A STUDY OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF

THE AGONA EAST DISTRICT ASSEMBLY

MIRRIAM OSAE-ADDO

(10113338)

THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF M.A COMMUNICATION STUDIES DEGREE

JULY, 2015
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented here was done by me as a student of the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana. I declare that where reference was made to other peoples’ work and other related materials, due acknowledgements have been given.

………………………
Date……………………………

MIRRIAM OSAE-ADDO
(STUDENT)

This work has been submitted to be examined with my approval as a supervisor.

……………………………
Date……………………………

MS. SARAH AKROFI-QUARCOO
(SUPERVISOR)
ABSTRACT

Communication is vital for the success of all human institutions and the Agona East District Assembly is no exception. This study set out to determine the communication strategies used by the Agona East District Assembly in its daily interactions with its numerous clients and publics. Particular attention was given to communication channels and methods the Assembly used in interacting with community members.

The study was guided by two communication theories - two-step flow communication and participatory communication. These theories were considered appropriate given the mandate of the Agona East District Assembly as a Local Government Authority to promote and explain government policies and programmes at the grassroot through public or popular participation.

The mixed methods approach was used to gather data for this study. Interviews were conducted with key District Assembly officials. As well, documents which indicated communication between the Assembly and its publics were studied. A survey of 400 people including opinion leaders, traditional leaders and other persons drawn from the five area councils was also conducted.

Among other things, the study found that the Assembly employed a number of communication channels depending on the situation, audience and other factors which sometimes differed from community members’ preferred communication channels. This finding led the researcher to conclude that the disparity in the Assembly’s communication practices and community members’ preferred channels was a possible cause of misunderstanding between the Assembly and community members.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To all the wonderful people whose efforts and contributions helped me complete this work, I owe much appreciation. I would first like to acknowledge my supervisor, Ms. Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo for her patience and guidance.

I also owe much appreciation to the management and staff of the Agona East District Assembly for their assistance throughout the course of this research.

Finally to all who made diverse contributions towards the success of this work, may God richly bless you.
DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to my family whose encouragement and support has brought me this far on the academic ladder. Thank you for investing in my education.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION i

ABSTRACT ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

DEDICATION iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS v

CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background 1

1.2 Citizens’ Participation in Local Governance 5

1.3 Overview of the Agona East District Assembly 8

1.4 Statement of Research Problem 9

1.5 Objectives 11

1.6 Research Questions 11

1.7 Justification of Study Area 12

1.8 Significance of Study 12

1.9 Definition of Concepts 12

Summary 14
CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction 15

2.2 Theoretical Framework 15

2.2.1 Two-Step Communication Theory 15

2.2.2 Participatory Communication Theory 17

2.3 Review of Related Studies 22

Summary 34

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction 35

3.2 Research Design 35

3.3 Sampling Procedure 35

3.4 Data Collection 38

3.5 Data Analysis 39

Summary 39
CHAPTER FOUR- FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction 40

4.2 Sources of Information 41

4.2.1 Sources of General Information 41

4.2.2 Sources of Information Emanating from the Assembly 43

4.2.3 Respondents’ Awareness of Assembly Information and Sources of Such Information 43

4.2.4 Preferred Communication Channels 46

4.3 Extent of Use of Participatory Communication 47

4.3.1 Availability and Access to Assembly Information 48

4.3.2 Assembly’s Response to Citizens’ Concerns and Opinions 49

4.4 Respondents’ View on Constraints/Effectiveness of Assembly’s Communication 56

4.4.1 Respondents’ Satisfaction with Assembly’s Current Communication Channels 56

4.4.2 Challenges in Assembly’s Communication 58

Summary 63
CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction 65

5.2 Communication Channels Used by Assembly 65

5.3 Limitations 72

5.4 Conclusion 73

5.5 Recommendations 74

Bibliography 76
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Population of Agona East District by Area Councils 36
Table 2  Assessment of Assembly’s Response to Citizens’ Concerns 49
Table 3  Assessment of Assembly’s Effort to Involve Community Members 50
Table 4  Level of Satisfaction with Current Communication Channels 57
Table 5  Level of Agreement to Communication Challenges of Assembly by Sex 58
Table 6  Factors that Affect Effective Communication 59
**LIST OF FIGURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Segmentation of In-depth Interview Participants</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Sources of General Information</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Sources of Assembly Information</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Sources of Information on Projects</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Preferred Communication Channels</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Availability and Access to Assembly Information</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Channel of Information Flow</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Assessments of Assembly Communication Channels by Respondents</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I 78

APPENDIX II 84

APPENDIX III 85
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Study

Governments all over the world are responsible for initiating and pursuing policies and programmes expected to solve basic problems of their citizens as well as improve their livelihoods, thus enhancing development. It is expected of governments to pursue projects, policies and programmes which will have direct social impact on the people. To ensure that public policies and programmes meet the true needs of the people, it is important that the people are involved in each step of the decision making process; from problem identification, through implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Governments ought to adequately inform and involve the public on specific policies and programmes in order to achieve the aims and objectives of public policies and programmes. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) note that only a knowledgeable and active people could participate, as democracy demands, in government and provide the needed support to government.

It is to enable governments to respond to the demands of society and formulate policies which will match societal needs as well as encourage the citizenry to participate in governance, that the District Assembly concept was introduced in Ghana in 1988 (Ahwoi, 2010). The District Assembly concept or local government system is intended to promote grassroot development through community participation in governance at the lowest level. Through local governance, the local people are empowered to take active part in governance by making their views and opinions heard especially through their assembly members and contributing to decision making.
Participation of the intended beneficiaries of development projects, policies and programmes involves the active inclusion of local people thereby giving them an opportunity to identify their local needs and to mobilise resources to solve their own problems (Soola, 1995).

Soola (1995) is of the opinion that beneficiary communities are empowered to take control of their own environment through participation, thus enabling them to identify, define, analyse and offer solutions to their own challenges. In his view, development that is based on community members’ strengths, traditions, beliefs, values and peculiar needs is more likely to be sustained than one which is merely designed by “experts” and imposed on the people without their key inputs. Such projects and programmes lack the support of the end users who tend to view the programmes as being for “them” (the policy maker and development partners) rather than being for “us” (the beneficiaries). Development partners, it is suggested, should only see their role as facilitators (McPhail, 2009; Melkote and Steeves, 2001).

As expressed by development experts including Mefalopolus and Tufte (2009), Okigbo, Okigbo and Nwokeafor (2002) and Soola (1995), many development programmes and projects have failed because the opinions and priorities of the end users of an identified project were not sought. They also are of the view that sometimes the opinions of the people (where they were sought) were completely ignored in the entire process of identifying and implementing one development project or the other (Mefalopolus, 2003; Okigbo, Okigbo and Nwokeafor 2002; Soola, 1995; Tufte and Mefalopolus, 2009).

In order to achieve an effective citizen participation in the design and implementation of public policies, programmes and projects which reflect the values, hopes, aspirations, beliefs and the real needs of society, there is the need for the existence of communication between policy
makers or development partners (the Agona East District Assembly) and the beneficiaries (community members) of those policies. In the view of Jolanta (1999), citizens’ participation in governance should go beyond periodical elections to select Parliamentarians, Presidents, Unit Committee Members and Assembly Members. Citizens must also have the opportunity to communicate their needs to government either as individuals or as civic groups. They have a right to have their voices heard in the development agenda. In the words of Msibi and Penzorn (2010, p.225), “communication is an important mechanism that could bring about effective social change to ensure sustainable development.”

It is therefore important for every organisation, including the Agona East District Assembly (AEDA) as a government agency, to engage in communication which would clearly define and explain to each party their specific roles and responsibility in executing any development agenda. Knowledge and participation would be effective if there is a communication system which consciously and clearly defines and explains to each party - the District Assembly and the community members - what is expected of them.

Communication is a major element of social interaction. It is a means through which people exchange ideas, make decisions and conduct business as they go through life daily. As stated by Sakyi (2010, p.158), “communication is the lubricant that keeps bureaucratic organisations functioning; it is the means through which roles are identified and assigned” and no organisation can survive if it disregards the important role communication plays.

Not only will communication lead to an increased knowledge and awareness of the citizenry about government policies; government also gets to be informed of the needs, hopes and aspirations of the people. Without an informed and active citizenry, government officials are
more likely to sink large amounts of public funds into development projects which may not necessarily address the more pressing needs of society (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2000). Communication also influences perceptions and beliefs, advocate specific issues, increase demand for specific services, counter rumours and promote community participation (Handbook for Health Communication, n.d). Communication indeed is perceived as the oil that keeps the machinery of human institutions running.

