

## **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES TO RURAL COMMUNITIES IN ORSU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF IMO STATE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The work reported the results of study aimed at identifying the library and information services in Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State, using Awo-Idemili as a case study. A survey research, which employed questionnaire and interview instruments, was adopted. A total of 560 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the thirteen villages that make up Awo-Idemili; 260 copies of which were distributed among the literates and semi-literates while the remaining 300 copies were used as interview schedule, which were interpreted to the stark illiterates and filled out on their behalf. Out of 560 copies distributed only 300 (53.6%) copies were completed and returned i.e. 180 from the literates and semi-literates while 120 were from the stark illiterates. The result showed that majority do not know what a library stands for. It was revealed that 97.3% and 95.7% of the population do not have access to Internet and library, respectively while 66.7% and 60% also do not obtain information at all on health and education, respectively. It was recommended that government should provide basic infrastructures and facilities like libraries to at least 2-4 more communities that make up this Local Government Area considering its teeming population and the number of primary and secondary schools available in this area. Some suggestions in this regard were also made.

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is disheartening to note that the establishment of more new rural libraries and information services to rural communities is being forgotten. For instance, Imo State, which has a total of 27 local government areas, has only 10 rural libraries serving them. From the annual report of Imo State Library (1976) the location of these rural libraries include: Ofekata Orodu, Mbaise, Obowo, Afara, Mbano, Isu, Nkwere, Umuhu-Okabia, Orlu and Okigwe branch rural libraries respectively. And from the available literature, illiterates constitute the majority of rural dwellers and they need information to better their lives. To bring rural dwellers into a central focus in social development, Adewale (2001) asserts that they must be well acquainted with relevant information, which can propel them into making the right judgment and taking the right decisions that affect their lives and existence. The provision of this information is through the library which according to Aboyade (1987) has been a major factor

because of its potential for giving new knowledge, raising consciousness, strengthening links and achieving the integration of disparate social groups. It is an important means of mobilizing people for sociopolitical and economic development and empowerment. Idike (1997) defined a rural area/community as any area with population of 20,000 people or below. To deny this number of people or above with information is in fact denying them one of the most basic necessities of life.

Chijioke (1989) listed some characteristics of a prototypical ruralist to include: poor, semi-literate, absorbed in the daily struggle for economic survival, and unaware of the information services which could assist them in that struggle. Odewale (1986) sums up the characteristics of a rural area as:

- i. Area with low level of literacy or high level of illiteracy;
- ii. Limited educational and economic (including jobs) opportunities;
- iii. Strong cultural, tribal and religious adherence;
- iv. Absence of large business and commercial institutions among others.

Anezi (2002) emphasized that rural libraries are meant to serve the rural population by serving their needs. In addition to these roles Amuchezi (1986) also added research role while Ogundipe (2005) added reference services directional guidance, simple clarification and explanation of things e.g. diseases; medicine or drugs and so on.

According to *The Guidelines For Rural/Urban Public Library Systems of Ontario 2005* that the key to rural development is more informed and innovative community Rural/Urban Public Libraries, the libraries should therefore assist in the collection, organization and dissemination of information and should form part of the communities innovative capacity. Its collection should support the culture of the community.

The type of services a library could offer will depend upon the type of library' and categories of people, professionals and other varying interests that would avail of its services. According to Harod (2000) a rural library is a library basically set up to benefit all classes of people who live in the rural area, Aina (2004) in affirmation further explained and added that from the highly educated to the stark illiterate, from the disadvantaged to the most advantaged in the community could avail of library services. It therefore serves as the intellectual, cultural and recreational centre of the community.

We can deduce from above that a rural library is a branch of a public library, which has the same roles/functions and services like its master. The main difference is on its location and characteristics of the area where it is located.

## **THE STUDY SETTING**

The background of this study is Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State. This Local Government is made up of 9 major autonomous communities which Awo-Idemili is the most populous and also the Headquarter of the local government. It has 13 villages and currently 4 local government council wards and 25 community wards. It occupies the Western extremity of Orsu L.G. A. It situates along Orlu-Ihiala road.

