

INFORMATION PROVISION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN GHANA: THE ASHANTI REGION IN PERSPECTIVE

JOSEPH BOAKYE

Assistant Librarian

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) Kumasi

ABSTRACT

In this paper the role of rural libraries in providing information to the Rural communities in the Ashanti Region has been discussed. Activities of other institutions in the Region by which they inform and educate the rural communities have also been looked at. These institutions are the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), the Information Services Department, and the Lands Commission. Suggestions have also been offered towards improving upon the provision of information to the rural communities in the Ashanti Region.

INTRODUCTION

Information has been defined by various writers, sometimes depending upon the context in which it is used. Sam (1996) quoting Isoun defines it as "all that contributes to increasing our general awareness, understanding or consciousness of a given topic." Alemna (2000) also defines it as "knowledge given or received of some fact or circumstance." He states further that "it consists of statements made by individuals about concepts which they have assimilated into their store of knowledge".

It could be simply said that information is some knowledge received or acquired by an individual, a group, a society or a nation about an event, incidence or occurrence, that contributes to the general awareness, understanding and level of consciousness of the activity in question.

APPROACHES TO INFORMATION PROVISION

In rural Ghana Information provided to the communities takes various forms depending upon the norms and practices of the community concerned. What is very common is that information could be provided orally where it is passed on from person to person or to the community in general by word of mouth that is orally.

In the rural communities of the Ashanti Region, besides oral information, the town crier beats a gongong to call the people's attention to his message from the chief or an individual (with the chief's permission) and then delivers the message or information verbally. Sometimes the chief's drum (atumpan) is sounded or beaten to assemble members of the community for some information to be passed on

to them or for a meeting or for an assignment like keeping the environment clean - what is commonly called communal labour. In this paper information provided to rural communities in the Ashanti Region by some institutions and organizations is discussed. The institutions covered are Libraries, The National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Information Services Department and the Lands Commission. These are a few of the large number of institutions and organizations (including Non-Governmental Organizations - NGO's) that in various ways provide information to the rural communities.

INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITIES

Information is the wheel of development and an uninformed society is a sick society. This is because lack of information on facilities and services that can help the society improve upon its standard of living leads to poverty and a low standard of living.

Information is a very important resource in mankind's development. It is needed by individuals, organizations and governments in taking decisions that affect the welfare of living and non-living organisms. For example the individual needs information on what schools there are in a locality in order to decide which school to attend. Farmers need information about the types of soil in a farming area in order to decide on the type of crop to grow in the soil.

The entrepreneur also needs information on the infrastructural facilities available in a locality, the labour market, availability of land and other related factors relevant to the success of his enterprise in order to be able to decide where to locate the enterprise. It will be realised that lack of information hinders progress in man's life.

The World Bank (1998) notes that knowledge gaps and information problems are obstacles to development. Without the required information needed by the government, for example, it becomes difficult for it to take decisions on education, health, water supply, communication facilities, among others.

To be able to identify the type of information needed by the people of a community, a number of factors are taken into account. These include the population of the people in the community, the types of people, the types of occupation undertaken by the people, the types of food they eat, the housing needs of the people, the level of literacy within the community, the types of schools sited in the area, the types of recreational activities the people are interested in and many others.

Fayose (2001) identifies seven groups of people living in the rural areas in West Africa. These are:

1. Non-literate farmers, fishermen, cattle-rearers, and craftsmen.
2. Semi-literate artisans and traders.

3. The village head or chief and his committee of elders who may be literate or illiterate.
4. School children and their teachers – usually primary school children. There may be a community secondary school serving a cluster of villages.
5. Retired elites who have returned to the villages after living their lives working in urban areas or towns.
6. Local Government officials who may be literate, semi-literate or non-literate.
7. A handful of professionals – nurses, and other health officials, agricultural officers and the like.

