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**ADVOCACY COMMUNICATION AND THE PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS  
DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS IN RURAL BAYELSA, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*The promotion of indigenous development innovations is one of the conditions that facilitate socio-economic and political development of rural communities across the world. The effective communication of such community-based innovations makes the mass media a critical partner in the development process. This study investigated the promotion of indigenous development innovations in rural Bayelsa by journalists in the State. The objectives of the study were to: identify some indigenous development innovations that require effective coverage and reportage by journalists in Bayelsa State; evaluate the extent journalists in Bayelsa State cover and report rural development innovations in the State; and to investigate the challenges of reporting rural development innovations in rural areas of Bayelsa State. The study was anchored on the Development Media theory. The study used the descriptive survey research design to undertake a census of the 320 registered journalists in Bayelsa State. Findings of the study showed that rural development innovations were significantly under-reported by journalists in Bayelsa State. The study also found out that one of the factors that hinder effective coverage of community development innovations by journalists in Bayelsa State was ownership interests. Based on these findings, the study recommended, among other things, that the ownership of media stations in Bayelsa State should put public interest above personal or parochial concerns and that Civil Society organisations and media rights groups in Bayelsa State should make concerted effort towards clamoring for extensive rural community reporting.*

**Key Terms:** *Advocacy Communication, Development Innovations, Development News Reporting, Journalists in Bayelsa State, Rural Community Reporting*

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## INTRODUCTION

The importance of the mass media in facilitating development constrains many governments across the globe to place value on their countries' mass media systems. The value is not only to use but also to regulate the activities of the media in order to maximally exploit mass communication to enhance development. The mass media institution in Nigeria is regulated by two agencies of the government: The Nigerian Press Council - which regulates the activities of the Nigerian print media and the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission - which regulates the country's broadcast industry. The activities of these agencies do not only consist in the regulation of the mass media and journalists, but also in the exploitation of mass communication to perform some crucial functions that are targeted towards the socio-cultural, economic, political and technological development of the nation. The Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2012), for instance, stipulates that broadcasting shall provide some efficient, professional and comprehensive services to the people of Nigeria. The objectives of broadcasting and indeed the print media extend across social, cultural, economic, political, technological and professional services targeted towards the rapid transformation of Nigeria and its people.

The implication of the importance of the mass media in covering and reporting dangers and opportunities towards the socio-cultural, economic and political well-being of the people of Nigeria is that events and occurrences in both urban and rural settings must be brought to limelight. It also entails that lifestyles, conditions, development efforts, etc in different communities (urban or rural) must be covered and reported by the mass media. The role of the mass media in facilitating development emphasises the observation of Dominick (2011) that the mass media are a pervasive part of people's lives and that the media must be available for people to keep up with current events and to learn about things in general or things that are identical to an individual's general curiosity. It goes to say that the business of journalism is to do the right thing in order to make the world a better place (Itule and Anderson, 2008).

Although the reportorial situation in Bayelsa State significantly favours events and occurrences in urban centres of the State, the issue of subjectivity in the presentation of reports is quite alarming. This is because several issues that concern the socio-cultural and economic conditions of even the rural dwellers are grossly under-reported in both government and private media stations operating in the State. It appears that the issues that are accorded space in the print and airtime in broadcast media stations in Bayelsa State are issues that concern high profile traditional and political office holders. Issues such as environment, local

technology, commerce and industry, education, health, community self-help efforts, etc are relegated to the background in the State's media space. This condition provokes an investigation into the challenges associated with covering and reporting development efforts in rural areas of Bayelsa by journalists operating in the State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Within the context of the Nigerian media, efforts to promote national interest through unbiased coverage and presentation of reports has been plagued by the desire of serving certain interests. While government-owned media stations increasingly serve as mouth pieces of the regime or political party in power, the alternative or private media stations are mostly concerned with profit-making. The result of this slide is that the Nigerian media are increasingly assuming the platforms for the promotion and protection of ownership interest at the expense of public interest. Notwithstanding the fact that the reportorial situation in Bayelsa State appears to significantly favour events and occurrences in urban centres, the issue of subjectivity in development news reporting is quite noticeable. This is because several issues that concern the socio-cultural and economic conditions of rural communities are grossly under-reported in both government and private media stations operating in the State. It appears that events or occurrences that are accorded space or airtime in the Bayelsa media space are issues that concern high profile traditional and political office holders. Issues such as local technology, agriculture, education, health, community self-help efforts, etc are relegated to the background. The question is: what are the peculiar challenges confronting journalists covering development news in rural areas of Bayelsa State?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify some indigenous development innovations that require effective coverage and reportage by journalists in Bayelsa State;
2. evaluate the extent journalists in Bayelsa State cover and report rural development innovations in the State;
3. investigate the challenges of reporting rural development innovations in rural areas of Bayelsa State.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

