, Sage Publications, India), 2008.

<sup>28</sup> The World Bank. *Information and Communication for Development 2006*. World Bank: Washington, D. C., 2006.

<sup>29</sup> FAO. *The Rome Consensus*. In *World Congress on Communication for Development: Lessons, Challenges, and the Way Forward*. Communication Initiative, FAO, World Bank, 2006.

reflect on advancing C4D especially in developing nations, to share experiences, build common understandings and agree on mutually beneficial strategies and initiatives for improved life.

Development communication is essentially about the deliberate use of communication to promote development. It is concerned with using communication to change or improve the lives of people. The development communicator plays a very significant role in explaining the development process to the common people in such a way that it finds acceptance. To achieve this objective, a development communicator has to have a greater understanding of the process of development and communication. The development communicator is expected to possess knowledge, skills and professional techniques and clearly grasp their use and should also know the audience. A development communicator also prepares and distributes relevant development messages and information to all stakeholders in such a way that they are received and understood, accepted and applied to bring about development. A development communicator uses different types of communication technologies and tools to bring a common understanding among stakeholders in order to change the socio-economic conditions of people. Development communication focuses on the use of communication to promote development. Those who write or produce programmes on issues related to development with the sole aim of achieving a common understanding among stakeholders on the process of development and what is required of them are called development communicators. Development communication initiatives can never be effective in the absence of proper communication research. Thus, before development communication strategy is conceived there is the need for proper communication research to be conducted. Communication professionals should not design communication campaigns or strategies without having all the relevant data to inform their decision. As a development communicator, one needs to carry out further research to obtain relevant data, to identify gaps, or to validate the project assumptions. Failure to do this will be problematic to one's cause as a development communicator. Conducting research about issues of importance to people will also enable one to have a fuller understanding of what needs to be achieved and how best to achieve it.

A development communicator must also have a specific and in-depth knowledge of the theory and practical applications of the discipline in order to be successful. In addition to the various communication theories, models, and applications, development communicators should be educated on the fundamental principles and practices of other interrelated disciplines including anthropology, marketing, sociology, ethnography, psychology, adult education, monitoring and evaluation, social research, etc. Versatility in knowledge is key in effective development communication. Naivety in any of the interrelated fields will not only be disastrous to the image of development communication but also tragic to the overall development process. Again, development communication is not exclusively about behaviour change. The various areas of intervention and the applications of development communication go beyond the traditional notion of behaviour change.<sup>30</sup> Umehali and Akubilo maintain that development communication also focuses on probing issues such as socioeconomic and political factors, identifying priorities, assessing risks and opportunities, empowering people, strengthening institutions, and promoting social change within complex cultural and political environments. The complexity of the concept of development means that development communication is a very broad concept whose relevance finds expression in broader changes which occur in society. Changes in all aspects of society must be of interest to development communication specialists. Any attempt to concentrate on one aspect to the neglect of the many other aspects of development is of no use to the over-arching aim of development communication.

C4D is even more important to rural development given the myriad of development problems people in rural areas face which requires a shift in paradigms and trajectories in terms of development initiatives. To help improve the conditions of people especially in the rural areas, in the view of FAO, means that communication should be used essentially for increasing people's participation and community mobilisation, decision making and action, confidence building for raising awareness, sharing knowledge and changing attitudes, behaviour and lifestyles. Adedokun et al. suggest that it is by this that communication can be seen to be a germane tool for development. The authors add that communication is expected to be the tool to facilitate people's participation in a development planning initiative and also the means to overcome the challenges of development at all levels. Of course, this cannot happen in the absence of the various channels and forms of communication and their utility value especially in development discourse.

## FORMING TYPOLOGIES OF COMMUNICATION

Development communication helps to promote the integration of interpersonal communication methods with conventional and new media channels, including radio, video, print, and ICTs. It also helps to encourage all stakeholders, including primary stakeholders, to fully participate in the process of development. At the grassroots level, Anyanwu submits that community development cannot occur without effective communication. Effective communication helps in the sharing of ideas and opinions and diffusion of good ideas while immaterial ideas are discarded. Thus, effective communication facilitates community participation for the attainment of local level development. However, whether

<sup>30</sup> UNICEF (1999). Towards better programming. A handbook on behaviour development communication in Water and Environmental Sanitation Programmes. (Unpublished document, UNICEF WES Technical Guidelines Series No. 4, Programme Division Guideline Series, New York).