These groups of people can all be found in the rural areas of the Ashanti region and therefore the information needs of the rural communities in the region are varied. Any programme planned towards the provision of information for the rural communities must take the interests of the various groups of people into account. For example rural libraries in the Ashanti rural communities must be stocked with materials that will meet the information needs of all these groups of people.

INFORMATION PROVISION BY ORGANIZATIONS / INSTITUTIONS

Libraries

One institution that has a very important role to play in rural information provision is the library. However in the Ghanaian situation there is no well-developed library system in the rural areas and the

Ashanti Region is no exception. Apart from school and college libraries there are not many libraries established in the rural areas to meet the information needs of the rural communities. The few that have been established are mostly in the district capitals serving those capitals and the surrounding towns and villages.

The few libraries available were established by the Ghana Library Board and the District Assemblies. Those set up by the Library Board are sited in Kumasi, Konongo, Obuasi and Effiduase. Those of the District Assemblies are at Nkawie, Ejisu, Offinso, Ejura, Tepa, Jachie, Manso Nkwanta, Bekwai, New Edubiase, Mampong and Agona.

With the exception of Jachie the rest of the towns are district capitals. Some of the libraries were established before 1999. The rest were established in 1999, or after, following a government directive in that year that all the District Assemblies in the country should establish libraries to serve the communities around, especially the schools. Some of those established in 1999 and after are those located at Ejisu, Jachie and Mampong.

In my data collection for this paper I visited seven of the libraries between October 2001 and March 2002, to find out how the available facilities meet the information needs of the rural communities. Those visited are sited at Ejisu, Konongo, Jachie, Bekwai, Ejura, Offinso and Mampong.

Library Staff

The findings show that all the libraries are staffed with library assistants with General Certificate of Education (GCE) ordinary level or Senior Secondary School (SSS) qualifications. Some of them have had three to six months' training from the Ghana Library Board. One of them however (at Mampong) is a professional teacher with a Post Secondary Certificate.

Through interviews it was realised that most of them are not happy with their conditions of service. Their monthly salaries range between ₵140,000.00 and ₵270,000.00 except those at Mampong (three in

number) who are paid between ₵400,000.00 and ₵500,000.00.

Opening Hours

The libraries open from Monday to Friday between 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. The Ejisu library opens on Saturdays from 9.00 a.m. to 12 noon.

Bookstock

The total bookstock of the seven libraries is 27,743 with a seating capacity of 397 serving a population of 888932 (the total population of the seven districts). Table 1 below gives the breakdown of the bookstock, seating capacity, the districts and their population

TABLE 1

Population of districts and profile of libraries visited

<i>Location of library/ year established</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Population of district</i>	<i>Opening hours</i>	<i>Book stock</i>	<i>Serials</i>	<i>Seating capacity</i>
Bekwai, 1997	Amansie East	197364	Monday - Friday 8.00a.m. - 5.00p.m.	5206	Local Newspapers	44
Ejisu, 1999	Ejisu/Juaben	120968	Monday-Friday 9.00a.m. - 5.00p.m. Saturday 8.00 - 12 noon	6340	Local Newspapers	84
Ejura, 1993	Ejura/ Sekyedumasi	74561	Monday - Friday 8.30a.m. - 5.30p.m	3431	3 J.L. Titles 4 Local Newspapers	20
Jachie, 2001	Bosomtwe/ Atwima/ Kwanwoma	118862	Monday - Friday 9.00a.m. - 3.00p.m	3219	Nil	35
Konongo, 1967	Asante Akim North	107771	Monday - Friday 9.00a.m. - 5.00p.m.	3848	Nil	24
Mampong, 2000	Kwabre	131717	Monday - Friday 8.00a.m. - 5.00p.m	1699	Local Newspapers	120
Offinso Newtown	Offinso	137,689	Monday - Friday 8.30a.m. - 5.00p.m	4000	Nil	70
TOTALS		888932		27743		397

Observation of Facilities

In each of the libraries visited some time was spent to carefully examine the bookstock and other facilities available. It was observed that with the exception of the Ejisu and Mampong libraries most of the books of the libraries are very old. Very few are current. The shelves lack labels and in most cases the books are without class numbers. There are no catalogue cabinets. The Konongo and Ejura libraries are quite old and are really not in good shape. A lot of improvements in the available facilities are needed. The Jachie library is located in a Junior Secondary School in the outskirts of the town, about one kilometre away from the centre of the town. There is no signpost in the town directing users to it. This limits users' awareness of the existence of the library and therefore negatively affects its patronage. Lighting and ventilation in the libraries are, however, encouraging.