The nature of communication that exists between an organisation and its stakeholders; in this case, the Agona East District Assembly and community members, goes a long way to affect the success or failure of its policies and programmes. Communication could be monologic where one-way communication approaches such as information dissemination, media campaigns, and other diffusion approaches are employed. The nature of communication could also be dialogic in which case two-way communication approaches where the communication process and its outputs are open-ended are employed. The scope of two-way communication approaches explores issues and generates new knowledge and solutions usually in a face to face interactional manner. Dialogic communication has been recommended by many development and communication experts rather than one which concentrates on transmitting and disseminating information (Tufte and Mefalopulos, 2009; Soola, 1995).

The nature and primary objective of decentralisation is to promote national development through grass-root participatory decision making. This requires District Assembly officials to employ communication strategies which are in line with the two-way communication or dialogic communication approach where there is a lot of interaction between the District Assembly and the people in order to build and maintain healthy and lasting relationships. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) are of the opinion that by establishing two way communication systems,
organisations including local government authorities are able to build and maintain healthy relationships with their citizenry.

It is against this background that this study set out to determine the communication strategies or practices employed by the Agona East District Assembly to ensure that its constituents were kept in the know of public policies. The study also sought to determine constituents’ level of involvement in taking decisions that affected their lives directly and what avenues were available for feedback. The study again set out to find how far the tenets of participatory communication are employed by the Assembly. The views of the community members on the present communication practices of the District Assembly were also examined.

1.2 Citizens’ Participation in Local Governance in Ghana

The local government system such as that which is practiced in Ghana is considered as a strategy to enhance development at the grassroot. Local governance through decentralisation is seen by many governments and development partners as a key policy strategy in achieving national and local development. The concept, it is believed, will bring governments closer to the populace and thereby enhance the rate at which government responds to the demands of the populace (Asante and Aryee, 2008). Asante and Aryee (2008) opine that local government improves the effectiveness and quality of public services and empower lower units to feel more involved and in control. Through effective local governance, citizens are able to hold government officials accountable.

The Government of Ghana through various laws and polices has provided the platform for citizens to participate in the governance process. Following are some of these policies and laws formulated in this regard:
• **The 1992 Constitution of Ghana**: Chapter twenty (20) of the Constitution which focuses on decentralisation makes room for citizen participation and involvement in making decisions that affect them directly from the problem identification stage through implementation and monitoring and evaluation stages. Article 240 (2) (e) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana states that “to ensure accountability of local government authorities, people in particular shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance.” Prior to article 240, article 35 (6)(e) provides that in an effort to make democracy a reality, the people shall be afforded all possible opportunities for them to participate in decision making at every level in national life. Participation of the people in local governance may be in the form of consultation, public education, community durbars and public hearings which will afford them the opportunity to make inputs into decision making that affect them directly.

• **The Local Government Act, 1993** (Act 462) enjoins District Assemblies, through Assembly Members to consult with community members on issues to be discussed in the District Assembly, collate their views, opinions and proposals and present them to the Assembly. Assembly members are also enjoined by the Act to report to the electorate decisions taken by the Assembly and its Executive Committee (Local Government Act 462, Section 16). The essence of this provision is to ensure that communication links are open and the people are given a chance to participate in taking decisions which directly affect their lives. To give the people further room for participation, the Act establishes a Public Relations and Complaints Committee (PRCC) in each of the 216 districts in the country. The PRCC which is chaired by the Presiding Member receives complaints made
against the conduct of members and staff of the Assembly from the public and make recommendations to the Assembly.

- As the Planning Authority, the District Assembly, in preparing the District Development Plans, is mandated to hold public hearings and consider the opinions expressed at the hearings before they (District Development Plans) are adopted. (Local Government Act 1993, Act 462).

The National Development Planning Systems Act, Act 480, also encourages communities to prepare sub-district development plans for themselves with reference to the general approved development plan for the district.¹

- The current structure of the District Assembly system (the District Assembly, Area/Town Councils and Unit Committees) is to ensure that the people are actively involved in the governance and democratic process at the very local level. With this structure, unit committee members are expected to meet and interact with the people and forward their opinions and grievances to the Assembly Member. The Assembly Member then forwards these opinions and grievances to the area council for onward submission to the General Assembly. The successful functioning of these structures will ensure that participation of the people becomes meaningful.

It is against this background that this study set out to determine the strategies employed by the Agona East District Assembly to ensure that its constituents were kept in the know of public policies and the level of involvement of the people in taking decisions that affected their lives directly. The study looked at the avenues which were available for feedback and the views of

¹This is sourced from a joint 2010 publication by the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) a German political non-governmental organisation.
community members on the Assembly’s communication practices. The study also set out to determine how far the tenets of participatory communication were employed by the assembly.

1.3 An Overview of the Agona East District Assembly

The Agona East District Assembly (AEDA), created in 2008 by Legislative Instrument (LI) 1920 is situated in the eastern corner of Central Region. It is one of the 20 administrative districts of the region. Covering a total land area of 665km², the district is divided into five (5) sub-districts or Town/Area Councils.² The Agona East District Assembly is composed of 30 members- 21 elected members and nine government appointees. The district is estimated to have a population of 85,920. Most of the population - 44,885 (52.2%) are female and the remaining 41,035 (47.8%) are male (2010 Population and Housing Census, District Analytical Report, 2014).

As a rural district, agriculture is the main source of economic livelihood; employing about 50.6% of the population. This is followed by the trade/business which employs about 15% of the district’s labour force (2010 Population and Housing Census, District Analytical Report, 2014). Only a few of the population are engaged in the formal sector with majority of these people engaged by government agencies and the few private institutions scattered around the district.

The literacy level of the district’s population is quiet low especially in the case of women. This is despite of the fact that the district has a good number of educational facilities at the basic and second cycle levels. (AEDA, 2010-2013 Medium Term Development Plan).

²The five (5) Area Councils of the Agona East District Assembly: Nsaba Area Council, Duakwa Area Council, Mankrong Area Council, Asafo Area Council and Kwanyako Area Council
The Agona East District Assembly has as its mission, “to ensure sustainable improvement in the living standards and conditions of the people through efficient mobilization and usage of resources to support total development of agriculture, health, education and social life”.

To ensure the realisation of its mission, the Assembly performs several functions as mandated by the Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462) and Chapter Twenty of the 1992 Constitution. The Assembly exercises political and administrative authority in the district, provides guidelines, gives direction and supervises all other administrative authorities in the district.

As well, the Assembly exercises deliberative, legislative and executive functions. The Assembly is responsible for the overall development of the district and ensures the preparation and submission of district development plans to the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) for approval. The Assembly is responsible for the preparation and submission of the district composite budget in relation to the approved district development plans to the Finance Ministry for approval. The Assembly is also expected to strategise for resource mobilisation to ensure the total development of the district.

As part of its mandate, the District Assembly is also expected to explain government policies and programmes to the populace, inform them of new programmes both at the central and local government levels and serve as an essential link between the government and the people.

1.4 Statement of Research Problem

According to Sakyi (2010), there is a relationship between communication and project implementation. Effective communication based on the principle of dialogue rather than information dissemination between the local government authorities and community members is likely to enhance the success of development projects (Mefalopolus, 2003; 2008). It is however
not uncommon for one to hear community members accuse the Agona East District Assembly and its officials of acting in an arbitrary manner when it comes to making decisions on major developmental issues. Community members also complain that the Assembly fails to explain certain key issues such as paying of property rates and taxes, obtaining permits before putting up structures of any kind, or why a food vendor should obtain a health certificate. Community members argue that the Assembly does not engage them in decision making as regard developmental projects in their communities and that their views are usually ignored resulting in projects which may not be of immediate necessity to them. According to Mefalopolus (2008), most development projects had failed because implementing agencies had not sought the views of the beneficiary communities in the identification and implementation of those projects and programmes.

District Assembly officials on the other hand respond that the Assembly provides information on any major decision taken by the assembly and that there are avenues for the people to make input into any decision. It seems therefore that though District Assembly officials claim that they communicate with the public, they may not be employing communication strategies which ensure that stakeholders (DA and publics) understand each other.