The following terms were defined based on their conceptualisation in this work:

**Bayelsa:** This is one of the States in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The capital of the State is Yenagoa.

**Development News:** Development news are the reports of people's spectacular efforts or inventions which can stimulate other people's creative abilities towards solving or improving their socio-economic conditions.

**Indigenous Technologies:** These are local or indigenous innovations used in solving problems, such as the construction of local bridges, manual construction of roads, development of local preservatives, local processing of drinks and drugs, etc.

**Rural Reporting:** Reporting the act of writing and presenting rural news reports to members of the public through the mass media.

**Rural Area:** This is a geographical area with features of an agrarian or poorly developed settlement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Development Media Theory

The Development Media theory was propounded by Dennis McQuail in 1987 (McQuail, 2010). The thesis of the development media theory is that the mass media have a role to play in facilitating the process of development in developing countries. The theory proposes that the mass media and communication can positively influence development processes. Thus, the development media theory advocates mass media support for the development goals of a country. The theory is of the view that in developing nations, government needs to work in concert with the mass media to ensure the socio-economic and political transformation of the country (Baran and Davis, 2009). The mass media are not only conceived as the vehicle that drive development messages of the government but also as the galvaniser of the support of the populace towards issues of national or public interest (Ndolo, 2005; Asemah, Nwanmmuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2017). The theory argues that the process of achieving and sustaining the socio-economic and political growth of a nation and the transformation of its people requires that the mass media should support and promote national development programmes. In their articulation of the Development Media theory, Baran and Davis (2009) state that the position of the mass media in the development process is to constantly provide all segments of the society with accurate information to accelerate development. They are to produce contents that meet specific cultural and societal needs. Development media theory holds that media in developing countries owe the responsibility to promote their country's development goals to

facilitate social and economic development, political stability, cultural development, national integration and to lead a sense of national purpose.

McQuail (2010) has identified the principles of the Development Media theory. It stipulates that:

- a. media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with established national policy;
- b. freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society;
- c. media should give priority in their content to the national culture and languages;
- d. media should give priority in news and information that link with other developing countries, which are close geographically, culturally or politically;
- e. journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks; and
- f. in the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in or restrict media operation and devices and direct control can be justified (121).

The implication of the importance of the mass media to social development is that media contents must accurately mirror the development needs of the society. Sotunmbi (1999) thus argues that the journalism profession which enjoys the freedom to determine the philosophy and contents of its programmes and reports without external pressures, except it errs, should serve to protect and promote public interest. It should provide equal opportunity to different individuals and groups in the society, as well as protect the rights of ordinary citizens and minority groups under the law through unbiased presentation of reports and the defence of public interest. It is this public service operational paradigm that presents the media with the capacity to unify the different groups or segments of the society to lend their support to those issues or causes that are championed by the media. McQuail (2010) identifies that media-society interaction is foundational especially in evolving democracies because it equips the media with the functions of “binding society together; giving leadership to the people; helping to establish the public sphere; providing for the exchange of ideas between leaders and masses; satisfying needs of information; providing society with a mirror of itself; and acting as the conscience of the society” (p. 89).