Patronage

The libraries are patronised mostly by pupils of the primary and secondary schools within the districts. Patronage by other members of the communities is not encouraging due to the fact that there are not many materials that most of them would be interested in reading. It was interesting to learn at Ejisu that drivers and hairdressers have been going to the library to look for materials relevant to their jobs.

Meeting Users' Information Needs.

The libraries need a lot of improvements in the services

provided to really serve as sources of information in rural communities.

The District Assemblies must make serious efforts in stocking the libraries with current materials. The library staff (who need to be motivated) have a lot to do in the selection of books acquired for the libraries. They need to study carefully the information needs of the communities they serve in order to acquire books and serials that would be of interest to them. For example the Ejura/Sekyedumasi District is a maize-growing district. Literate Farmers would be interested in books on maize production. Books and other materials that would be helpful to workers in public and private institutions must be acquired to serve their needs. This would improve upon the patronage of the libraries.

Service To Schools

As earlier stated, the libraries are patronised mostly by pupils in the schools within the communities. For example, at Ejisu the library opens officially at 9.00a.m. but sometimes special arrangements are made for some pupils to visit the library at 7.00 a.m. before they go to school.

During visits to these libraries, it was observed that some of the libraries have some school text books but many of them are very old while others are not very relevant. If the information needs of the pupils are to be met, the library staff must liaise with the schools to study carefully the curricula of the courses pursued so as

to acquire books relevant to the courses.

As it is very well known, the prices of the text books are high and many of the pupils in the rural schools cannot afford to buy them.

If the libraries are well stocked with relevant and current books helpful to the teachers and pupils in their teaching and learning it will help greatly in improving upon the standard of education in the rural areas and thus bring about improvement in the pupils' performance in their various examinations.

Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) Results

A study of the results of the BECE in the Ashanti Region for the period 1998/99 - 2000/01 indicates that a large number of the candidates failed. In 1998/99 36.9% failed; In 1999/2000 38.9% failed while in 2000/01 39.6% failed. A number of reasons may be given for these failures. I believe lack of reading materials is one of the factors. This emphasises the key role the rural libraries play in supporting education in the region.

MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Secretariat and Staff

The Ministry of Food And Agriculture in the Ashanti Region is very much involved in the provision of information to the rural communities in the Region as most of the rural dwellers are farmers.

In the Region, the Ministry has regional and district secretariats. Information from the Regional secretariat to the farmers may be passed through the District Secretariat.

The Regional and District Secretariats are headed by Regional Director and District Directors respectively. There are various units headed by specialists in charge of various activities. These specialist are very much involved in the Ministry's programmes by which the rural farmers are trained in new farming technologies. This helps the farmers to become aware of new technologies or researches developed in the farming industry. There are Agricultural Engineers, Veterinary Officers, Specialists in Livestock, Crops, Fisheries, Agricultural Extension Officers, Human Resources Officers and an officer in charge of the Evaluation Unit.

Meetings and Research Application

The Regional Director and the Regional Specialists hold quarterly meetings at which various issues, some of which are agricultural policies from the National Headquarters are discussed. Monthly meetings, which involve the District Heads are also held. Decisions taken that must be known by the farmers are passed on to them through the District Directors and the district staff of 20 - 25 workers.

Through the National Agricultural Extension Project (NAEP) and the National Agricultural Research Project (NARP) some agricultural

technological packages have been developed which are passed on to the farmers through the Agricultural Extension Agents who organise training programmes for them to educate them on how to apply the new technologies.