Given the important role of communication in the success of organisations including the District Assembly, this study set out to determine the communication practices, methods and channels employed by the Agona East District Assembly in fulfilling both its needs and that of the local people. Again, given the advantages of participatory communication as a two-way communication approach in addressing the developmental needs of rural communities and given the mandate of the Assembly to promote rural development, one would assume that the Agona
East District Assembly would employ communication strategies which favour the participatory communication approach.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the communication practices, methods and channels employed by the Agona East District Assembly to engage with its constituents.
2. Establish the views of community members on the District Assembly’s communication practices.
3. Determine the extent of the use of participatory communication by the Agona East District Assembly.
4. Determine the communication challenges of the district Assembly and the factors that account for such.

1.6 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions in an effort to reach the above stated objectives:

1. What communication methods and channels were used by the Assembly to engage its constituents?
2. What were the views of community members on the District Assembly’s communication practices?
3. To what extent was participatory communication used by the Agona East District Assembly?
4. What were the communication challenges of the Agona East District Assembly and the factors that account for such?

1.7 Justification of Study Area

The Agona East District was chosen for this study given the fact that it is a new district and also due to its rural setting. As such, the Assembly as the Planning Authority will have to embark on a number of projects to ensure total development of the district. Officials of the Assembly also have a greater task of explaining government policies to the people; whilst ensuring that their (the people’s) opinions are adequately represented in the development agenda.

1.8 Significance of Study

It is expected that the results of this study would add to existing literature on development communication. The results of the study could also serve as a guideline to District Assemblies, the Local Government Service Secretariat and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development as well as other organisations interested in community or grassroots development to plan, design and implement programmes, projects and other social interventions.

1.9 Definition of Concepts

In research, conceptualisation is important to give specific meaning to concepts and terms that are used in the context of the particular research for consistency in meaning.

In this work, the following terms have been conceptualised:

**Constituents and community members**: these terms are used interchangeably to refer to the local people who are the beneficiaries of all development efforts.
Communication strategies: defined as plans of communicating information related to a specific issue, event situation and audience to stimulate positive and measurable behaviour and social change (Environmental Protection Agency). In this study, the term is used to describe the communication practices, the methods of communication and communication channels used by the District Assembly and the channels available for feedback. It also covers the views and perceptions of the community members on the Assembly’s communication practices.

Local government authority and District Assembly: these terms are used interchangeably to refer to the highest decision making body at the local level as established by the laws of Ghana.

Development projects and programmes: refer to all activities undertaken by the district assembly and its decentralised departments intended to improve the total living conditions of the populace. Programmes refer to non-physical interventions which are geared towards improving the overall outlook of the people. Such programmes include the Ghana School Feeding Programme, National Youth Employment Programme and the National Programme for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cocoa. Projects are the physical interventions like a new school building, roads and health centres.

Citizen participation: the practice of involving the people at the centre of development activities to seek their views and input into decision making.

Assembly Officials: senior management staff as well as Assembly Members of the Agona East District Assembly.
Summary

This chapter provided a general background to the study. Issues discussed in this chapter include the objectives and the research questions raised in the study. The main thrust of the study was to investigate the communication practices as well as methods and channels used by the Agona East District Assembly. The study also explored the views and perceptions of community members on the Assembly’s present communication practices and methods.

This was important given that community members often accused Assembly Officials of not engaging them in the decision making process as well as not giving them information on relevant issues of the Assembly. Assembly Officials on the other hand also responded that this was not the case. The chapter provided an overview of the study area, the Agona East District Assembly as well as justifications for this study. The chapter finally looked at definitions of concepts and key terms used in this study.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter firstly looks at the theories that underpinned the study. Given the advantages of participatory communication in addressing the development needs of rural communities, it is the basic assumption that communication strategies of the Agona East District Assembly will favour this approach. Hence participatory communication is one of the main theories that have guided this study. Another theory that has guided this study is two step flow communication theory.

The chapter also takes a look at related works on the subject and tries to draw a link between them and the current study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This section takes a look at the various theories that have guided the researcher in this study. The two-way communication theory and participatory communication theory, which both fall under development communication, have served as a guide to this study.

2.2.1 Two-Step Flow Communication Theory

An interpersonal communication model, the theory seeks to impress the relevance of personal relations in the effect of the mass media on individuals and groups (Severin and Tankard, 2001). Severin and Tankard (2001), note that the two-step flow communication theory deals with how individuals receive information and transmit to others in any social system.
The theory further asserts that interpersonal relations have a greater impact on shaping public opinion than mass media channels. In the 1940 Peoples’ Choice study and other studies carried out in later years, researchers identified that people in a community were more likely to form their opinions on issues based on their interaction with others whom they considered as leaders or opinion leaders. In the two-two step flow process, it is found that people were most likely to define their opinion leaders based on the similarities between themselves and the opinion leaders. “Opinion leaders are quite influential in getting people to change their attitudes and behaviours and are quite similar those they influence” (Livingstone, 2006).

Considering all of the factors identified, development agents, being the Agona East District Assembly in this study, were more likely to succeed in development project formulation and implementation if they communicated all the advantages of an initiated programme or new project to the opinion leaders who were able to influence the decisions of other members of the community.

The theory has been criticised as being over simplistic in nature. According to critics, the flow of mass media information spans more than a two-step process. This criticism has led other researchers to propound the multi-step or diffusion of innovation theory. The theory is also criticised for its assumption that information flow is one-way in nature. Critics opine that there is rather an opinion sharing among leaders and followers rather than information giving from leaders to followers in the communication process. According to Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) cited in Severin and Tankard (2001), opinion leaders could be both passive and active which is in contrast with the assertion of the two-step flow theory that opinion leaders actively seek information while their followers are passive individuals who only depend on opinion leaders for information.
Though the theory has been favoured to explain the flow of mass media information and its effectiveness, one can also see clearly the play of interpersonal interactions to convey messages about a particular idea. This is especially in situations where the potential beneficiaries are grouped into small groups and development partners depend on community and opinion leaders to disseminate information in a face to face manner. Again, today’s media is more interactive and audience friendly, thus making it possible for audience to ask all relevant questions and receive immediate answers. These traces of interpersonal and interactional communication lean towards the second theory that guided this study.

2.2.2 Participatory Communication

Participatory communication (PC) is another theory that guided this study. The theory, made popular by the Brazilian scholar, Paulo Freire emerged in the 1970s and attained prominence in the 1980s (McPhail, 2009). The participatory communication theory emerged as a result of the deficiencies found in the diffusion theory and other early theories of development including dependency, cultural imperialism and modernisation.

Participatory communication on the other hand lays emphasis on interpersonal communication strategies which is dialogic in nature. Again, while modernisation theories designed development projects with the exclusion of the beneficiary communities; participatory communication pays attention to the active involvement of the people at every stage of development. Participatory communication approach to development provides an avenue for gaining key insights into communication for grassroot development as the theory attempts to build the trust of beneficiaries by ensuring that the local people are involved in setting their own development agenda (McPhail, 2009).
More than transmitting information in a vertical manner, participatory communication is about “using communication to generate new knowledge and consensus in order to facilitate change” (Mefalopulos, 2008).

Proponents of Participatory Communication recognise that rural people have a store of knowledge which cannot be discounted in the development process. The theory acknowledges that development is about sharing ideas, knowledge and information between the rural folk and development partners on an equal level. “Participatory communication stresses the basic right of all people to be heard, to speak for themselves and not to be represented by another party” (McPhail, 2009; p.27).

McPhail (2009) captures this assertion as follows:

The native population possesses relevant information regarding their own development and are a unique resource without which a development project might fail; the native population has the fundamental human right to contribute to the formation of their own advancement; and inclusion of the native population will draw more support which will in turn facilitate the achievement of common goals (McPhail, 2009; p. 28).

McPhail (2009) goes on to identify five key tenets of participatory communication theory: dialogue, conscientisation, praxis, transformation, and critical consciousness. In order to share information on development projects, build trust and commitment in development, participation of all key stakeholders is very necessary. This can be achieved through dialogue which is the constant interaction between those within development organizations (government agencies, non-governmental agencies and inter-governmental agencies) and those they serve. This interaction is done in a manner such that each party in the communication process is both receiver and source. Dialogue affords both development partners and community members to learn and share information. Freire (n.d) suggests that people are able to define their own
problems and social needs, and begin to find ways of solving their problems as they have identified.

Through dialogue, both development agents and community members are able to come to a consciousness of their differences and recognise that they may not agree on some issues though they may be looking for the same effects in the interaction. This may be the source of friction between the people and the development partners. This is what has been referred to as ‘Conscientisation’ by McPhail (2009). He puts it this way, “Conscientisation is the acknowledgement, awareness and handling of the inherent power differential and possible disenfranchisement between the organization and the native population” (p.29).

