CASE STUDY

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DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AND PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF EJURA SEKYEDUMASE MUNICIPALITY IN GHANA

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Abstract

Communication and development are perceived as closely intertwined phenomena in which one is believed to guarantee the other. This paper argues that, sustainable development initiatives are those that guarantee the participation of those who have some interest in the intended change. The paper further argues that, communication facilitates community participation in development projects. However, development interventions at the community level seem to ignore the important role communication play in sustaining development projects. This paper highlights the importance of communication in sustaining development projects in the Ejura Sekyedumase Municipality in Ghana. The research adopted the exploratory case study approach using four communities and three purposively selected projects. The data for the study were obtained from a survey of institutional and household heads and focus group discussions. The results show that development communication facilitated the participation of communities in development projects and increased their willingness to commit resources such as money, accommodation, information, labour etc. to sustain projects. Also, projects with effective communication had good operations and maintenance culture with better prospects of sustainability than those without effective communication. Therefore, Development Communication facilitates the effective operations and maintenance of development projects which ensures that the intended benefits of the projects are realised over the entire project life. Development communication is also effective in building local capacities through training and sensitisation to initiate, implement and take ownership of local level projects. The study recommends that communication should take center stage in the planning, implementation and monitoring of rural projects for their sustainability.

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Introduction

Communication is necessary for the achievement of development projects. In project management, communication is perceived as the foundation or lifeblood for effective project planning and management (Lester, 2007; Kerzer, 2009; Muller and Turner, 2010; Olsson and Johansson, 2011; Jahannessen, 2012; Milićević, Tomašević and Isaković, 2014). A study by Mintzberg (1989 cited in Sońta-Drączkowska, 2015) revealed that American executives spent 78 percent of their working time on communication. Therefore, communication serves as the backbone and the glue that holds an organisation together (Olsson & Johansson, 2011). Good communication is important for trading information, coordinating activities, creating mutual understanding, socialising and influencing outcomes (Weldearegay, 2012). Communication also promotes the engagement of stakeholders in a project (Tonnquest, 2008) and in the workplace, promotes job satisfaction, performance and retention of project employees. The project management components such as change management, human resources management, project integration management, stakeholder management and several others, rely on communication strategies as well as the project manager's communication skills (Sońta-Drączkowska, 2015). It has been argued that, in order to resolve problems and disputes, it is imperative to maintain open lines of communication between project stakeholders during and after a project (Anthoney, 2002; William, 2010).

Poor communication is a contributory factor to project failure (Project Management Institute, 2013). Effective communication contributes to about 17 per cent increase in finishing projects within budget, on the average, two out of five projects fail to accomplish their original goals and business intent out of which one-half are related to ineffective communications (ibid). Consequently, organisations that practice good communication are five times more likely to perform better than organisations without effective communication.

Three components characterise the most basic level of communication: a transmitter/sender, a transmission channel/medium and a receiver (Zulch, 2014). The message moves from the sender via the medium to the receiver who finally decodes it. The process flows in a cyclical fashion beginning with the sender who has a purpose to communicate (Zulch, 2014). All the components must function to avoid misunderstanding (ibid). A feedback loop is essential to prevent delay and to affirm the receiver's understanding of the message. Communication may occur within the project, in other areas within a project department, in areas outside the department, in areas in the larger organisation, in external operational areas and among external professionals outside the parent organisation (Tushman & Katz, 1980, in Weldearegay, 2012). Communication may occur before, during and after a project. Thus, communication occurs in all the stages of a project; initiating, planning, executing, controlling or monitoring and closing (Weldearegay, 2012). Communication enables project managers to identify and formulate development programmes, to dialogue with stakeholders in order to take into account their needs, attitudes and knowledge (Diouf, 1994). In this way, project beneficiaries become the principal actors in the development process (FAO, 2004).