Recent researches undertaken, the results of which have been passed on to the farmers are:

- a) Split-Corm technique in plantain
- b) Processing of milk products
- c) Utilization of Cassava Composite Flour
- d) Root and Tuber Crop Improvement Project

Publications on research findings are kept at the district offices and accessible to farmers and others who want to read them.

Grains Development Board

The Grains Development Board is a subvented organization within the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. It has a close relationship with the Crops Research Institute of the Council For Scientific and Industrial Research. The Board collects breeder seeds from the Crops Research Institute and multiply them into foundation seeds which are sold to Registered Seed Growers who produce certified commercial seeds which are sold to farmers.

Information on where to obtain the seeds and how to grow them is passed on to the farmers through the district offices and the Agricultural Extension Agents.

Cocoa Diseases And Pests Control

The Ministry of Food And Agriculture

in collaboration with the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease Unit (CSSVDU) of Cocoa Board organises spraying of cocoa every year. This year (2002) the Districts have been requested to select between them capsid and Black Pod Control which would be started in earnest. Information on this programme and how it is going to be organised is passed on to the farmers through the District Offices and the Agricultural Extension Agencies.

Soil Research Institute

This institute offers training in land and water management, especially soil conservation. Interested farmers who want to undertake the training obtain information on it through their district offices and the Agricultural Extension Officers.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

The Ministry of Health has its regional office in Kumasi. There are district offices handling health administration at district level. Each District has a District office personnel who manages the issues concerning health.

Some of the districts have Sub Districts, and further down the grassroot level, there are Implementation Committees which serve as liaison between the Districts/Sub Districts and the rural communities. There is yet another group called Health Workers who visit the villages weekly or twice in a week to meet the villagers to inform as well as educate them on health issues. Still at the community level there are informal health workers who are volunteers,

technically called Community Based Volunteers (C.B.V.) who assist in health administration in the villages. Some of these volunteers are selected by the District Administration and trained to inform and educate the villagers on diseases like malaria, guinea worm, tuberculosis. Immunization and family planning also form part of the education programme. Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA's) are also considered as volunteers.

All the various groups of workers have various roles to play in providing information to the rural communities. The Regional Administration passes information on to the District Administration which also passes it on to the Sub-Districts and from that level to the Implementation Committees which also pass it on to the Health Workers who finally inform or educate the rural communities on the issues involved. The voluntary Health Workers (also called Community-based Surveillance Volunteers) find out the problems of the communities and pass such information on to the Health Workers, Sub-Districts and the Districts as the case may be. Similarly, they carry information from the District Health Administration to the village communities. If there is, for example, an epidemic or serious health problem in the village, these volunteers may be the first people to report to the District Administration.

The Sub-District Health Administration holds a monthly forum for the dissemination of information on

health issues to the rural communities. The District Health Management Team also organises open air programme or forum to educate the rural communities on sanitation, diseases, maternal health and related issues.

Reproductive Health Unit

The Reproductive Health Unit of the Ministry of Health collaborates with chiefs, queenmothers, Traditional Birth Attendants and Opinion Leaders in the towns and villages in the Ashanti Region to educate the people on matters pertaining to reproductive health. Durbars are organised during which lectures on family planning are given. At the hospitals, clinics and maternity homes such education programmes are also organised. One of such durbars was organised at Nyameani in the Atwima/Kwanwoma/Bosomtwe District on the 10th of May 2002.

National Health Learning Materials Centre

This Centre is located in Kumasi near the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly Offices. The Centre produces literature on health for use by health workers in hospitals, clinics, Health Centres and maternity homes. Some of the literature are used as sources of information by the health workers in their village education and training programmes.

Some of the Centre's Publications are:

1. Trainer's Manual on Nutrition and Growth Monitoring
2. A Manual on Control and Communicable Diseases

3. Prevention of Round Worms
4. Personal Hygiene
5. Let's Learn About Hypertension

A Buruli Ulcer Manual is currently being prepared. Some of the publications are kept at the District Offices, rural clinics, health centres and maternity homes for use by the health workers as reference materials.