Mefalopolus (2008) on his own part identifies four levels of participatory communication:

- **Passive participation** where participation of the people is limited to information sharing; usually from development experts and partners (the district assembly officials with reference to the present study) to project beneficiaries and communities. At this level, participation is limited to awareness creation by disseminating information in a top-down approach.

- **Participation by consultancy** where beneficiaries are consulted to identify their needs but they are not actually involved in the final decision making. For instance the assembly may engage community members who will identify a number of areas of need but the assembly on its own determines which of the identified areas are of priority and other important factors to be considered in project design and implementation.
- **Functional participation**: beneficiaries and stakeholders are allowed to contribute to the decision making. At this level, stakeholders are not usually involved in the initial stages. The involvement at this stage is not done on an equal basis.

- **Empowered participation** can be said to be the true form of participation. At this level, significant stakeholders are involved throughout the whole cycle of the development initiative. Here, they have an equal influence on the decision making process.

Though participatory communication has numerous advantages to facilitate and improve development, the theory has not been without criticisms. One major challenge of the approach is the difficulty to provide a clear definition of the term participatory. Mefalopulos (2008) suggests that the concept of participation is not an “absolute one” (p.40). Concerns have also been raised about what level of participation can be said to be truly participatory. Mefalopolus (2008) identified four phases of participation in an attempt to address this concern: information, consultation, functional and empowerment participation.

Participatory communication can be an expensive approach in terms of financing, time and recruitment of competent development communication persons. Citing from Lister (2002), Ravensbergen and Vander Platt (2009) noted that “the need for appropriate resources… may be another reason for the limited implementation of … participatory research”. Most of the time, programme or project implementation relies on funds which are not forthcoming and so development agents are forced to limit the extent of participation.

Again, critics of this approach as well as some proponents have identified as a weakness the inability of project or development agents to involve beneficiary communities in all aspects of project identification and implementation. This can be linked to difficulty in identifying and
involving all relevant stakeholders as was revealed in a 2009 study by Msibi and Mwangi. In this study, it was found that even though efforts were made in capturing all key stakeholders in the design and implementation of the programme, there were still issues of excluding significant stakeholders whose contributions could have ensured the programme’s sustainability.

In a 2003 study of Food and Agriculture Organisation project, Mefalopolus noted that the people were not engaged in the project design phase. Most projects are labelled as participatory but in reality, participation is limited to a one time consultative meeting with recipient communities. Such meetings are also used to disseminate information on a pre-determined intervention. McPhail (2001) notes that such a practice defeats the values underpinning the theory which advocates community participation in identifying their needs and professing probable solutions.

Since one of the goals of the participatory approach is to empower beneficiary communities, development agents are often reluctant to implement programmes which are participatory in nature for the fear of losing their entrenched positions. The fact that the ultimate goal of such a participatory approach would be to put the power of decision-making in the hands of local stakeholders could be perceived as a threatening factor by those who are currently in the position of deciding if and how to promote the adoption of such an approach.

Local people may also resent the idea of having strangers in their community. Community leaders especially may feel threatened by the new status of other community members. The social, political, cultural and other existing factors in the beneficiary communities may pose as a hindrance to an effective participatory approach (Mefalopolus, 2003).

Though highly acclaimed by theorists and academics, the practice of participatory communication is not an easy task to achieve as decision makers are more interested in visible
results which is difficult to achieve with this approach to development in the immediate term (Mefalopolus, 2003).

2.3 Review of Related Studies

Development projects can reflect the needs of beneficiaries only if they are actively involved in the identification and execution of such projects. Mefalopolus (2003; 2008), Killingsworth (2009), Melkote and Steeves (2001) and other scholars of development and communication have shown in their works that projects and policies which have involved key actors have succeeded better than those which were designed and “imposed” on beneficiary communities by the central government or so called development partners.

Sakyi (2010) conducted a study to establish how communication worked in decentralised health systems. The objectives of the study among others were to find out the channels through which health sector reform related information was delivered and received by health personnel. The study also set out to establish how health workforces and stakeholders perceived the adequateness of information they received from health directors, supervisors and senior managers at the district levels. The study was carried out in three districts, with data collected over a period of three months - October- December, 2009.

The study was based at the district level due to the fact that district administrations of health services are responsible for facilitating stakeholder participation in health planning and implementation especially in rural Ghana. Using semi-structured interviews as the data collection instrument, the researcher interviewed 72 persons including officials who were purposively selected from the regional and district directorates of health and district assembly officials. Other interviewees were staff of health related Non-governmental organisations and private health
providers who were considered key stakeholders in health. Content analysis was used to analyse data collected from the interviews.

Sakyi (2010) noted in his study that there existed a close relationship between communication and policy implementation as both involved interaction and occurred within a social setting. He further noted that in a situation where key actors in the policy community did not see eye to eye on the need for certain policies, there was the tendency for the project or programme not to reach its set objectives and sustainability might pose a challenge. This assertion obviously called for the involvement of all stakeholders in the project through consultation and dialogue to ensure that beneficiaries have a sense of ownership of these policies and projects. This way, beneficiaries are eager to work hard for the success of the project and policies.

Findings from the study indicated that junior staff were not involved in the decision making process. They (Junior Staff) only got to find out management decisions when these decisions were posted on the notice board or communicated to them through letters and circulars or verbally by senior health officers to the junior staff. The findings also revealed that information was mostly received from officials at the district and regional directorates. The channels used to disseminate information; it was found included circulars, letters, staff meetings and staff consultations among senior officers. Responding to questions on timeliness of response, feedback and follow-ups to ascertain the effectiveness of communication channels used, Sakyi noted that though there was a general opinion among respondents that official letters and circulars were the formal channels for receiving information, they were not considered appropriate as these letters and circulars were not received on time. In giving feedback, while senior officials blamed junior officers for not responding early enough to information sent to them, junior officers on the other hand accused senior officers of the same offence.
Other findings of the study resulting from interviews with other key stakeholders (district assembly officials, health professional associations, NGOs and private health providers) indicated that these stakeholders were seldom involved in health decision making at the district level. According to the researcher, stakeholders complained that apart from annual health forums, they rarely received any information on health reform issues.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that lack of communication is a major factor that posed a challenge to implementing health decentralisation at the district level. He also concluded that ineffective use of communication channels resulted in communication gaps between health managers, staff and stakeholders at the district level.

Paolo Mefalopolus (2003) carried out a study with an objective to investigate how participatory communication was conceived and used in a specific project. He argued that participatory communication, due to its horizontal and people-based connotations, has the potential to support development which will address the specific needs and priorities relevant to people and at the same time assist in their empowerment.

As a case study, the researcher collected data through interviews and also through a review of project documents of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). He also did a review of personal notes and memos recorded as he was involved in the implementation of the project. In sum, the researcher interviewed eighteen officers who were directly related to the project. To enable him better explore the principles of participatory communication and match them against how they have been used in a practical development project, Mefalopolus divided the project
cycle into six\(^3\) phases and examined the application of participatory communication principles at each of the six stages.

He was of the opinion that participatory communication is an approach capable of facilitating people’s involvement in the decision-making process. “It is a necessary component needed to increase projects sustainability and ensure genuine ownership by the so called “beneficiaries.”” (Mefalopolus, 2003; p. vii). The findings of Mefalopulos show that though the FAO South African project was perceived outside the project area, there were some basic features that remained constant throughout the project cycle. These features- namely dialogue, endogenously driven and process-oriented- form the basis of participatory communication both at the theoretical and practical levels.

Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) undertook a study which set out to determine the extent to which participatory communication principles and practices were applied by local governments to communicate with the community in South Africa. Data for the research was gathered using interviews, observation and documentary studies. The researchers interviewed thirty two persons made up of three municipal officials, four ward councillors; four ward committee members, three community development officials and eighteen community members.