Development Communication or Communication for Development (ComDev) is the systematic and planned practice of communication through inter-personal mediums and mass media for social change (del Castello & Braun, 2006:3). ComDev is premised on the idea that development is about change, and if development initiatives are to be sustainable they should start with mechanisms that ensure broad participation by all those who have some interest in the intended change (Mefalopulos, 2008). In ComDev, rural people are at the centre of development initiatives and so communication is used in this sense for community mobilisation, participation, building confidence for awareness raising, decision making and action, knowledge sharing, changing lifestyles, behaviour and attitudes (Adedokun, Adeyemo & Olorunsola, 2010). Communication can be used as a tool to facilitate community participation in a development planning initiative (Adedokun et al., 2010; Quebral, 2012).

The idea of project sustainability has been tackled by several authors. For instance, Silvius and Schipper (2010) have described sustainability in project management as getting the right things done right. This paper argues that, though a plethora of research exists on project communication, there is a paucity of literature linking development communication with project sustainability in the rural context in Ghana.

Literature

Development communication has its roots from Nora C. Quebral, an academic and a pioneering figure in the discipline of ComDev in Asia (Servaes, 2012). She has since been accredited as the "Mother of Development Communication" in recognition of the inert contribution to the development of the concept (Garcia, 2007 cited in Vivar-Zurita and Garcia-Garcia, 2012). Quebral (1971) defined development communication as the science and art of human communication purposed to rapidly transform a country or redeem the majority of its people from poverty to a robust state of economic growth that guarantees social equality and the realisation of human potential (Quebral, 1971:69 cited in Servaes, 2012:65). Quebral's classical definition brazenly states the nature of ComDev as well as its essential role in economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries. The World Bank offers an alternative definition of development communication in the context of project management. Development communication is perceived by The World Bank as the mainstreaming of strategic communication in development projects from the understanding of indigenous realities (Manyozo, 2006). The idea of local or indigenous context captured in the World Bank's definition resonates with Mefalopulos (2003) who argued that development projects that fail to internalise local realities cannot succeed in bringing about change. The Rome Consensus also perceived ComDev as a social process that is anchored on dialogue applying a wide range of methods and tools (Servaes, 2012:66). It further explained that ComDev is all about seeking change at multiple levels inter alia, building trust, listening, sharing skills and knowledge, making policies, learning and debating for sustained and meaningful development (ibid). Consequently, the empowerment of local people is the distinguishing factor that separates ComDev from other forms of communication (Table 1). ComDev is not corporate communication or public relations (Mefalopulos, 2008; Servaes, 2012).

Table 1: Types of Communication in Organisations

Type	Purpose/Definition	Main Functions
Corporate Communication	Communicate the mission and strategies of the organisation, mostly for audiences.	Use media products and outputs to advance the mission and strategies of the organisation; communicate relevant activities to selected audiences.
Internal communication	Facilitate the sharing of information within an organisation/project.	Ensure effective and timely flow of relevant information within the staff and units of the organisation. It evades duplication and boosts synergies.
Advocacy communication	Promote change at the policy level and facilitate issue-based development	Raise awareness of on communication methods and media to influence specific audiences and support the intended change.
Development communication	Support sustainable change in development operations by engaging key stakeholders.	Establish conducive environments for assessing risks and opportunities; disseminate information; influence behaviour and social change

Source: Mefalopulos (2008:5)

Based on the aforementioned definitions this paper considers development communication as a conscious effort of sharing information between stakeholders using appropriate techniques to reach a common understanding, thus support and sustain the goals of socio-economic, political and cultural development.

Development communication has gone through a checkered history and its essence is in its history (Mefalopulos, 2008). According to authors such as Agunga (1997), Anyaegbunam, Mefalopulos, and Moetsabi (2004), Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (1998), Mefalopulos (2003; 2008) and Servaes (2012) the history of development has revealed disappointments and failures which are attributable to two interrelated factors: lack of participation and failure to use effective communication. Other recommendations to integrate communications into development projects included the treatment of communications as a resource, thereby integrating communications with economics (Jussawalla and Lamberton, 1982; Manyozo, 2006). The foregoing point is emphasised by Servaes (2003; 2008), who argues that communication and participation are major determinants of the success or failure of development projects.