Community Wheel Programme

The Centre has a programme called Community Wheel Programme which is undertaken within the Kumasi Metropolis and the surrounding villages. The Centre's staff go out with cassettes with information on various types of diseases like Cholera, Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Diarrhoea, Poliomyelitis, Measles and Tuberculosis. They go round in vans with public address systems. The messages on the cassettes are played to the hearing of the communities. Some of these cassettes are borrowed by the District Health Management Teams for training and open air programmes in the rural areas.

Visits To Organizations

The Centre's staff visit churches, schools, mosques and other organizations to educate them with slides and the cassettes mentioned above.

Many rural communities are covered in these visits.

Human Resource Development Programmes

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service some selected teachers from the urban and rural areas are trained

to provide information on health issues to their students and communities, especially in the rural areas.

INFORMATION SERVICES DEPT (ISD)

The information Services Department is one of the many institutions that provide information to the rural communities in Ghana. It is under the Ministry of Information in Ghana. It is the principal public relations outfit of Ghana. In the Ashanti Region the Department has eleven District Offices located in eleven District Capitals, headed by a District Information Officer. Five of these District Offices cater for other districts in the region.

These District Offices organise programmes – film shows, and other activities by which the rural people are informed of events going on in the country, particularly government programmes, policies and functions. Vans go round the villages informing the people of events of the government and of private organizations (upon their request).

Until the end of March 2002, there were Information Centres established in some towns and villages. These centres had publications, radio and television sets which were sources of information for the people. These centres were located at Kuntanase, Juaso, Agogo, Barikese, Nsuta, Banko, Akrofosu, Manso-Mim and Nyinahin. According to the Ashanti Regional Information Officer these centres were closed down in early April for

restructuring exercises to be carried out.

At durbars of the chiefs and people the Department seizes the opportunity to educate the general public on a number of issues going on in the country.

THE LANDS COMMISSION

The Lands Commission is a Public Institution which manages public (Government Lands) and vested lands.

The Public lands are those acquired by the government and holds them in trust for the people.

The vested lands are those on which the government has legal interest while the stool is the beneficiary of the revenue from the sale of the land or activities undertaken on the land. Such lands are often acquired or managed by the government probably because of land litigation.

Information/Education Programmes In the Ashanti Region

1. In the rural areas chiefs invite the Commission to their meetings and seminars to educate them on land and land-related issues. Information that need to be passed on to the rural communities are made known to the chiefs.
2. The Commission had a Committee which used to go round the Districts to organise durbars to educate the rural communities. All the district capitals in the Ashanti Region were covered

except New Edubiase.

Currently the Regional Lands Commission has been dissolved and the Committee's work has been suspended.

3. The F.M. radio stations are used to discuss land issues. By this, the general public is informed and educated on land issues. Processes involved in land acquisition are explained on the radio and also during the durbars and seminars.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CIVIC EDUCATION (NCCE)

The Commission was established under the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana to educate the general public on the tenets or provisions of the constitution.

Functions

1. It was set up to create the awareness of the principles of the constitution to the people.
2. It is to educate the citizenry to defend the constitution against any violations at all times.
3. It is to inculcate in the citizens the awareness of their civic rights and responsibilities.

Methods

The commission uses various methods in its work. Among these are the following.

- i. It organises durbars in the various rural communities to inform and educate them.
- ii. Identifiable groups like churches, mosques and other organised groups in the districts are used to disseminate

information among the people in the rural areas.

- iii. Programmes including civic classes are organised in schools to educate teachers and students on their civic duties in the towns and villages.
- iv. Civic Education clubs have been formed in schools and identifiable groups which are used to inform the people.
- v. The Commission organises quiz and debates in Senior Secondary Schools in urban and rural areas on topical issues.
- vi. As they go round the rural areas with public address systems mounted on vehicles, they make whistle stops at various communities to inform and educate them on national issues. Time is allowed for the people to ask questions on issues that are not clear to them.
- vii. Radio programmes are organised to get the information on various issues across to the people. This is found to be quite effective as many villagers own transistor radios.