### **The Concept of Development**

Development is conceptualised in different ways by different scholars in the same manner it has been divided into eras. The first development era or what is referred to as the dominant paradigm viewed development from the materialistic or economic standpoint. In other words, during the first development era, the yardstick for measuring development was the growth of a country's Gross Nation Product (GNP). It was on the basis of the conceptualisation of development from the economic standpoint that Rogers (1969) cited in Asadu (2009) defines development as the introduction of new ideas and modern production methods towards higher per-capita incomes. What this means is that the economic view of development did not take into account people's socio-cultural and economic conditions. It simply propagated the acquisition or introduction of development methods of the West by developing nations in order to get developed. Thus, Rodney cited in Udoakah (2004) describes the dominant conceptualisation of development as one-sided view which sees development as a process in which national wellbeing is the ultimate goal. It was the criticisms of the dominant development view that ushered in the second development conceptualisation. According to Schiavo-Campo and Singer 1970 cited in Udoakah (2004), the second era of development paradigm conceptualises development in terms of the provision of the basic conditions that make the realisation of individuals' goals practicable. Some indicators during the second development era were employment, equality, better nutrition, low mortality rate and technological progress. The mass media were also viewed as the facilitator of development during this era.

Like the dominant view of development, the second development paradigm was somewhat materialistic. It did not take into account the people for whom development initiatives were created. The era conceives development initiatives to be created for the people and not by the people. Onoso (2009) thus argues that development should not be seen to be quantitative - measuring certain indicators but qualitative - providing people the opportunity to manipulate their environment and socio-cultural conditions to attain the kind of development they need. Thus, the third development conceptualisation situates development in terms of people's involvement, concern for the environment, culture, local technology and care for the indigenous people (Soola, 2002; Echenim, 2004; Conrod, 2016).

A careful consideration of the conceptualisation of the different development paradigms shows that the different definitions form the bedrock of problem-solving. The difference is that whereas the first and second development views

were significantly materialistic, the third development conceptualisation makes provision for the allocation of responsibility for people to lead their development effort. This is the foundation of social development which not only dwells on the provision of conditions that make the realisation of people's goals practicable, but also the involvement of a target population in development processes. Inayatullah (1967) defines development as the democratisation of society to enable individuals to have greater control their political and economic destiny (Anaeto and Anaeto, 2010).

### **Development Communication**

Development communication involves the application of communication strategies and media in achieving development. The development that is intended could be the establishment of meaning or the provision of knowledge or information that are intended for the transformation of a society and its people. The recognition of the role communication plays in development processes does not in any way imply that the application of communication media and strategies directly result in the transformation of the society and its people. Communication only plays a counterpart role in the development process since its application must be consistent with the kind of development needs that are to be solved. According to Schramm and Lerner (1976), development is the actualisation of the kind of social and economic system which a country chooses. The implication of this scenario is that the development facilitator must develop and functionally exploit those communication strategies that conform to the kind of change a society desires else, the effort could become worthless. Grunig (1971) thus argues that communication is only a complementary factor to development which can have little effect on the development process except some structural measures are put in place first to align the communication strategies adopted with the development needs that are being addressed. What this simply means is that communication, though indispensable, plays a contributing role in the development process. Development, according to Kegley and Blamton (2011), involves the processes (economic, political, etc.) by which a country increases its capacity to meet the basic needs of its citizens and to raise their standard of living. Emphasising the indispensable role communication plays in development processes, Seat of the Country's Agricultural Research and Training (2013) describes development communication as recognising the power of communication as a catalyst for social development. It is the utilisation of existing communication tools and applicable theories for result-driven strategies for the advancement of society.

Development communication can be carried out orally or in writing; hence, this connotes the view that, development communication is an organised effort to use communication processes and the media to bring about social and economic improvement especially in developing countries.

Some scholars of development communication have centered on the use of the mass media for disseminating information for national development. But, it has been discovered that the mass media play only secondary, though crucial, role in national development. Consequently, the combination of the mass media and traditional media of communication has been advocated. What is recognised globally, however, is that the role of the mass media in facilitating development cannot be compromised. This condition accounts for why journalists and the mass media must demonstrate responsibility as a critical partner in the development process.

### **Functions of the Mass Media in the Society**

**Surveillance:** The surveillance function of the mass media summarises the news and information role of the media to the society. The mass media survey the environment and report events, occurrences, issues, dangers, etc to members of the public. These reports inform members of the public about happenings or developments in their immediate and larger environments. This information equips members of the public to make informed decisions to avoid these dangers and their consequences. Smith (1996) argues that providing people with useful information is one of the ways to enable them to develop their independence.

**Interpretation:** This mass media function is otherwise regarded as correlation. The mass media accord meaning and importance to events, people, issues, phenomena, etc. The media not only inform but also assign meaning to the issues they present to the public. Ndimele and Innocent (2006) state that interpretation goes beyond the provision of information about events and developments in society. "It entails explanation, so that the public is told what to do, how to do it and the implications of a particular line of actions" (p.150).