Their study found that local communities within the Kungwini Local Municipality; which was the area of study were empowered through deliberative communication methods which were employed by officials of the Municipality to make decisions concerning their own development by identifying problems and making decisions about development issues. The researchers observed for example that the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process gave community

\(^3\)The six stages of the project cycle identified by Mefalopolus (2003): 1. Identification of area/sector intervention; of area/sector of intervention; 2) Needs assessment/research; 3) Project Formulation; 4) Planning; 5) Implementation; 6) Evaluation (and Monitoring).
members the opportunity to be engaged in a rigorous discussion and communication process to recognize their own problems and challenges which led them to make decisions on important developmental issues. The findings from their study indicated that communication methods employed by the municipality were participatory and two-way which allowed for knowledge sharing on an equal basis. Such methods included citizen surveys, and phone calls to the citizen information centre. Other findings from the study were that the municipality used “a people centred approach to facilitate participatory communication”. This observation is further explained by the researchers who note that the IDP process was spearheaded at the local level by the ward committees which may be likened to the unit committees in the Ghanaian decentralisation setup.

Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) also noted in their findings that the municipality made extensive use of indigenous knowledge and culture. This finding buttresses the point made by Soola (1995, 1997) that the local people have a huge store of knowledge which could lend to project sustainability if they are treated as equal stakeholders and not merely as recipients of development aid. It also gives credence to the point made by Freire (cited by Sevreas, n.d) that all individuals have voices which they should be allowed to express.

As aptly captured by the Xavier Institute (1980) and quoted by Sevreas (n.d),

> Development efforts should be anchored on faith in the people's capacity to discern what is best to be done as they seek their liberation, and how to participate actively in the task of transforming society. The people are intelligent and have centuries of experience. Draw out their strength. Listen to them.

The researchers contended that though participatory communication is critical for development at the local level, it is difficult to implement the strategy in an environment where there seem to be a lot of divisions on many fronts including political, ethnic, social class, and level of
urbanisation. There is the challenge of implementing participatory communication; especially at the local level.

Another finding from the South African study was the fact that communication alone is not a panacea to all the challenges of development. They note that the question of development spans other issues as availability of resources and even the relationship between central government, the provincial and local government (Central Government, Regional Co-ordinating Council and the District Assembly in the case of Ghana).

In a study on local government communications, Killingsworth (2009), noted that since citizens relied on government policies to manage and maintain democratic societies, the manner in which local government authorities communicate with their citizens has an impact on their (local governments) success. The objective of the study was to investigate the extent to which local governments valued and practised excellent public relations to build relationships with their constituents. Using “a large municipality in Western Canada” as a case study, Killingsworth (2009) interviewed senior administrators of the municipality who were engaged in communication planning at the municipality. She also gathered data by examining official documents of the municipality and archival material. Data gathered from the documentary and archival studies in the view of the researcher were useful in confirming information gathered during the interview sessions.

In analysing data collected, Killingsworth (2009) applied the pattern matching technique to show the relationship between data collected and the principles of excellent public relations. According to the researcher, pattern matching makes the internal validity of a case study stronger when the outcome coincides with the expected patterns.
Findings from the study revealed that executives who had previously been engaged in professional communications had a better understanding for the role and value of communication than those who did not have any previous communication experience. Findings from the study also showed that by establishing call centres, citizens were given the opportunity to contribute to the decision making process in the municipality and that two-way forms of communication were also encouraged through citizen satisfaction surveys and the adoption of some social media tools and tactics. Killingsworth (2009) also found that the political environment hindered effective communication- “often by the time the municipality is able to engage in communicating on an issue, it has spun out of control during the political process and the municipality is criticized for having a lack of or poor communication” (Killingsworth, 2009).

Other factors that challenged effective communication in the municipality according to the findings of the study included public perception about communication which Killingsworth (2009) noted had made it difficult for the municipality to access and retain the needed resources to enhance effective communication. Again, a lack of understanding of the strategic role of communication has kept the municipality from including communication executives in decision making and this was identified as a barrier to effective communication in the large Canadian municipality as noted by Killingsworth (2009). Killingsworth further noted that while officers understood the role of communication, most of them lacked understanding of the fact that communication is supposed to influence the “operational decision and not just to communicate about the decision.

Ramirez and Quarry (2004), in their study of communication strategies in rural development suggest that “while communication strategies are only a part of the transformation, they are strategic tools that merit attention”. Using a case study approach, Ramirez and Quarry sought to
bring to the fore important lessons for policy making when well thought out communication strategies are used communicate about two rural based development projects in Uganda and Mozambique- Communication and Information Strategy for the National Agricultural Advisory Services Programme (NAADS) of Uganda and the Communication Strategy for the Plano de Transição para Água Rural. They noted that in recent times where decentralisation and privatisation of rural services are highly recommended as the panacea to the problems of development, it is important for policy makers and all stakeholders to appreciate their changing roles.

Findings from their studies revealed that a communication and information strategy would address human resource development goals as well as organisational performance and field implementation. Their research also revealed that audience research is a basic starting point to learn about what stakeholders already know, what communication channels they can access, and what media combinations respond to those channels. An understanding of these factors will enable district assemblies to craft their messages such that they have the desired impact.

Using the Australian Citizens Parliament as a case study, Hartz-Karp, Anderson, Gatsi and Felicetti (2010) showed how engaging citizens in the decision making process can lead to citizens’ sense of nationality in an environment where there is much division along the lines of ethnicity and status in society. They noted that a major challenge faced by public officials as duty bearers was how to bring the diverse opinions of the public in a deliberative manner to achieve common results in an effective manner.

The research carried out by Hartz-Karp, Anderson, Gatsi and Felicetti (2010) is a case study of the Australian Citizens’ Parliament; a process that brought together people of diverse
backgrounds in February, 2009 to draft policy proposals for the consideration of the federal government. The essence of the citizens’ parliament carried out by the Australian Federal Government was to strengthen the political system and to serve the people better.

The objectives of the study were to find out how there emerged among participants in the Citizens’ Parliament a sense of common identity which was not the case before. Another objective was to determine if there was a relationship between the emergence of a shared identity and the improved understanding of participants and their new commitment to the public good as was apparent in the final outcomes of the deliberative sessions by participants in the Australian Citizens’ Parliament (ACP).

To enable the researchers gather data for their study which was largely a qualitative one, the researchers studied a number of documents including transcripts of discussions held by the ACP, daily feedback notes gathered by organisers of the ACP, and a host of other documents considered by the researchers as being relevant for the purpose of the study. Hartz-Karp et al also conducted surveys of all participants in the ACP a year after the process had ended.

The study found that minority views were recognised as participants were given the option of sending strongly held minority views along with those on which consensus was reached. This encouraged the expression of divergent views, thus giving them a sense of value and belief in their own capabilities. The study also found that citizen participation in policy formulation led to a sense of ownership, leading the people to work hard to achieve policy objectives and sustain projects. The findings of the study only buttress the view of development experts that citizen engagement or the absence of it has an impact on the success or failure of public policies and projects (Soola, 1995, Melkote and Steeves, 2001).
Using the case study approach, Muturi and Mwangi (2009) examined how participatory communication was used in a campaign aimed at addressing gender based violence in the Caribbean. During the study titled, “The Theory and Practice Gap in Participatory Communication”, the researchers used qualitative data collection methods including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and a study of project documents to gather information over a period of six months. Through the research, the authors were able to come out with factors which worked against the effective and practical use of participatory communication as a strategy in project design and implementation.

The researchers noted in their analysis that involving stakeholders in the planning and implementation process of any program is a critical feature of participatory communication. They show this by explaining how various stakeholders in the campaign were brought together in designing and implementing the campaign. Muturi and Mwangi (2009), while evaluating the participatory process used in the Caribbean campaign against gender violence, the researchers found that though there were efforts to capture all stakeholders and engage them in the process, there were issues of excluding key stakeholders whose contributions could have ensured sustainability of the campaign. The researchers also found that in spite of the fact that “campaign activities were discussed and laid out in the participatory framework, some agencies lacked the capacity to carry them out adequately”. This observation by the researchers may be a reason why some development partners have failed to include stakeholders in the planning process as the situation might delay the programme.

In 2009, InterMedia, a non-profit research and consulting company with expertise in media, communication and development launched a project dubbed AudienceScapes in Ghana and other African nations. The project sought to research into how the development community could
structure their communication efforts at both the policy level and the local level. The project also sought to determine what the development community could do to improve policy information flow in Africa, with a focus to support effective development.

The Ghana project employed the qualitative approach to gather relevant data by conducting in-depth interviews with fifteen “senior members of the Ghanaian policy community”. The interviews sought to seek data on how actors in the policy environment “gather, assess, share, and disseminate information critical to development”. These officers represented parliament, various ministries, the presidency, the business community and donor institutions. The objective of the Ghana project, which spanned a period of three months (July-September, 2009) was “to understand how external stakeholders...can most effectively engage and assist policy makers” (p.5).