Mowlana (1990) and Servaes (2012) revealed that ComDev programmes started with a focus on nationalism and patriotism. However, in the post-World War II period, a theoretical ideology was formed based on modernisation paradigm. This ideology tried to resolve 'Third World' problems by facilitating the transformation through information transmission in mass media of pre-modern and "backward" attitudes and practices of "traditional" societies into modern, rational and Western ways of life (Mowlana, 1990). The modernisation approach in communication was epitomised by Daniel Lerner's influential passing of traditional society thesis (1958), which posited that mass media exposure allowed people to develop a sense of "empathy"; the ability to envision and accept new ideas beyond one's local conditions and traditions (Deane, 2004).

Communication for Development (ComDev) or development communication originates from modernisation theory; the dominant development thinking in the post-Second World War era (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 1998). The existing assumption at the time was that 'traditional' practices in developing countries should be displaced by the norms of modern societies. Mass media were seen as having the potential to act as key agents of change by spreading modernisation to the remote traditional populations and transforming the structures of life, values and behaviours to mirror modern Western Societies (FAO, 2014).

Antagonists of the modernisation paradigm started to criticise the ideology in the 1960s which led to an alternative theoretical model rooted in political-economy: the dependency theory (Mefalopulos, 2008). The proponents of dependency theory criticised the basic assumptions of the modernisation epoch mainly because it blames the causes of underdevelopment exclusively on the recipients neglecting external, social, historical and economic factors. They also accused the modernisation epoch of being Euro-centric, neglecting other alternative paths to development (Mefalopulos, 2008). Dependency theory was aimed at lobbying for a more balanced flow of information at the international level but could not yield the objectives the proponents envisaged. There were however, little indications that they lobbied for more horizontal forms of communication within countries (UNESCO, 2007).

The dependency theory perceived mass media as a means of communicating the values and practices of the developed nations to the underdeveloped countries. They argued that media helps induce change. As noted by Mefalopulos (2003), dependency theory gained popularity in the 1970s and the 1980s but started to loose relevance gradually. By the late 1970s, it was evident that members of the public were not passive recipients of information, and that media alone could not change people's mindsets and behaviours (FAO, 2014).

At this time, another development perspective began to influence communication thinking and practice (Rogers, 1976; FAO, 2014). This is participatory development. Proponents of participatory development argued that community participation in the design and implementation of development programmes had become essential as communities experienced the reality of development (UNESCO, 2007). Mefalopulos (2008) opined that the participatory approach is more rooted in the cultural realities of development, a reflection of the emerging development paradigm which advocates for the consideration of social dimensions in development.

UNESCO (2007) disclosed that by the late 1980s the notion of participatory development, particularly participatory rural appraisal, in which poor communities are directly engaged in defining their own problems and solutions, had gained root within many development organisations, especially non-governmental organisations (NGOs). FAO (2014) revealed that, a horizontal multi-directional communication method that made use of a mixture of channels and emphasised the importance of dialogue. This new method stressed the need to facilitate trust, mutual understanding as well as to amplify the voice of poor people and to empower them to identify ways of overcoming problems in order to improve their own well-being.

Development communication depends on the synergistic application of three components; social mobilisation, behavioural change communication and advocacy (UNICEF, 1999). Advocacy is communication that targets the existing leadership and the powers to take actions to achieve programme objectives (UNICEF, 2008). "Leadership" includes political, business and social leaders at national and local levels. The advocacy component according to UNICEF (2008) informs and motivates leaders to establish an enabling environment for the programme by taking measures such as changing policies, allocating resources, speaking out on critical

issues and initiating public discussion. Participation is relevant in this context as the voice of the community helps direct advocacy objectives and activities. Mefalopolus (2005) defined advocacy as a means 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 policymakers directly or winning the support of public opinion. The first task of advocacy as stressed by UNICEF (1999) is often to raise awareness in general, yet its ultimate objective is to spark action either from decision-makers or their constituents. The aim is to gain commitment and active support for a development objective and prepare society for its acceptance over the long-term.