**Transmission and Promotion of Cultural Values:** The mass media transmit and promote the cultural norms of the different people and groups in the society by portraying those norms or values that advance the well-being of the society and its people and discouraging harmful or dehumanising cultural norms. The discouragement of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Nigeria and the wider acceptance of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) are cases about which the Nigerian mass media have occupied the front seat in the campaign. The



mass media also transmit and promote the cultural norms and myths of the society by widening the horizon of different groups in the society to appreciate the cultural values of different groups. UNESCO (1980) states that the mass media promote society's cultural heritages through "the dissemination of cultural and artistic products for the purpose of preserving the heritage of the past; the development of the culture by widening the individual's horizon, awakening his imagination and stimulating his aesthetic needs and creativity" (p.14). What this means is that the mass media leave the past in the present without de-emphasising succeeding and evolving gainful cultural revolutions.

**Linkage:** This is otherwise referred to as continuity (McQuail, 2010). This is another function of the mass media which involves linking different people and groups together. Geographically located groups who share some common concerns can be united by the mass media (Dominick, 2009). Nigerians, including some adults, have become fans and friends of some international sports sprinters in Europe, South America and the rest of the world. The mass media also link manufactures of goods and services with the prospective market (consumers) of their products or services through advertisements. The extent of linkage the mass media provide families and groups thousands of miles away from each other becomes massive daily especially with the revolutions in information and communication technologies.

**Entertainment:** This involves the provision of amusements for the pleasure of members of the mass media audiences. Dominick (2009) states that the scope of mass media entertainment is massive. It embraces symbols, sounds, images, drama, dance, stories, music, comedy, etc presented to provide amusement and relaxation for mass media audiences. McQuail (2010) states that mass media entertainment function provides members of their audiences with amusement, diversion and the means of relaxation.

### **Advocacy Communication**

Advocacy communication involves drawing the attention of the government or other agencies to some development issues, such as health, agriculture, environment, etc (Anaeto and Anaeto, 2010). The goal of this attention is to push for investments in such areas in order to better the condition of the citizens and the economy. Advocacy also involves drawing the attention of members of a community to potential dangers or opportunities. Thus, Asadu (2009) states that advocacy communication involves disseminating information that should affect people's actions or alter people's views about an issue. The importance of advocacy to the mass media is to better the society (Itule and Anderson, 2008).

Advocacy engenders conscientisation which involves calling people's attention to new developments, innovation or opportunities (Anaeto and Anaeto, 2010). This call enables people to take stock of their condition or a particular situation to see the need to devise solutions to address such needs. Raufu (2003) states that stories or programmes that display certain social conditions or needs may provoke the government to actions. Such stories can also trigger the spirit of self-help among members of a community.

Advocacy is the foundation of development news reporting. It entails consciously beaming the search-light on development challenges and opportunities. It means getting both the government and the people involved in addressing development challenges. Thus, Udoakah (2004) states that development news can be disseminated through newspapers, radio and television programmes. For this to result, members of the public must be informed of what they may not have known which could enhance their development process.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey method. A descriptive survey research design is used to document existing conditions or attitudes (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). Survey was appropriate for this study because it provided the platform to investigate the coverage of development news reporting by journalists in Bayelsa State. The population of this study was 320. This figure was obtained from the secretariat of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Bayelsa State Council. Based on the established manageable population, the study conducted a census. Data for this study were obtained using the questionnaire administered to journalists in Bayelsa State. Data obtained with copies of the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively in statistical tables using weighted mean score based on a four-points Likert scale.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Data for this study were obtained using copies of the questionnaire administered to practicing journalists that are registered with the Bayelsa State Chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). A total of 320 copies of the questionnaire were administered to practicing journalists in Bayelsa State. Of this number, 311 (97%) copies were properly filled and returned. The other 9 (3%) copies were not returned.