communication will be effective especially in the context of development will depend on the form it takes. Various forms of communication exist which are utilized by different organisations to achieve a set goal. Thus, these various categorisations of communication are informed by the purpose and functions of communication in organisations.<sup>31</sup> UNICEF has listed three main types of communication. These are advocacy, social mobilisation and behavioural change communication. These types of communication are effectively used in C4D. Advocacy communication targets leadership and the powers that be to take actions to support programme objectives. Leadership here includes political, business and social leaders at national and local levels. Advocacy communication informs and motivates appropriate leaders to create a supportive environment for the programme. To do this requires taking actions including changing policies, allocating resources, speaking out on critical issues and initiating public discussion. Advocacy communication also requires participation since the voice of the community members helps direct advocacy objectives and activities. It is largely applied to promote a specific issue or agenda, generally at a national level which is often directed at changing policies or supporting policy-making changes, either addressing policy makers directly or winning the support of the public opinion.<sup>32</sup> Its goal is to foster public policies which support the solution of a problem or need. It influences change at the public level by raising awareness at the policy level. It uses communication methods and media to influence specific audiences and support the intended change.<sup>33</sup> It again seeks to trigger action from decision-makers and or their constituents and also helps to gain commitment and active support for development objectives. Besides, advocacy communication promotes development issues by preparing society to accept, support and commit to them over a sustained period. It entails organized efforts to influence the political climate, policy and decisions, public perceptions of social norms, funding decisions and community support and empowerment towards specific issues. Owusu further lists three forms of communication which are critical in effective C4D. They are advocacy, social mobilization and behavioural change communication; a typology which reinforces the views of UNICEF and Mefalopolus.

Social mobilization is also defined as a process of harnessing selected partners to raise demand for or sustain progress toward a development objective. Social mobilization triggers the participation of institutions, community networks and social and religious groups to use their membership and other resources to support participation in activities at the local level. In social mobilization, consultation with the community is key. Consultation helps to ascertain which institutions; social, political and religious groups will command the most influence on the primary participants. According to The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), social mobilization entails deliberate actions and processes to reach, influence, and involve all relevant segments of society across all sectors from the national to the community level. The aim is to create a conducive environment and effect positive behaviour and social change.<sup>34</sup>

McKee draws a distinction between social mobilization and social marketing by asserting that the former seeks to muster national and local support for a general goal with the aid a more open and uncontrolled process and the use of as many channels as possible at an accelerated rate.<sup>35</sup> Behaviour change communication (BCC) is about face-to-face dialogue with individuals or groups to inform, motivate, problem-solve or plan, in order to promote behaviour change. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), as cited in Owusu, also defines BCC as an interactive process for developing messages and approaches using a combination of communication channels aimed at encouraging and sustaining positive and appropriate behaviours. ILO, as cited in Owusu, explains further that BCC evolved from information, education and communication (IEC) programmes to promote more tailored messages, greater dialogue and increased ownership together with a focus on aiming for, and achieving results. According to The Family Health International, as cited in Owusu, BCC seeks to promote positive behaviour; promote and sustain individual, community and societal behaviour change; and maintain appropriate behaviour. The core assumption of BCC is that individual attitudes and behaviours can be altered voluntarily through communication and persuasion techniques and the related use of effective messages. BCC also helps to shift the focus from making people aware to bringing about new attitudes and practice; it tries to understand people's situations and influences; develops messages that respond to these concerns and uses communication processes and media to persuade people to increase their knowledge and change risky behaviour.

Mefalopolus has also identified four types of communication, namely corporate, internal, advocacy and development communication. As a type of communication, corporate communication informs audiences about the mission and activities of an organisation through the use of the media whereas internal communication refers to the sharing of information among staff in an organisation or institution so as to promote awareness on issues regarding the institution. Mefalopolus agrees with UNICEF that advocacy is a vital form of communication. Indeed, the explanation given to advocacy communication is very much similar to what UNICEF offered. According to Mefalopolus, advocacy communication is the type which seeks to bring change to the lives of people employing the available and the right

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF. *Communication for Development and Social Change*. London: Sage Publications, 2008.