The findings of the study indicated that though most players in the policy making environment had some misgivings about the accuracy and professionalism associated with local traditional media, it was the main source of information for them. The television though was not as popular as the radio and newspapers; this the researchers cite the busy nature of the work of policy makers as the probable reason for this. Policy makers also relied on personal information sources, some of which are informal in order to receive policy information in a timely manner. These included mobile phone conversations, text messages and social networks. The researchers noted that though formal communication channels, such as letters, policy papers and reports were the best to rely on as basis for discussion and decision making; there was difficulty in accessing these documents either from their own offices or other state institutions in a timely and reliable manner through these formal channels.
Assessing how policy information was communicated to the public and the options available for feedback and inclusion from the public, the Audience Scapes report indicated the use of both formal and informal channels. Official channels included the media, public events and stakeholders’ consultations. Through these means policy actors informed citizens about government policies, received public input into new programmes as well as received feedback on the success or otherwise of public policies. Policy makers who participated in the study also indicated that they often relied on informal channels such as local contacts or by engaging in conversations with their constituents. This way, they are able to get relevant information which feeds into the decision making process as well as get insight on what the ‘ordinary’ citizen makes of public policies and programmes. Traditional leaders and opinion leaders were also cited in the study as important conduits to make information available to the people especially those described as “hard to reach populations”.

The study revealed that though the Ghanaian political system made it possible for public participation and debate, there were a number of challenges including apathy showed in the public’s low demand for policy information, low levels of education and high illiteracy rates. As noted by the researchers, “beyond the need to make information available to hard to reach populations, there is the question to ensure that the information actually is seen and heard, and is in fact understood by the targeted recipients”.

University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh
Summary

This chapter of the report focused on the various theories used in this study: participatory communication and two-step flow theories which underpin many studies on development (Mefalopolus, 2009). The chapter examined the merits and demerits of these theories. Earlier studies related to the present study were examined in this chapter. The reviewed studies were selected based on the fact they are basically based on the same theories. Almost all the related studies here also employ the same methodologies in trying to seek answers to very important development and communication.

The studies reviewed here have all shown how communication has been used to engage local citizens in various projects. Mostly they have shown that in projects where participatory communication has been used, there have been successes with the projects. The studies here have also looked at the channels and methods of communication used in various projects and how they affected the project outcome. Challenges associated with the use of certain communication channels and methods were also indicated in the studies reviewed in this chapter.

The basic assumption underlying this study is that as much as possible the assembly would use participatory communication methods or other such methods which allow for effective communication between the Assembly and community members at all levels. This study also takes a look at the communication channels and methods used by the assembly and the challenges associated with these. Though the studies reviewed here have all focused on specific projects, this study looks at the general communication which exists within the Agona East District Assembly and the extent to which they are effective.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodologies used to collect and analyse data for this study. The study triangulated quantitative and qualitative research methodologies for both data collection and analysis. Presented in this chapter are research design, sampling technique and procedure, data collection procedure and instrument and data analysis procedure.

3.2 Research Design

The mixed methods approach was employed in gathering and analysing data for this study. Mixed methods approach (triangulation) to research, which makes use of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to gather and analyse data was considered appropriate for the study as it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem than using one approach alone.

While providing quantitative information about extent and occurrence of the practice of communication in the development agenda of the Agona East District, triangulation also provided qualitative in-depth information from the viewpoint of some key informants who participated in the study.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

Multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select and sample respondents for the study. The Agona East District consists of five (5) Area Councils and each Area Council is also made up of communities or suburbs. All five (5) Area Councils were selected at first stage of sampling.
At the second stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select the administrative capital/major town of each Area Council to represent the Area Council. Within the selected community, random sampling technique was used to select two suburbs from the pre-determined community list obtained from the District Development Planning Co-ordinating Unit. In each suburb within the selected community, a random sampling technique was employed to administer the survey instrument to eligible respondents (adult resident aged 18 years or older).

In all, a total of 400 respondents out of 23,571 adults (18+) were recruited from the 10 suburbs for the survey. Out of the 400 respondents recruited and given the questionnaire, 392 returned the completed questionnaire giving a response rate of about 97%. The population distribution by district and community are presented in Table 1. Each suburb was stratified into zones (4 zones) using the streets and the layout of the community. After zoning the suburb, 10 respondents were selected for the survey without replacement from every fifth house/dwelling unit using systematic sampling approach. An eligible respondent in the house willing to participate in the survey was recruited and questionnaire administered. The questionnaires were self-administered.

Table 1: Population of Agona East District by Area Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Council (Community)</th>
<th>Population (18 years and above)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nsaba</td>
<td>5,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwanyako</td>
<td>6,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asafo</td>
<td>5,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duakwa</td>
<td>5,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankrong</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,571</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-depth interviews were conducted with key District Assembly officials. The officials interviewed were the District Chief Executive (1), the District Co-ordinating Director (1), the District Planning Officer (1), the Presiding Member of the Agona East District Assembly (1), and an Assembly member from each Area Councils (5).

Interview guide was used to solicit the information from the District Assembly officials. These persons were considered appropriate for this study because of the roles they play in executing the development agenda of the district. The Assembly Members for instance were included in the study because of their closeness to the populace and seeing that they are mandated by the Local Government Act, 1993 to act as the liaisons between the Assembly and the populace; always ensuring that the views, opinions and needs of the people are inculcated in the development agenda of the district. The District Chief Executive was interviewed as the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Assembly which is responsible for implementing all decisions taken by the General Assembly bothering on the development of the district.
3.4 Data Collection

Primary and secondary data were used to achieve the research objectives. The primary data consist of sample survey and in-depth interviews while the secondary data are made up of population census data (both at the district and community levels) of the Agona East District. Other relevant secondary data including records and information from the District Assembly administration were used in this research.

Survey was conducted among the adult (persons 18 years and older) residents’ population of the Agona East District. A standardised structured questionnaire was used to collect survey data. The questionnaire covered channels of communication respondents were exposed to, communication channels used by the assembly to reach respondents and the channels available for feedback. The questionnaire also covered the extent of local participation in the Assembly’s development agenda and the factors which affected communication if there were any (Appendix I, p.78). The questionnaire was self-administered to respondents. Moreover qualitative interviews were conducted using an interview guide. The interview guide covered the various themes developed based on the theories and the concepts that guided the study. Some of the key areas covered under the qualitative interview were the channels used by the assembly in its communication and available channels for feedback, communication challenges faced by the assembly and the factors which accounted for such. The interview also sought to find out the avenues available as well as the extent of citizen participation in the Assembly’s decision making process.

Other relevant documents such as letters from the District Assembly which ceded authority to the sub-structures, correspondences from various stakeholders’ which catalogued their grievances to
the Assembly as well as legal documents which call for participation of the local people in the development agenda of the district were examined for the purposes of this study.

3.5 Data Analysis

The results of this project were arrived at after employing both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. The data gathered with the structured questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs.

Thematic analysis was employed to investigate and analyse the interviews. This was done after the interviews were transcribed and coded. Each transcript was coded twice at two time intervals for intercodal reliability. The codes were developed based on the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Attention was also given to new codes that were not on the original coding frame.

Summary

The focus of this chapter has been to present the methodology applied in this study. The mixed method approach which makes use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods was used for the purpose of this study. Data was collected by administering questionnaire to community members and also by interviewing assembly officials.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study hoped to understand some of the main communication strategies used by the Agona East District Assembly in engaging with community members. This chapter presents findings gathered from data collected through interviews with Assembly officials and Assembly Members as well as a survey of people in the catchment area of the District Assembly.

The findings represent participants’ knowledge and their views of the communication strategies employed by the Agona East District Assembly in its dealings with them. Findings of the study cover the level of awareness of community members of some projects and programmes being carried out by the Assembly, communication channels open to them to interact with the Assembly as well as communication channels through which the Assembly interacts with them. Findings also cover the avenues available for community members to give feedback on issues and what constraints exist within the communication process from both the viewpoint of community members and Assembly officials.

Assembly officials, the study revealed considered communication as an important element in their daily activities. This was expressed in the following statement by the District Co-ordinating Director and the District Chief Executive:

_I did not meet any such document upon assuming duty and we have not yet developed one but this is by no means to say we do not regard the place of communication in the scheme of things._
Like I said earlier, we may not have what you call a communication strategy but that does not mean we disregard the place of communication. Communication is important in everything we do in this life.