**Table 1: Indigenous development innovations identifiable in rural areas of Bayelsa State**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Questionnaire Items</i>	<i>Responses</i>				<i>Total</i>	<i>WMS</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
		<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>			
1.	Local bridges	480	426	36	31	973	3.1	Accepted
2.	Manual road construction/maintenance	628	417		15	1,060	3.4	Accepted
3.	Local preservatives	612	249	54	48	963	3.0	Accepted
4.	Local processing of herbs and foods	523	249	72	59	912	2.9	Accepted
5.	Processing of fabrics and garments	512	477	22	13	1,024	3.2	Accepted

Data presented in Table 1 indicate journalists' identification of some indigenous technologies in rural areas of Bayelsa State that require effective coverage and reportage by journalists in the State.

**Table 2: Coverage and reportage of development innovations in rural areas of Bayelsa State by journalists in State**

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Questionnaire Items</i>	<i>Responses</i>				<i>Total</i>	<i>WMS</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
		<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>			
6.	I am convinced that coverage and reportage of development news is crucial to the development of the rural areas of Bayelsa State.	512	477	22	13	1,024	3.2	Accepted
7.	My media organisation has a development news beatfor rural news events.	132	93	84	205	514	1.6	Rejected
8.	My media organization also has correspondents and reporters who regularly report development news	112	96	178	162	548	1.7	Rejected

events in the rural areas.

Data presented in Table 2 indicate that there is gross neglect of development news events in the rural areas of Bayelsa State. This report is based on the weighted mean scores of 1.6 and 1.7, respectively obtained by items 7 and 8 of the questionnaire.

**Table 3: Challenges of reporting development innovations rural areas of Bayelsa State**

S/N	Questionnaire items	Responses				Total	WMS	Remarks
		SA	A	SD	D			
9	Media ownership affects the coverage of rural development news events..	532	354	52	34	972	3.1	Accepted
10.	Geographical terrain of some rural communities in Bayelsa State affects the coverage of rural community development events.	272	561	48	32	913	2.9	Accepted
11	The cultural practices of some rural communities also hinder the coverage of rural development news events in Bayelsa State..	152	174	98	168	592	1.9	Rejected
12	Security threats also contribute to under-reportage of rural development events in Bayelsa State.	196	159	278	70	703	2.2	Rejected
13	News commercialisation drives coverage of	584	327	82	15	1,008	3.2	Accepted

	urban areas more than rural centres.							
14	Illiteracy among the rural populace poses additional challenge.	172	114	150	155	591	1.9	Rejected
15	Lack of motivation of reporters by the management of their media organisations discourages development news coverage of rural areas.	384	417	84	34	919	2.9	Accepted
16	Unfriendly disposition of some news sources serve as a disincentive to rural development news reportage.	164	78	188	150	580	1.8	Rejected

The presentation in Table 3 shows that some of the challenges of development news reporting in rural areas of Bayelsa State were ownership interest and the geographical terrain of the State. This report is evident from the weighted mean scores of 3.1 and 2.9, respectively obtained by items 9 and 10 of the questionnaire. Data presented in the table show that other challenges to development news reporting in rural areas of the State were news commercialisation and lack of motivation of development news reporting. This is based on the weighted mean score of 3.2 and 2.9, respectively obtained by items 13 and 15 of the questionnaire.

### Discussion of Findings

The discussion was presented in line with the research questions that guided the study.

#### Research Question 1: What are some rural development innovations that require effective reportage by journalists in Bayelsa State?

Responses to research question one indicate that journalists in Bayelsa State were aware or could identify some indigenous development innovations in rural

communities in the State that require effective reportage in order to project the developmental efforts of such communities to the world. This report is evident from the weighted mean scores of 3.1, 3.4, 3.0, 2.9 and 3.2, respectively obtained by items 1-5 of the questionnaire. The implication is that with adequate support and motivation, issues about rural development can be effectively reported.

The appreciation of the importance of journalists and the mass media in accelerating the development of the society buttresses the fact that mass media and journalists are integral in achieving a working society. Itule and Anderson (2008) state that the job of the mass media is to do the right thing in order to make the world a better place. Apart from serving as people's window to events in their immediate and larger environments, the mass media popularise social reality by according meaning to issues, people and circumstances. This is the thesis of the Development Media theory, which conceives the mass media critical partner in the development process (Baran and Davies, 2009; McQuail, 2010).