<sup>32</sup> P. Mefalopolus, *Media and global change; rethinking Communication for Development*. (Nordicom and CLACSO, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> J. Servaes, 'Advocacy Strategies for Development Communication', in J. Servaes (ed.). *Walking on the Other Side of the Information Highway*. Communication, Culture and Development in the 21st Century. (Penang: Southbound, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> Centre for Development and Population Activities. *Social mobilization for reproductive health: A trainer's manual*. (Washington, D.C., 2000).

<sup>35</sup> N. McKee, *Social Mobilization and Social Marketing in Developing Communities: Lessons for Communicators*. (Penang, Malaysia: Southbound), 1992.

medium. Besides, both Mefalopulos and UNICEF agree that advocacy communication mainly occurs through the involvement of leaders such as chiefs, religious leaders and CBOs. However, contrarily to UNICEF that failed to consider C4D as a type of communication, Mefalopulos is of the view that C4D is a type of communication whose relevance cannot be overlooked. As a type of communication, C4D seeks to bring change to people through participation of all relevant stakeholders, according to Mefalopulos and Owusu. However, Mefalopulos concedes that a great difference exists between development communication and the other types of communication in both theory and practice. Besides, each has a different scope and requires specific knowledge and skills to be performed effectively. Expertise in one area of communication is insufficient to ensure results if applied in another area. This author agrees with Mefalopulos that C4D is an essential type of communication which is even more significant in this era of technological advances.

In addition, Quarry as cited in FAO, argues that it is useful to see communication as a spectrum, along which there are various types of communication strategies and consequently listed various forms of communication including public relations, awareness creation and behaviour change (Figure 1).<sup>36</sup>

These types of communication proceed in a continuum. First on the continuum is public relations (PR) and disseminating information. This forms an important aspect of communication strategies which is often used by governments, organisations and the private sector to enhance their image and keep people informed. All governments, public and private organisations need to communicate using this form in order to improve their image and also keep people informed. This is a one-directional form of communication.

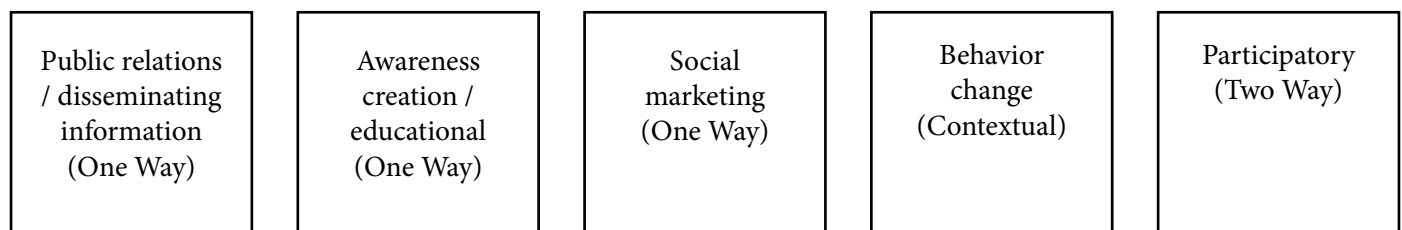


Figure 1: The Communication Spectrum

Source: FAO (2010)

Also, along the spectrum is awareness-creation and educational communication which seeks to increase people's awareness of issues which affect their life. Clearly, awareness-creation and educational communication identified by Quarry as a type of communication is very much similar to advocacy communication which Mefalopulos and UNICEF has indicated. Awareness-creation and educational communication can be done on the effective approaches to tackling a particular disease, the need for farmers to wash their hands after planting a specific type of seed, or the need for animal farmers to wash their hands after administering certain chemicals on animals. Nevertheless, Mefalopulos, Quarry and UNICEF appear to hold a similar view that advocacy communication or awareness-creation and educational communication is a one-directional communication which often tends to be top-down or vertical, involving an agency or organisation telling people what to do without recourse to dialogue. It should, however, be stressed that an effective awareness-raising campaign is based on research into the attitudes and practices of the target audience as well as the issues at hand. In communication discourse, many development programmes end at awareness-creation and educational communication. The problem with this form of communication especially in development discourse is that it does not often work out as desired. In support of this assertion, FAO lampoons the situation in which development practitioners sometimes assume that simply transmitting a piece of information will bring about change. Indeed, this is not really the case since issues including contexts should be considered by development practitioners. For example, local conditions, and indeed national conditions, might not provide the enabling environment for people to act on the information transmitted to them.