The primary aim of advocacy, indicated by Servaes (2000), is fostering public policies that support the solution of an issue or problem. It involves organised attempts to influence the political climate, policy and programme decisions, public perceptions of social norms, funding decisions, community support and empowerment towards specific issues. Again, Servaes (2008) viewed advocacy at the policy level, as that which is used to assure the high level of public commitment necessary to undertake action by fostering a knowledgeable and supportive environment for decision making, as well as the allocation of adequate resources to attain the campaign's goals and objectives.

Social mobilisation as defined by UNICEF (2008) is a process of harnessing selected partners to raise demand for or sustain progress towards a development objective. Social mobilisation solicits the participation of institutions, community networks, social and religious groups to use their membership and other resources to strengthen participation in activities at the local level (UNICEF, 2008). Consultation with the community is needed here to ascertain which institutions, social, political and religious groups will have the most influence on the primary participants. The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) opined that "Social mobilisation involves planned actions and processes to reach, influence, and involve all relevant segments of society across all sectors from the national to the community level, in order to create an enabling environment and effect positive behaviour and social change" (CEDPA, 2000:9). According to McKee (1992), social mobilisation differs from social marketing because it aims to muster national and local support for a general goal or programme through a more open and uncontrolled process with the idea of using as many channels as possible at an accelerated rate.
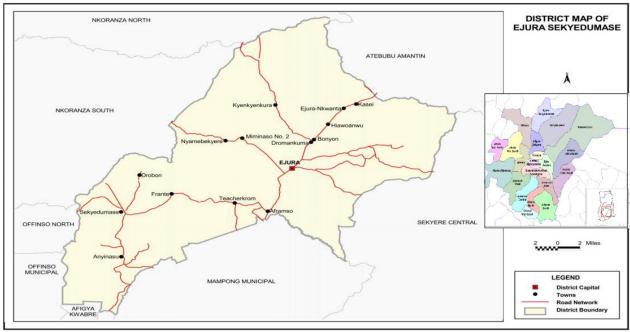
Behaviour change communication (BCC) involves face-to-face interaction with individuals or groups to motivate, inform, plan or solve a problem, with the aim of promoting behaviour change (UNICEF, 2008; Sascha et al., 2014). BCC according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2008) is an interactive process for creating messages and approaches using a combination of communication channels in order to facilitate and sustain positive and appropriate behaviours. ILO (2008) further reveals that BCC has evolved from information, education and communication (IEC) programmes to support more tailored-made messages, greater interaction and increased joint ownership with a focus on aspiring and achieving health-enhancing results.

Communication for behaviour change aims to foster positive behaviour; promote and sustain individual, community and societal behaviour change; and maintain appropriate behaviour. Its underlying assumption is that individual attitudes and behaviours can be changed voluntarily through communication and persuasion techniques and the related use of effective messages. BCC shifts the emphasis 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 (UNICEF, 1999).

Study Area

Ejura Sekyedumase is one of the Municipalities in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The Municipality was carved out of the former Sekyere and Offinso districts and was thus created as a result of the implementation of the decentralisation programme on 29 November 1988. The district was established by a Legislative Instrument, PNDC L.I 1400, 1988. The Municipality is located within Longitudes 1°5W and 1°39' W and Latitudes 7°9' N and 7°36'N. It has a large land size of about 1,782.2sq.km. (690.781sq.miles) and is the fifth largest of the 27 districts in Ashanti Region. It constitutes about 7.3% of the region's total land area with about one-third of its

land area lying in the Afram Plains. With the creation of new districts, the Ejura Sekyedumase Municipality, located in the Northern part of the Ashanti Region, now shares borders with Atebubu-Amantin District in the North-West, Mampong Municipality in the East, Sekyere South District in the South and the Offinso Municipality in the West (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Map of Ejura Sekyedumase Municipality

The population of the Municipality is about 101,826 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). The Municipality is predominantly rural - 57% of the population live in rural areas. Out of the 130 settlements, only Ejura, Sekyedumase and Anyinasu are considered urban. The Municipality has five sub-districts; Ejura and Sekyedumase as urban councils and Kasei, Bonyon-Dromankuma and Ebuom as area councils.