### **Research Question 2: To what extent do journalists in Bayelsa State report rural development innovations in the State?**

Responses to this research question indicate that rural development innovations were being neglected by the mass media in Bayelsa State. This report is based on the weighted mean scores of 1.6 and 1.7 obtained by items 7 and 8 of the questionnaire. Responses to the same research question indicate that despite the understanding of the importance of effective coverage of rural technologies, ownership of many media stations in Bayelsa State do not encourage rural community reporting.

The result of the negative impact of media ownership on rural community reporting in Bayelsa State is that development news events and development innovations across many communities in the State remain significantly unreported and this neglect also affects the development of the wider society. Uttamchandani (2005) argues that the place of the mass media in social development is to focus on ways of dealing with poverty, emancipating the oppressed, projecting the conditions of the secluded and marginalised and mobilising the populace to participate in development processes. What this means is that people's knowledge of development conditions and innovations in other climes or communities is crucial to stimulating development thinking among the populace. Udoakah (2004) shares this view as he argues that citizen's socio economic conditions can be improved through the spread of knowledge. He adds that "knowledge of many things including that of opportunities available can be got from the media" (p. 17).

### **Research Question 3: What are the challenges of reporting rural development innovations in Bayelsa State?**

Responses to research question 3 indicate that apart from the geographical terrain of Bayelsa State which makes it difficult to access several communities by road, most of the challenges to development news reporting in the State are directly related to media ownership interest. While the identification of geographical terrain as one of the challenges of development news reporting in the rural and urban areas of Bayelsa State is based on the weighted mean score of 2.9 obtained by item 10 of the questionnaire, the identification of ownership interest as a constraint to rural community reporting is based on the weighted mean scores of 3.1, 3.2 and 2.9, respectively obtained by items 9, 13 and 15 of the questionnaire.

The negative impact of media ownership on rural community reporting is antithetic to the Development Media theory which beckons on the mass media to partner with other institutions and organs of the society in facilitating development (Baran and Davies, 2009). Udoakah (2004) states that citizens' socio-political and economic conditions can be improved through the dissemination of knowledge. He adds that the dissemination of knowledge, including knowledge of opportunities available in the society should be the primary function of the media.

Although, media ownership interest and the determination of news reports that are carried by a particular medium cannot be extricated. However, being the watchdog of the society saddles the mass media with the responsibility to be objective and fair in the presentation of reports. McQuail (2010) argues that the mass media, especially in evolving democracies or developing countries, should serve as the representative of the public, critic of the government, advocate of public policies and general watchdog. Ogunbiyi (2015) avers that being a watchdog of the society places a huge responsibility on the mass media in terms of objectivity and non-partisanship. What this means is that even though the mass media owner reserves the right to protect the interest of his business, reports that should endear the well-being of members of the public should not be undermined due to ownership or some sectional interest.

### **Conclusion**

There is a gross neglect of rural development innovations by journalists in Bayelsa State. Apart from the geographical terrain of many rural communities in the State, media ownership interest significantly underlies the neglect of indigenous development innovations by journalists in Bayelsa State. Ownership

interest is manifested in commercialisation and the absence of rural news beats by many media organisations in Bayelsa State. The neglect of development news events and sources in the rural areas of Bayelsa State is not only due to the geographical terrain of the rural areas but largely due to the interest of media ownership. The management of many media stations in Bayelsa State do not encourage rural community reporting.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings above, the study recommended that:

1. As part of their social responsibility and in keeping with journalism code of ethics, journalists in Bayelsa State should strive to identify development news sources in the rural communities in the State by passionately upholding investigative journalism. Development news reports from such rural community sources can be disseminated through other channels of communication rather than the conventional channels - television, radio, newspaper and magazine whose reports are often tailored or shaped by ownership or other parochial interests.
2. The government should endeavour to make rural communities in Bayelsa State more accessible through construction of roads and bridges across communities, especially communities on the islands. Linking the rural areas of Bayelsa State to the urban centres through roads will encourage more coverage of rural community events by journalists in the State.
3. The ownership of media stations in Bayelsa State should put public interest above personal or parochial concerns. The continual neglect of newsworthy events in the rural areas of the State will not only impede the rate of development of the rural communities, but the entire State.
4. Civil society organisations and media rights groups in Bayelsa State should make concerted effort towards clamouring for extensive rural community reporting. Since these organisations are concerned with the acceleration of an egalitarian society, they cannot afford to wish away rural development challenges and innovations.

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