(District Co-ordinating Director, June 2012)

It is very important to us in our operations especially... in ensuring that government policy and other programmes are communicated to the people. ... As the figurehead here I must be able to let the people know the exact work we are doing for them on the ground. So for me as DCE communication is very very important to this assembly...

(District Chief Executive, June 2012)

4.2 Sources of Information

The study tried to find out community members’ sources of information. In doing this, a number of potential sources were listed for respondents to choose from, including friends, Assembly Member, opinion leaders, the radio, Information Service Department, and family members. The study also tried to find out whether or not respondents were aware of any on-going projects or programme (for instance School Feeding, Community Led Total Sanitation, Sustainable Rural Water and Sanitation Programme) and if they were aware, how they got to know about it. Assembly officials were also asked in the in-depth interview to indicate which channels they mostly used to communicate with community members.

4.2.1 Source of General Information

The main communication channels identified by respondents as their usual sources of general information included friends, Assembly Members, radio, community information centre, and information service vans. Of all the channels listed, the radio was indicated as the main source of information by respondents. The impact of community radio in information dissemination was widely acknowledged by a huge proportion of respondents as many respondents identified it as
their main source of information. This is understandable given that the radio as a medium of communication is easily accessible in terms of cost and language used as well as coverage thereby reaching a wide range of community members. The detailed distributions of the various sources of general information are presented in figure 2.

**Figure 2 Sources of General Information**

![Diagram showing the sources of general information with Radio at 38%, Assemblymen at 16%, Friends at 15%, Community information centre at 13%, Information service van at 11%, Family members at 4%, Opinion leaders at 2%, Other at 1%]

The results indicated that almost four out of ten respondents (38.3%) interviewed reported that the radio was their main source of general information. Almost one-fifth (16%) of the respondents also mentioned Assembly members as their source of general information while 15% mentioned friends as their main source of general information. Community information centres, information service vans, and family members were identified as other sources of general information.

**4.2.2 Source of Information Emanating From the Assembly**

In relation to information emanating from the District Assembly, the study found that the Agona East District Assembly used varied communication channels and methods depending on the
nature of information that needed to be communicated. Respondents indicated that Assembly members and officials were their main source of information, with 34.4 percent of respondents relying on them for Assembly information. Information service van was the next to be mentioned as source of information emanating from the Assembly, accounting for 13 percent response rate.

**Figure 3 Sources of Assembly Information**

![Figure 3 Sources of Assembly Information](image)

### 4.2.3 Respondents’ Awareness of Assembly Projects and Sources of Such Information

The study also tried to find out whether or not respondents were aware of any on-going projects or programme and if they were aware, how they got to know about it. The result of the study revealed that among the respondents surveyed, about three in four (75.3%) were aware of at least a development project currently being undertaken by the District Assembly in their respective communities. Among those who indicated being aware of a development project in their area, almost four out ten (38%) received the information about the project from their Assembly member. This was followed by friends (21.4%). Other sources including community meetings, notice board, information service van, church meetings and unit committee members were
indicated by almost two-fifth (37.9%) of respondents as their source of information of any on-going project.

The least mentioned sources were radio and opinion leaders, accounting for two percent and one percent respectively. The details of the distribution of sources of information on Assembly projects are presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4 Sources of awareness/information on Assembly Projects**

These sources indicated by community members were also supported by Assembly officials when they were asked about the various communication channels they used in order to interact with the community members. Almost all officials who participated in the study indicated that the Assembly mostly employed varied communication means depending on the nature of the information to be delivered. They noted that information from the Assembly about policies, programmes and projects were usually disseminated through Assembly members and community leaders who they believed were better positioned to understand their message and deliver them. The various channels of communication were mentioned and explained by the District Assembly officials during the interview discussions with them as captured in the following quotes below:
...We use all possible means. For me especially I make it a point to visit the communities from time to time to meet them with their chiefs and brief them on what we are doing as an assembly for them.... we fall on the chiefs and other respected persons to help us convince the people to support. Then again from time to time we do meet them in stakeholder meetings where they have the opportunity to tell us about their needs. These are considered and included in our plans.

(District Chief Executive, June, 2012)

Mostly radio is used during assembly meetings and other important events organised by the Assembly. This way we are able to reach a wider coverage and we are also able reach even people outside our district. We also do TV but that is on a smaller scale looking at the costs involved. Occasionally we also rely on the print media to carry out information about our projects. But on the whole, we rely on the newspapers to advertise our contracts.

(District Co-ordinating Director)

Sometimes, we send announcements of very important information to the radio stations and sometimes we write letters to community leaders to inform them of events or to ask them to give us certain information we need. Or sometimes, we also inform assembly members who also in turn inform community members of any projects in the area .........We also use the information vans and community information centres to notify the people of new rates and fees usually at the beginning of the year. And you know, like I said before, we sometimes use the chiefs and assembly members to carry out information, especially about new projects and they will in turn tell community members. You see, because they are their leaders, it is easy for them to convince the people.

(Development Planning Officer, June 2012)

Findings of the study indicated that the District Chief Executive and other senior members of the Assembly sometimes appeared as guests on radio programmes to explain key issues to the public. During such times, the public also have the opportunity to call into the programme or send text messages to voice their opinion on the issues being discussed as well as let the DCE know what challenges they faced in their communities. Again, during General Assembly meetings and other important functions of the Assembly, the press and local radio stations were
invited to cover the programmes with an aim of having the programme aired to feed the public with information about the activities of the Assembly.

4.2.4 Preferred Communication Channels and Methods

Although radio was ranked among the least cited channels of receiving information about District Assembly projects, it was one of the preferred means of receiving information about Assembly projects. Other preferred sources of information emanating from the Assembly included community information centres, community meetings and the use of information services vans.

Whereas about one-fifth (19%) of the respondents preferred radio, one out of every five (20%) and 16 percent were in favour of the community information centre and community meetings respectively. About 13 percent also favoured the Assembly members interacting more often with their communities. It must be noted here that these classifications were not mutually exclusive; as such some respondents reported more than one channel. Data about preferred communication channels is presented in figure 5.

**Figure 5 Preferred Channels of Communicating Information on Projects**

![Preferred Communication Channels and Methods](image)
Preference for information centres may be attributed to the fact that the centres were manned by officials who could offer explanations on issues as well as provide community members the opportunity to present their views and opinions on critical issues of concern. These views are then presented to the appropriate department of the Assembly for redress or they are integrated into the activities of the Assembly. With the advent of interactive radio, there is a ready platform for the Assembly to interact on major issues affecting the lives of community members. The Assembly could combine these modern strategies with traditional participatory communication methods to ensure that beneficiaries of development programmes and policies are duly consulted and involved in the decision making process. Mefalopolus (2008) recommends that for best results in project design and implementation, development partners and change agents should adopt communication strategies which combine both diffusion and participatory approaches according to the specificities of the situation. This approach he calls the ‘communication multi-track approach’ (Mefalopolus, 2008; pg.70).

4.3 Extent of the Use Participatory Communication

The question was meant to solicit views of community members as well as Assembly officials regarding the nature of communication strategies employed by the Assembly in engaging community members in decision making. In this regard, respondents were asked to rate various aspects of the decision making processes of the Assembly: including respondents’ ability to express their views on development projects in their area; Assembly’s response to their concerns; and Assembly’s effort made in getting respondents involved in decision making. Respondents were also asked to rate the availability and access to information from the Assembly.
It was important to find these out as the assumption here was that since the core mandate of the District Assembly is to promote grassroots development, the Assembly would need to employ methodologies which will exploit the opinions and concerns of the local people in order to better understand their needs and involve them in the decision making process. Respondents’ responses to questions raised here gave a picture of the communication strategies of the Assembly as either monologic or dialogic or a mixture of both.

4.3.1 Availability and Access to Information from Assembly

Regarding availability of and access to information from the Assembly, the results indicated that community members were generally satisfied with the level of availability and access to information from the District Assembly. This is because almost half (49.7%) of the respondents rated the level of availability and access to information from the Assembly satisfactory (Figure 6). About one in every four (25.8%) rated the level of availability and access to information from the District Assembly poor. Six out of ten (6.1%) rated the same subject very poor. The remaining 18.3 percent of the respondents interviewed rated availability and access to information from the District Assembly as good or very good.