It has a rough population of 20,000 in 1963 and population projection of 60,500 in 1996 with a spatial coverage of some 25sqKms.

The inhabitants are engaged predominantly -in subsistence farming and gardening, with most of the farmers performing part-time tasks in fields such as trading, wine-tapping, animal husbandry, bicycle repairing, sewing, poultry and woodwork. The men also engage in carving, art and crafts; the women in addition to participation in subsistence farming also engage in basket making and petty trading.

## **THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study include:

1. To determine the need to establish more rural libraries and information services in Orsu Local Government.
2. To identify the sources of information used by Awo-Idemili inhabitants.
3. To identify the types of information obtained from these sources.
4. To determine their knowledge about what a library stands for and the benefits.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is significant in the sense that its result will help to create awareness both to State Public Library, Ministry of Education and Orsu local government citizenry especially Awo-Idemili of the need to have rural public library, which will help them in the socio-economic, educational, cultural and political transformation and development.

Students, teachers', school leavers, applicants, retired civil servants, traders, artisans, civil servants and the average rural dweller stand to gain from this study as it will serve as an eye opener to them after all anyone/group can be an initiator of a programme and others follow.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Survey method using questionnaire and interview were utilized to elicit information for this research. Visits were made of other communities in Orsu Local Government and discovered that only Umuhu-Okabia has a rural library, the resources which could not even offer adequate services to the host community. A total of 560 questionnaires

were distributed to the thirteen villages that made up Awo-Idemili. 260 questionnaires were distributed among the literates and semi-literates groups. Out of this, 180 or 60% questionnaires were dully completed and returned. On the other hand, another 300 questionnaires were distributed among the illiterates. Because they could neither read nor write, it was interpreted and filled out on their behalf. This implies that this questionnaire was also used as interview schedule. Among this later group interviewed, only 120 or 40% of this group cooperated by providing the answers. Others could not be reached while some were scared to answer questions. This implies that out of 560 questionnaires distributed only 300 or 53.6% were dully completed and returned and therefore used as population of this study. The responses to the various items of the questionnaires were analysed using tables, and simple percentages.

## **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULT**

The result shows the need to establish a rural and information services; the sources where the inhabitants obtain information, types of information they get from sources, the knowledge they have about what a library stands for and its benefits.

Out of 300 questionnaires completed and returned, 180 or 60% represented literates and semi-literates while 40% or 120 represented the stark illiterates. The low representation of the illiterates is expected because their level of illiteracy and accessibility affected the filling of the questionnaire, which served as interview scheduled for them.

### **NEED TO ESTABLISH MORE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN ORSL'LOCALGOVERNMENTAREA**

The result on (table 1) reveals that Awo-Idemili is made up of 13 villages, 12 public primary schools and 2 public secondary schools available for the inhabitants. It was discovered that 90 (40%) did not attend school at all; 19.3% with FSLC, 10% with JSSII; 18% with SSCE; 6.7% with TCII/NCE/OND/HND and so on.. See Table 1 attached as appendix for details.

The study also shows that more people are into trading 56(1 8.7%) and fanning 54(18%) than any other type of occupation. Others are retirees 5.3%, 1.7% respectively for those who are too old to do anything again and so on. See same attachment above.

It was discovered that 65% are between the ages of 15-50 while 35% are 51 and above. Discovered also is that more than half (59.3%) of the population are illiterates and semi-educated. The result also shows that more people are into trading and farming followed by students. The retirees who must have spent greater part of their

lives in urban areas also reside in rural area. From the above therefore there is in fact to establish more rural and information services in Orsu Local Government Area and Awo-Idemili in particular from where these categories of people will obtain their informational needs. See same table above.