Activities In the Ashanti Region

In the Ashanti Region it has offices in all the district capitals. These offices organise programmes in the rural areas to inform and educate the rural communities on their civic rights and responsibilities.

THE MASS MEDIA

The Radio

The mass media is a major tool of information provision among the rural communities. Many rural

dwellers own transistor radios and can therefore listen to radio programmes by the F.M. Radio stations which entertain, educate and inform the public.

In the Ashanti Region, programmes by the F.M. Radio stations like Garden City Radio, Capital Radio, Luv FM, Fox FM, Ash FM, Invisible FM, OTEC FM, Spirit FM, Mercury FM are popular stations among the rural communities. The news broadcast by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and the private radio stations provide a lot of information to the rural communities. Topical issues discussed on the radio also benefit the rural communities. They thus become informed of national and world events. The various institutions mentioned above and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) use the radio to educate and inform the rural communities of their activities.

The Television

In the rural areas where there is electricity many people own television sets. The various television programmes inform and educate the rural dwellers of government policies and events happening around the world. Various Institutions and organizations use the television as the medium to inform and educate the rural dwellers.

The Print Media

There are newspaper vendors and agents of the various newspapers who make the newspapers available to the literate rural dwellers. The literate

read and inform the non-literate ones of the contents of the newspapers. The rural dwellers are also informed and educated through the print media.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

With the development of the ICT the world has now become a global village with information from one corner of the world reaching other parts of the world. In Ghana the ICT is not very well developed as information and communication tools especially in the rural areas. The urban centres like Kumasi and Accra have however made significant headways. According to a television discussion programme (Talking Point) on ICT, there are now 20 Internet Service Providers (ISP's) in the country. These are however located basically in the urban towns and cities.

It is expected that the Ghana Government will come out with a policy on the issue that would in the near future make it possible for rural schools and colleges to take advantage of internet facilities. Some schools in the rural areas do have computers and if internet facilities are extended to these areas the schools, colleges, government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) will benefit a lot and the rural dwellers will thus become informed of national and world events through the internet. The rural communities in the Ashanti Region are not that endowed with internet facilities. If the rural

electricity programme makes it possible for most of the rural dwellers to enjoy electricity there can be the hope that the ICT facilities can reach them.

The Ghana Telecom's programme of a nationwide telephone coverage has not been well developed in the rural areas. If the rural communities have telephone facilities, information provision in the rural areas of the Ashanti Region will be enhanced.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are made which hopefully can accelerate the rate and extent of information provision to the rural communities in the Ashanti Region.

- a). The rural libraries should be well stocked with current materials relevant to the information needs of the rural communities. For example books on maize production will be helpful to maize-growing communities like those in the Ejura/Sekyedumasi District.
- b). District assemblies must realise the major roles played by libraries in the provision of information in the rural areas. Funds must be allocated out of the District Assemblies Common Fund to finance the libraries.
- c). In the book selection policies of the library staff, the interests of school children, especially, must be taken into consideration. The library staff should study the syllabi of the basic and secondary schools and purchase books relevant to their courses. This