Traditional Authorities command the respect of people in the communities, particularly in rural areas. They provide land and materials for infrastructural projects, mobilise community members for communal labour and arbitrate disputes. There are three traditional divisions in the Municipality namely, Ejura, Sekyedumase, and Anyinasu, with Ejura being the largest. The relationship between the Traditional Authorities and the Municipal Assembly is cordial.

Ejura Sekyedumase Municipality is one of the districts in the country that has benefited from most projects from both government and development partners. Some of these projects include the construction of boreholes, pipe water system, clinics, schools, rural electrification projects, warehouses and other farming projects. These projects have provided the basis to assess the role of communication in project sustainability. how communication was adopted to achieve sustainability.

Methods

The research follows the exploratory methodological approach. This was chosen because of the novelty of the research issue. An exploratory approach is ideal for situations where the topic of investigation is new or unclear, or the research variables cannot be clearly defined (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). The study adopted a case study approach which seemed more appropriate as it helps to understand complex issues through the analysis of a number of events or conditions and their relationships. As indicated by David and Sutton (2004) and Asamoah

(2010), the case study approach is an explanatory method which makes it easy to answer the 'what', 'why', 'when' and 'how' questions associated with the research. A detailed research design is presented in Figure 2.
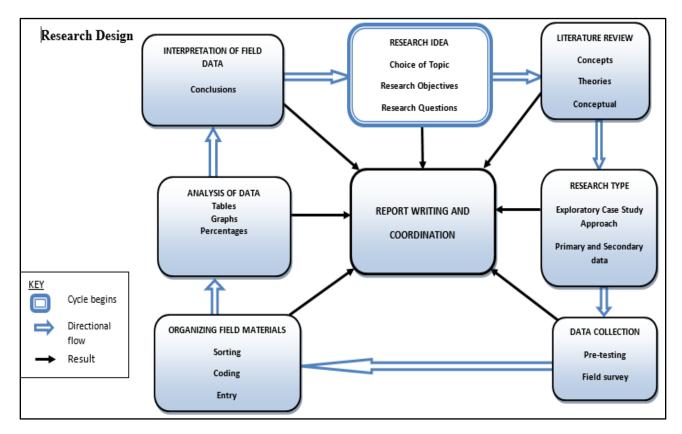

Figure 2: Research Design

A preliminary interview with the selected development implementers revealed that most of the communities have received development interventions in the form of electrification and water supply to help curb developmental problems. Based on this information, the study focused on rural electrification and rural water supply. From the list of nine communities provided by the Municipal Office, four were selected randomly. This was to establish the short and long term sustainability concept reviewed in the literature. For ease of generalisation, multi-stage cluster sampling was used to divide the Municipality into two geographical units, thus, North and South, using the Municipal capital (Ejura) as the reference point. Simple random sampling was used to select two communities, the communities that fall in the category above was selected from both units. The communities selected in the northern sector are Nkwanta and Kyenkyenkura, and those in the southern sector are Aframso and Ebuom. Nkwanta and Ebuom are the communities that had projects especially the electrification for more than 5 years and Kyenkyenkura and Aframso had projects that have been implemented for at least 3 years.

Primary data for the study was gathered through a survey using a structured questionnaire, and Focus Group Discussions. The survey was conducted using an institutional questionnaire which was administered to the heads of the Planning and Coordinating Unit (PCU) of the Municipal Assembly, the District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST), the Department of Community Development, Northern Electricity Department (NED) of the Volta River Authority (VRA) and World Vision, Ghana. These institutions were contacted in lieu of the roles they play in bringing development projects such as potable water and electricity to people in rural communities. Besides these, a total of two hundred and thirty-four (234) (Table 2) household heads were included in the survey. The sample size was prorated to the population of each of the four selected communities (Table 2) which were selected based on the availability of projects particularly water and electricity. The systematic selection of households was done using the mathematical method to select, for instance, every second household in the Aframso Community.