FAO mentions the USA as the place where social marketing was developed. Social marketing tries to adopt commercial marketing techniques to address social issues. This is similar to BCC which is characterized by research into the attitudes and practices of the target audience to discover what needs to be addressed to help bring about a change in behaviour. Many development practitioners believe that, like awareness-raising communication, this is not enough. The social context within which people live also dictates behaviour, and if the information being transmitted is not sufficiently contextualized, a communication initiative is likely to fail however well-intentioned the initiative may be, a position which this author shares with Quarry and the FAO. BCC enables people and groups to have a face-to-face dialogue with each other in order to inform, motivate, problem-solve or plan, in order to promote behaviour change. It is

<sup>36</sup> W. Quarry, Decision makers do want communication – what they may not want is participation. Paper prepared for the 1st World Congress on Communication for Development. (The Communication Initiative, 2006).

more interactive which helps to develop messages and approaches via a combination of communication channels so as to encourage and sustain positive and appropriate behaviours. BCC seeks to promote more targeted messages, increased dialogue and greater ownership in order to achieve a set goal.

In fact, the importance of the communication process becomes apparent only when we get to the farthest end of the spectrum – participatory communication. Disseminating information using various channels (e.g., a radio soap drama, printed extension leaflets, community development videos) represents only one step in the process of communication. Messages contained in any of these channels must be developed based on the analysis of the target audience. Such analysis should be done in a way to bring on board the inputs of various stakeholders. It is by providing the stakeholders the platform to be part of any decision that affects them which moves a communication initiative away from a vertical, one-way approach towards a horizontal, two-way participatory process.

In the view of Bessette, participatory communication is a well-planned activity based on clearly defined participatory processes and on media and interpersonal communication.<sup>37</sup> Participatory communication seeks to promote dialogue and discussion among all stakeholders involved in a development intervention or initiative, which signifies a shift from merely disseminating information to a far more inclusive effort. A thorough observation reveals that FAO's participatory communication is similar to the type of communication which Mefalopulos called development communication. Indeed, whilst UNICEF failed to recognize participatory communication as a type of communication in its typology, this author holds the view that participatory communication is a type of communication. Thus, an all-encompassing attempt at forming typologies of communication should take into cognizance the participatory nature of communication especially in the context of development. It is therefore unsurprising that Mefalopulos and Quarry, as well as the FAO concede that participatory communication is a vital type of communication.

Beyond its importance, effective participatory communication requires investment in capacity building. Capacity building is mainly required to enable stakeholders to actively participate in the communication process. Particularly, primary stakeholders who are likely to be marginalized, illiterate and/or unfamiliar with the process need capacity building to make their participation useful. By so doing, the marginalized and the vulnerable become empowered to make their participation meaningful. Similarly, it is vital to sensitize decision-makers, who already have power, to the need to collaborate with the newly empowered in the communication process. It is when these measures are put in place that communication will become a useful tool in bringing about change.<sup>38</sup> In essence, FAO, Mefalopulos, and BouSalah are of the view that participation is very crucial in any communication which seeks to bring about change. However, whilst Mefalopulos, and BouSalah appear silent on what is required to ensure participatory communication, FAO offers a strong voice on capacity building for the marginalized as a vital ingredient in participatory communication. In the considered view of this author, it is of importance to ensure that communication is participatory in development process. However, this author recognizes that to achieve participatory communication requires a deliberate effort and commitment towards building the capacity of the marginalized, the illiterate and the vulnerable in the society.

Moreover, Roling conceived three types of communication based on the functions of communication.<sup>39</sup> First, is policy communication which is used to make new policies and regulations known. For example, when a government launches a new policy on the use of disease tracking application, water resources, etc. communication media are used to inform the public about the policy. Second, is educational communication which deals with the transfer of new ideas, knowledge, skills and technologies. For instance, extension workers use educational communication to transfer new farming practices to farmers. Lastly, there is participatory (or facilitative) communication. This form of communication is used to bring together stakeholders to voice their needs and priorities, discuss ideas and develop ways of working together on a multi-stakeholder basis. It includes setting up forums where nurses can work with rural radio broadcasters to develop a programme on disease control or basic hygiene. It can also create a platform for farmers to work with rural radio broadcasters to develop a programme on pest management. Roling's identification of participatory communication finds expression in the writings of FAO, Mefalopulos, BouSalah, and Quarry.