### **MAJOR SOURCES OF INFORMATION OBTAINED**

The response on the major sources by which the respondents obtain information shows that 215 (71.7%) of the respondents obtain their information from family and friends. This is as a result of interactions and brotherliness prevalent among rural dwellers. Other sources include meetings 183 (61%); churches 144 (48%); 177(59%) from their leaders i.e. the community/opinion leaders because they assumed that they will provide them with first hand information. 141(47%) obtain their information from town criers. 135 (45%) obtain information from bill board/posters. Others who obtain information from vendors and bookshop represented 21 % and 14% respectively. Library 4.3% and Internet or cybercafe 2.7% ranked the least in this hierarchy as a result of non - provision of & these facilities in this place. Those who claimed to have used these last two said that they move to Urban Area to solicit information from them. See table 2 attached as an appendix for details.

### **TYPES OF INFORMATION OBTAINED.**

Type of information obtained is dependent on the source of information available to them. The result in table 3 (see appendix) shows that Awo-Idemili inhabitants got information more on the rite of passage 80% and 66% in politics than others. Health 33.3%; educational 40%; agricultural 47% and environmental information 1.7% respectively are not encouraging considering the percentage number of people that do not receive them.

### **Responses on the Awareness/Unawareness of What & Benefits of Library & Information Services were.**

**Table 4A: Responses on the Definition of Library**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>DEFINITION OP LIBRARY</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>%</b>
1	A place where books are stored	80	26.7
2	A place to go and read quietly	70	23.3
3.	An information centre	20	6.7
4.	Have not heard about library before	130	43.3

**Table 4B: BENEFITS OF LIBRARY**

S/N	BENEFITS OF LIBRARY	NO. OF AGREEMENT	%N	NO. OF DISAGREEMENT	%N.
1	Reduction of crime rate among the youths	160	53.3	140	46.7
2	Helps to improve skill	ISO	50.0	150	50.0
3	Rendering of leisure and creational services	114	38.0	180	60.0
4	Its use helps one to pass examination	252	84.0	48.0	16.0
5	A poor man's university	120	40.0	174	58.0
6	Provides information on the causes & cure of different diseases	182	60.7	108	36.0
7	Reduces migration of youths to urban areas	160	53.3	140	46.7
8	Can provide information to illiterates	50	16.7	250	83.3
9	Can yield revenue through its services like bindery, photocopy & internet services	135	45.0	165	55.0
10	Provision of information on local history	165	55.0	135	45.0

Responses on what a library is (**table 4A**) reveal that 43.3% of the population has not heard of a library before while only 6.7% were able to give correct definition. This is so because rural dwellers are predominantly illiterates.

Furthermore, responses on library benefits (**table 4B**) contradicted the above response in that many who do not know the correct definition of library were able to agree to a considerable extent about the benefits of library. For instance, more than % i.e. 84% of the respondents indicated that they agree that a library can help one to pass examination while 48 or 16% disagree and so on.

## **DISCUSSION OFFINDINGS**

Awo-Idemili like many other communities in Orsu Local Government comprised many villages and has many schools. From the result of the findings made, there is a very big need to establish library and information services in Orsu and Awo-Idemili in particular, considering its teeming population, number of public schools and the

categories of people living in this area. These people need information to better their lives.

The low percentage use of major sources of information by rural dwellers is not unconnected to lack of access and illiteracy and this hampers their physical and intellectual development. Furthermore, they need relevant information that will help them into making the right judgment and taking the right decision that affect their lives and existence as Adewale (2001) rightly pointed out.

The low responses on the type of information obtained like health; educational; agricultural and environmental information are attributed to lack of sources where they can obtain them. Thus, type of information obtained is dependent on the source of information available to them. Low response on the type of information obtained is not encouraging at all. Hence, this jeopardizes what was contained in *The Guidelines For Rural/Urban Public Library System of Ontario 2005* that the key to rural development is a more informed and innovative community.

The low response of the respondents (**table 4A**) about what a library really stands for implies that rural dwellers are ignorant and predominantly illiterates. This agrees to what Odewale (1986) said about their characteristics, which include low level of literacy or high level of illiteracy, limited educational and economic (including jobs) opportunities, among others.

Responses, which accrue from the benefits of library (**table 4B**); may puzzle the eyes as it contradicts to large extent responses on what library really is. This is in accordance to the significance of this study, which is to create awareness, so the researchers explained little about what a library is to these stark illiterates only and this helped them to answer questions on benefits, which will be derived from the use of library.