Table 2: Sample Size for Selected Communities

Selected Communities	Sample Size for Population	Total	Systematic Selection of Households
1. Aframso	(252/563) x 234	105	234/105 = 2.2 Approximately after every 2nd household
2. Nkwanta	(165/563) x 234	69	234/69 = 3.5 Approximately after every 4th household
3. Kyenkyenkura	(71/563) x 234	30	234/30= 7.8 Approximately after every 8th household
4. Ebuom	(75/563) x 234	31	234/31 = 7.5 Approximately after every 8th household

Four research assistants were trained to help in the collection of the field data by administering the questionnaire. They were initially taken through the rationale and the main objectives of the study. They were also trained on how to go about the data collection, which areas to visit and how to identify their respondents. One basic criterion used to select the research assistants was their understanding of the local languages spoken in the study area and how they could translate the questions in order to get the right information. The research assistants were monitored to ensure that the work was done accurately.

The questionnaire was pre-tested in two of the study areas, namely Aframso and Nkwanta to check its reliability and validity. As a result, some questions within the questionnaire had to be rephrased in order to make them clearer and other questions had to be totally taken off the questionnaire. It also enabled the researchers to appreciate some of the problems that were most likely to be encountered during the actual data collection.

Focus group discussions were also held in two communities (Kyenkyenkura and Nkwanta) with Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) committees. These were committees which were active and well organised. The focus groups discussions provided a means to verify data collected from households and the institutions.

Data gathered was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The data gathered via questionnaires were displayed to enable a diagrammatical and pictorial representation in order to show what those data signify (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Quantitative data gathered through the structured questionnaires and interviews were analysed with the aid of SPSS Version 16 and presented in tables of frequencies and cross-tabulations. Also, data obtained from focus group discussions were qualitatively analysed.

Results and Discussion

The study examines the role of communication in sustaining development projects in Ejura Sekyerdumase Municipality in Ghana. Sustainability of development projects was considered by the level of community contribution to the project, operations and maintenance as well as training and capacity building. These factors were derived from available literature on project sustainability and development communication.

Communication, Community Contributions to Projects and Project Sustainability

The contributions of a community towards a project is essential for the sustainability of development projects. Alemneh (2002) has argued that some contributions from users build commitment to the sustainability of a project. The results in Table 3 show that community contributions vary according to the types and stages of a project. For instance, contributions before and during the project implementation are lower for electricity but higher for the water system and borehole projects. Discussants in the focus group discussions indicated that electricity projects unlike the water systems and boreholes did not require initial contributions from beneficiaries. Although the rural electrification projects came as a result of the demands made by some communities, the project concept was developed and implemented with little participation from members.

Generally, the contributions made by members include money, sharing information, providing materials such as gravel and stones, providing moral support, operations and maintenance and communal labour (see Table 3). Discussants in the Focus Group Discussions indicate that communal labour was used in the borehole and water systems where communities mobilised themselves to undertake tasks such as clearing and weeding as

well as cleaning of the surroundings. Monetary contributions were also common in the borehole and water systems where the beneficiary communities were required to honour a counterpart funding of between five percent and twenty-five percentof the total cost of the project.

The contributions made by communities were facilitated by communication between implementers and communities (Table 3). In the case of the water projects, information about the opportunities at the Assembly and the processes for applying for the water systems and the boreholes were made available to communities through their local representatives at the Assembly. Discussants at the focus group discussions indicated that the information about the availability of and processes involved enable them to prepare to meet the counterpart funding requirement and the management arrangements of the water systems and the boreholes.