- will help the pupils as they are unable to buy the books because of the high prices. Teachers will also find the books useful as reference materials which will help them in their teaching.
- d). Libraries should cater for artisans like drivers, masons, dressmakers and hairdressers as some of them are interested in getting materials on their vocations. It was interesting to learn that drivers and hairdressers have been going to the District Assembly library at Ejisu to look for reading materials on their trades.
 - e). To improve upon the patronage of the libraries there should be efforts made by the library staff and the District Assemblies to make the rural communities aware of the existence of the library in the community. Signposts should be erected directing users to the locations of the libraries. Current materials in the libraries could be advertised on notice boards erected for that purpose to make people aware of them. This way, some people's interests will be developed in patronising the libraries. The F.M radio stations in the Ashanti Region should be used to advertise the libraries and their facilities just as it is done in advertising the existence of rural banks in the rural communities in the Region.
 - f). From my observation as I visited seven of the rural libraries in the Ashanti Region, the conditions of service of the library staff are not attractive. Their salaries are quite low. This does not motivate them to work hard which affects the use of the library in information provision to the rural communities. Their employers must provide better conditions of service to motivate them to work harder.
 - g). More libraries must be built in other towns and villages in addition to those located at the district capitals so that the people living far away from the district capitals can also have access to the libraries, especially the school children.
 - h). There should be collaborative work between the library and all other organizations and ministries in the rural areas of the Ashanti Region such that those organizations will deposit copies of their publications in the libraries and make them accessible to the rural communities. The library staff should be proactive in this. They should contact the various ministries and departments to collect copies of their publications to be kept in the libraries for public accessibility.
 - i). The various Individual departments and organizations have been organising fora at which the rural communities are informed or educated on the activities of these organizations. It is suggested that the organizations must co-operate with each other and once in

three months or six months organise a joint programme to inform/educate the rural communities of their various programmes. This way, costs will be minimised as compared with the situation where individual organizations organise their own activities. The District Assemblies must be involved in such programmes and assist in financing the organization of such programmes.

- j). There is a programme organised by the Garden City Radio called 'Yema Asanteman Akye' (We salute the Ashanti Nation). In this programme a durbar is held in one of the towns of the districts in the Ashanti Region. At the durbar, the District Chief Executive, the District Co-ordinating Director, the chiefs and the heads of the various public departments address the gathering, informing them of what they have been able to do in the past and what they intend to do in future. This is a very commendable programme by which the rural communities are informed of what is going on around them and what they are supposed to do to raise their standard of living. The programme is broadcast on the radio. It is suggested that the frequency of the programme should be increased so that each district will be covered in each year. The District Assemblies should provide funds for the programme

because the programme provides an opportunity for them to inform the rural communities of their planned development programmes. The programme helps greatly in breaking the information gap between the Assemblies and the rural communities.

It is recommended that all the private radio stations should also organise such durbars - which will help in informing the rural communities of events in their own districts and in other districts. One district will be informed of the good activities going on in other districts and this may motivate the district to emulate to them.

Conclusion

It is hoped that these suggestions, if taken into consideration will help in making the rural communities in Ashanti Region well informed and enlightened and thus reduce the level of ignorance of the rural communities which over the years have negatively affected the standard of living of the people in the rural areas. If the people are well informed and enlightened, there will be improvement in the living standards of the rural communities.

REFERENCES

- Alemna, Anaba A. (2000) *Libraries, Information And Society* Ghana Universities Press. p6.
Ashanti Regional Education Office (2002) *Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) Results Analysis (1998/99 - 2000/01) Ashanti Region. Tables And Charts*
Fayose, Paulina Osazee (2001) "The Goals of Rural Library and Information Services in

West Africa" *SCAULWA NEWSLETTER* 2(1), January - June, p18

Population And Housing Census: Provisional Results. Ghana Statistical Service. August, 2000. p19

Information Services Department. *Presenting The Information Services Department: Keeping the People Informed* n.d.

John, Patricia LaCaille (1995) "Rural Libraries and Information Services" *Library Trends* 44(1) Internet: http://www.lis.unic.edu/puboff/catalog/trend/44_i.html 19th June, 2002

Mchombu, Kingo "Impact of Information on Rural Development: Background, Methodology And Progress" The Internet: <http://www.idrc.ca/books/focus/783/mchombu.html> 26th June, 2002

Sam, Joel (1996) "Information Use By Agricultural Policy Makers and Managers in Ghana" *Information Development* 12(2), 106

World Bank *World Bank Policy and Research Bulletin* 9(3) 1 n.d