The high acceptance of some benefits of library (**table 4B**) by these people showed that though majority of Awo-Idemili inhabitants do not know what a library stands for yet they are aware of the benefits derivable from it is not surprising owing to education given to them about library by the researchers.

On the other hand, the high disagreement on benefits of library is as a result of high level of illiteracy in this community, which needs to be addressed by the provision of library and information services.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study, reported in this article was an attempt made by the writers to determine the need to establish more rural libraries in Orsu Local Government Area and Awo-

Idemili in particular, identifying sources where the inhabitants obtain information and type of information obtained and also their knowledge of what a library really stands for and its benefits.

From the finding, it is clear that the provision of library and information services in rural areas will help to eradicate ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, and help in the improvement of their lives generally. There is need therefore to establish more rural libraries in Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State and Awo-Idemili in particular. Based on this, it is therefore suggested that:

- Government should establish 3 or more rural libraries and information centres in every local government that has a very large population.
- The State Public Library Board should also ensure that these rural libraries are adequately assisted in terms of financial, material and human resources.
- The communities too should be involved in building library and information centres.

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## APPENDIX

**Need to Establish Library and Information Services**  
**Table I(a) Name of the Villages and Number Primary/Sec. Schools**

S/N	NAME OF VILLAGE	NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHLS	NUMBER OF SEC. SCHLS
1	Edenta	3	
2	Edeukwu	2	
3	Isieke	1	
4	Amaimo	None	
5	Ezeogwu	1	
6	Ubahaezike	None	
7	Ubahaeze	1	
8	Ubahaezedeke	None	
9	Ahaba	None	
10	Amaokwe	1	
11	Amadim	1	
12	Ohakabia	1	1
13	Obibi	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

**Table 1 (B) Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

**(i) Age and Sex of the Respondents.**

AGE	N&%	15-30	31-40	41-50	>51
Sex: M	110	36	21	18	35
%	(36.7)	(12)	(7)	(6)	(11.7)
F	190	50	30	40	70
%	(63.3)	(16.7)	(10)	(13.3)	(23.3)

**(ii) Highest Educational Qualification, of the Respondents**

QUAL	SID 6 CERT.	FSLC	JSSIII	SSCE	TCII/NCE /OND/HND	BACHELORS	MASTERS	NONE
Sex: M	1	13	10	5	5	2	0	75
%	0.3	(4.3)	(3.3)	(1.7)	(0.7)	(0.7)		(25)
F	0	45	20	49	15	13	2	45
%	0	(15)	(6.7)	(16.3)	(5)	(4.3)	(0.7)	(15)

**(iii) Occupation of the Respondents**

OCC.	STD	T.	C.S	TR.	FM.	B.M	W.T	U. E	S.E	O. L	RETIREE	OTHER S
N	40	20	14	56	54	20	10	22	15	28	16	5
%	13.3	6.7	4.7	18.7	18	6.7	3.3	7.3	5	9.3	5.3	1.7

**TABLE 2: Responses on the Major Sources of Obtaining Information**

S/N	MAJOR SOURCS OF INFORMATION	NUMBER	%
1	Library	13	4.3
2	Family/Friends	215	71.7
3	Community/Opinion Lenders	177	59.0
4	Meetings	183	61.0
	Radio/T.V	140	46.0
6	Vendor	63	21.0
7	Town Crier	141	47.0
8	Churches	144	48.0
9	Bookshop	42	14.0
10	Bill Board/Posters	135	45.0
11	Internet/Cyber Cafe	8	2.7

**TABLE 3: Responses on Types of Information Obtained from the Major Sources**

S/N	TYPES OF INFORMATION OBTAINED	NUMBER	%
1	Health Information	100	33.3
2	Environment	50	1.7
3	Politics	198	66.0
4	Agriculture	141	47.0
5	Death/Birth Marriage	240	80.0
6	Religion	171	57.0
7	Education	120	40.0