Table 3: Community Contributions Before and After Projects

Project	Contribution Before (%)		Contribution During (%)		Contribution After (%)		Type of Contribution	Role of Communication
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Electricity	23.4	76.6	35.6	64.4	93.5	6.5	Support (labour, food, accommodation, information), connecting & usage	Sensitising, mobilising & transparency
Small Water System	85.2	14.8	83.0	17.0	70.4	29.6	Financial, information, morale, operations & maintenance	Sensitising, mobilising & transparency
Borehole	78.3	21.7	70.1	29.9	66.7	33.3	Financial, information, materials, morale, operations & maintenance	Sensitising, mobilising & transparency

Source: Authors' Construct

Operations and Maintenance of Projects

The effective operations and maintenance of a project affect its sustainability over time (Sohail, Cavil & Cotton, 2005). It is argued that projects survive when the beneficiaries are able to operate and maintain them. Results from the survey and the focus group discussions revealed that the operations and maintenance of electricity infrastructure were at the behest of the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG). Communities were, however, expected to monitor and provide feedback to the ECG for sustained services.

On the contrary, the borehole and water system projects were managed and maintained by communities with or without assistance from implementers. Consequently, the implementation of the water projects involved the formation, training and commissioning of Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) committees. The main responsibility of the WATSAN committees is to ensure that the boreholes and water systems function effectively. It was further revealed that, not all communities had WATSAN committees that were functioning. In Ebuom for instance, the implementer World Vision Ghana was said to have repaired most of the boreholes. Under this arrangement, some boreholes were abandoned because of inadequate funds and expertise to repair them.

In all the communities that had functioning WATSAN committees, repairs and maintenance were financed mainly through monetary contributions from households and the use of communal labour. However, in Ebuom it was observed that the commitment of beneficiaries in repairs and maintenance was lacking due to poor communication. In a focus group discussion, a discussant remarked that he was not bothered about a broken down borehole located close to his house because he knows that "they will come and repair it", meaning the implementers will repair it. This indicates that the community had developed dependency syndrome which affected the sustainability of the projects.

Training and Capacity Building

As noted earlier, the WATSAN committee members in all the selected communities received training in repairs of boreholes and the water systems. However, households were only sensitised on the need to maintain the facilities and to keep personal hygiene to avoid diseases. Yet, it was observed that some of the WATSAN

committee members were teachers who later were affected by transfers and thus were not available to play their roles. This affected the capacity of some WATSAN committees to repair and maintain the facilities. It was, therefore, proposed that there should be continuous training and transfer of knowledge among community members on the repairs and maintenance of water system and borehole projects.

In the case of electricity projects, respondents argued that the repairs and maintenance were done by professional electricians licensed by the Ghana Energy Commission. However, it was revealed that the implementers did not include in the project, the training of local electricians to manage the household wiring and households were not sensitised about the use of the electricity. Because of these impediments, discussants indicated that some poor households who had received electricity connection, later had their lines disconnected because they could not manage their consumption of electricity leading to the accumulation of heavy bills. There were also reports of some workers selling ECG meters to households while some demanded money from households before connecting them. Because of lack of information, some households who were yet to be connected were also angry about the process and could not understand why they were left out. Training and capacity building of project beneficiaries is directly linked to the project utilisation and sustainability.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to highlight the important role development communication plays in sustaining development projects at the local level in Ghana. The results show that communication is vital for project sustainability at the community level in Ghana. Development communication is important in mobilising local resources for project implementation which contributes to project sustainability. Also, Development Communication facilitates the effective operations and maintenance of development projects which ensures that the intended benefits of the projects are realised over the entire project life. Development communication is also effective in building local capacities through training and sensitisation to initiate, implement and take ownership of local level projects. The results have shown that development communication engenders local participation in development which enables communities to own the development process and contributes to the sustainability of development projects.

The study, therefore, recommends that community-level projects should encourage the full participation of beneficiaries for project success and sustainability. Also, development communication processes should include interactive mechanisms for effective participation.

Declaration of Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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