The FAO agrees with the typology developed by Roling. A focus on policy communication, educational communication and participatory communication is regarded as a useful way of explaining various communication activities. Beyond this, the FAO adds a fourth category called communication for networking and coordination. This form of communication is used to establish a link between common-interest groups through electronic media to exchange ideas and information. Indeed, the upsurge of internet and satellite technology coupled with the arrival of mobile phones has brought about new and diverse opportunities for communication to flourish globally. ICTs can help reduce isolation, improve dialogue and participation, and foster interactive networks. A combination of both traditional

<sup>37</sup> G. Bessette, Working Group on Facilitating Dialogue, Learning and Participation in Natural Resource Management. In 9th United Nations Communication for Development Roundtable. (Rome: FAO, 2004).

<sup>38</sup> F. BouSalah, "Gender considerations and approaches in Communication for Development in the Near East region." Paper prepared for the Technical Consultation on Communication for Development in the Near East, held in Cairo, Egypt (12–14 June 2006).

<sup>39</sup> N. G. Roling, Communication support for sustainable natural resource management. In Special Issue: Knowledge is power? The use and abuse of information in development. IDS Bulletin, (1994), 25, no. 2.

communication channels especially in the developing world and new ICTS can immensely enhance people's ability to share experiences and knowledge, and creates new opportunities for using communication in order address priority issues. To effectively achieve this requires professional development communicators, relevant contents, increased ICT infrastructures and adequate access to ICTs, as well as the increased literacy rates. However, almost all of these issues constitute a big challenge particularly in developing nations. There is therefore the need for more commitment from stakeholders such as the governments, NGOs, CBOs, corporate organisations, etc. in order to make sustainable development goal a possibility. This author tends to favour the typology adduced by Roling and the new addition offered by FAO. The author's view is that communication should manifest in policy communication, educational communication, participatory communication, and networking and coordination. However, this author concedes that depending on the nature and utility value, the different communication typologies can be effectively applied in the context and scope which are very useful in development practice. That, any attempt to overemphasis one typology to the neglect, whether overtly or covertly, of the other will only contribute to obliterating the merits and demerits of the various typologies; an exercise which in itself obfuscates the complexity of development. Development is multi-dimensional and so its approach and manifestation should be multifaceted. However, clarity needs to be brought to bear on the communication typology used in undertaking a specific development practice and what its underpinnings and methodological frameworks are within a clearly defined context.

## CONCLUSION

Participatory development has become indispensable at all levels due to the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. The calls by various stakeholders including development researchers and practitioners for all-inclusive development approaches at all levels coupled with the progressive advancement in technology, globalization and intense growth especially in the social media have heightened the need for effective development communication. Rightly so, these calls have been triggered by the increasing level of poverty, squalor, starvation and diseases especially in developing countries which continue to dominate global conversations. It is in times like this that people will try to find solace in development communication as a driving force to improve the conditions of the world. Nonetheless, it is a truism that the role of development communication specialists can best be appreciated only when there is a clear understanding of what actually constitutes development communication and how it should be made to manifest in development discourse. Essentially, development communication should be seen to clearly focus on a well-planned use of communication to facilitate development. C4D is about using different types of communication technologies, methods and tools to create a shared understanding among stakeholders in order to improve the socio-economic conditions of people. To this end, development communication specialists are professionals who possess in-depth knowledge, skills and techniques about how to help stakeholders develop a common understanding of how best to come out with development initiatives and how best to pursue those initiatives in the interest of all. Development communication initiatives are underpinned by cutting-edge communication research. In other words, data is critical in development communication strategies and approaches. Again, effective development communication is informed by a clear understanding of relevant communication theories, principles, typologies and models and their applications in the context of development. What is more, since development is a complex, multifaceted concept, its theorizing and practical manifestation are also very complex and diverse. As such, effective development communication specialists are persons who have knowledge of the theories, concepts, principles, approaches, and practices of the field of development and its other related disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, adult education, psychology, management, monitoring and evaluation, social research, etc. Finally, the ability to build consensus, listen and create a shared understanding among stakeholders is crucial in any successful development communication strategy.

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