Figure 6 Level of Satisfaction Regarding Availability and Access to Information from Assembly
4.3.2 Assembly’s Response to Citizens’ Concerns and Opinions

Presented in Table 2 is the distribution of respondents by the Assembly’s response to citizen concerns by gender. The results of this study indicated that about three out of five (59.9%) respondents interviewed considered the level of the District Assembly response to their concerns as poor or worse. Only about 15% of the respondents rated the level of response to their concerns by the District Assembly good or better while another quarter (25.5%) rated the same subject satisfactory.

Table 2: Assembly Response to Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of response</th>
<th>Sex N (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>28 (10.7)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>127 (48.5)</td>
<td>80 (61.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>66 (25.2)</td>
<td>34 (26.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>33 (12.6)</td>
<td>8 (6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>8 (3.1)</td>
<td>8 (6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>262 (66.8)</td>
<td>130 (33.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar trend was observed when survey participants were asked to rate the Assembly’s deliberate effort in getting the community involved in the decision making processes of the Assembly as good, very good, poor, very poor or satisfactory. Majority of the respondents interviewed (63.2%) indicated the Assembly’s effort in getting them involved in decision-making as poor or worse with the rest indicating they were satisfied with the effort of the Assembly to get them involved in decision-making (Table 3).
Table 3 Assessment of Assembly’s Effort to Involve Community Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of satisfaction</th>
<th>Sex N (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>72 (27.5)</td>
<td>16 (12.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>104 (39.7)</td>
<td>56 (43.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>60 (22.9)</td>
<td>33 (25.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>22 (8.4)</td>
<td>13 (10.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>4 (1.5)</td>
<td>12 (9.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>262 (66.8)</td>
<td>130 (33.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above data shows that there was a limited effort by the Assembly to involve community members in the decision making process regarding developments in their communities as well as to give feedback to the Assembly with such poor ratings. More than half of the respondents (66%) answered ‘no’ to the question: “Does the Assembly seek your opinions on developments in your area?” A same percentage responded in the negative when asked if Assembly members were on hand in giving feedback to them.

Although respondents generally rated the Assembly’s effort to include them in the Assembly’s decision making process as poor, there were indications that community members on their own tried to take part in the Assembly’s business. While about 40 percent reported that they made inputs through the Assembly members or officials of the Assembly, 35 percent of respondents said they made inputs through community meetings and durbars; and just about 18 percent reported that they did this through peer groups meetings. A minimal 15 percent, that is less than
two persons on the average used radio phone in programs to make inputs into the decision making processes of the assembly.

When asked about the channels available for community members to make their concerns known to the Assembly, slightly more than 70 percent of respondents (71%) responded that they made their concerns known through the Assembly Members or Assembly officials. Letters, community meetings, and radio were other minor means through which respondents communicated their concerns to the Assembly. It is worth noting here that in making inputs or communicating concerns to the Assembly, residents may use more than one channel especially where issues are of much importance to them. Residents’ use of two-way interactional communication methods in communicating concerns to the Assembly may be favoured due to its impact on a feeling of participation in the governance process of the District.

From the interviews with Assembly officials however, it was revealed that the Agona East District Assembly usually engaged community members in the decision making process through stakeholder consultations at both the community and Assembly levels. Most officials interviewed stated that as far as decisions concerning physical projects and programmes were concerned, the usual trend was for the District Planning Co-ordinating Unit to meet with community members at the Area Council level where the community members indicated which needs they considered as priority areas. The nature of these meetings is usually face to face, sometimes grouping them into males and females or young and old.

This, according to the District Co-ordinating Director and the District Development Planning Officer enabled the Assembly to prepare the Annual Action Plan based on a need-based
approach. These felt needs were captured and incorporated into the Annual Action Plan of the assembly.

_In preparing the Medium Term Development Plans, we usually meet community members at the Area Council level to solicit their views on any projects based on their needs as a community. These enable the assembly to determine which activity or plan to include for which community. ….. In project supervision and monitoring, we try as much as possible to involve members of beneficiary communities and their assembly members._

(District Co-ordinating Director)

_You know the work of the DPCU is mainly to develop the Medium Term Development Plan and the Annual Action Plan. To do this, especially when it comes to the medium term development plan, what we do is to hold stakeholder consultative meeting. So at this meeting, various representatives of the people in the communities come together and inform us which areas they need to develop._

…… So yes before a project is taken to a community, the people must have made a request for it.

(District Planning Officer)

Assembly officials indicated that beneficiary communities of development projects were involved at the project implementation stage as the project monitoring teams were usually made up of Assembly members, some selected community leaders (usually selected by the community to represent them) and officials of the Assembly. This was confirmed by site meeting minutes signed by all monitoring team members of some projects which were made available to the researcher. The nature of these monitoring teams allowed for community members to participate in project implementation.

Citizen engagement in the decision making process was seen through the Assembly members who received petitions on key areas of concern from their electoral areas and presented them at
Assembly meetings for discussion. An Assembly member said there were instances where a community resolved and adopted certain positions which they viewed as essential for their development. These were discussed by and accepted by the Assembly through a resolution. In these cases, such decisions affect only the community that presented the petition.

Oh easy. Every 3 months we meet and discuss our issues. So I put them down and when we go for meeting I present them. Also, when the people see you, they come to you and make a complain about something and I get to know.

(Kwanyako Assembly Member)

Before any assembly meeting I make it a point to meet the community and discuss with them issues which are of major concern to them and present to the assembly. Sometimes too a department of the assembly organise a programme where we all go to discuss issues like the area council forums organised by the DPCU. Last year too the education office organised a stakeholders meeting where we discussed how to improve education.

(Mankrong Assembly Member)

Assembly officials also indicated that the channels and methods used to receive information about the needs of the people and feedback on any initiated project were not different from what officials used in order to communicate about the Assembly. According to officials of the Assembly, community needs were usually presented by their Assembly Members and community leaders, at public forums and other community initiated functions which were sometimes attended by the District Chief Executive and other members of the Assembly. These programmes offered the platform for community members and Assembly officials to interact, thus the community members stated their challenges. The quotes below present some of the key means by which community members communicate with District Assembly.

First they inform their community leaders and assembly members. Or sometimes, if they are unhappy about anything, they go to radio stations and complain.

(District Planning Officer)
People also walk in daily to make their complaints to us. We sometimes ask them to write to us or consult their assembly member. This helps us to take any future actions necessary to solve the situation.

(District Co-ordinating Director)

On my part before any assembly meeting I make it a point to meet the community and discuss with them issues which are of major concern to them and present to the assembly. Sometimes too a department of the assembly organise a programme where we all go to discuss issues like the area council forums organised by the DPCU. Last year too the education office organised a stakeholders meeting where we discussed how to improve education.

(An Assembly Member)

On how the community members gave feedback to the Assembly, again it was indicated by interviewees that feedback was usually through letters signed by the chiefs on behalf of their communities; expressing the community’s view of a programme that had been initiated or implemented in their communities. These letters were usually signed by the chief, opinion leaders and other persons such as the community’s clergyman or headmaster of the community school. Officials of the Assembly also noted that by monitoring radio programmes, the assembly was able to get feedback from the public and this is imputed in the decision making process. Again, Assembly Members also gave feedback on various projects in their Electoral Areas to the Assembly.

Stakeholders’ consultative meetings were held to seek the opinions of the public on key developmental issues. In March of 2011 for instance, the District Educational Unit of the Assembly held a stakeholders’ meeting to try to strategise on ways to improve education in the district. This meeting was attended by traditional leaders, school heads, convenors of the social service, education and development planning sub-committees of the Assembly, and senior management staff of the Assembly.
Assembly officials also cited the use of informal communication channels such as friends and sources in the community who gave them information on important messages. This way they received feedback and the concerns of the people. The following quote by the district chief executive and some assembly members lend support to the above.

...I use the communication people a lot. They inform me of anything they hear from their people and I take action if I should. I also make it a point to monitor radio stations every morning and evening. I interact with the community members and their leaders a lot and I get to know more. They inform me of what they would like the assembly to do for them to enhance their lives...

(District Chief Executive)

I also put information I gather as I go about my work every day together. Sometimes too I’ll be in the house and various groups of people like the youth group and the keep fit club come with ideas of how they think we can develop the community, I present some to the assembly and those we can take care of as a community I inform the chiefs and if they agree we take it up.

(Assembly Member, Mankrong)

On my part what I do is to meet with the unit committee members to discuss issues with them. I also go round listening to what the people are saying and the issue most people talk about is what I see as their most pressing need. I send this to the assembly or sometimes to the appropriate sub-committee committee.

(Assembly Member, Nsaba)

The various communication channels used to disseminate information as well as receive the people’s contribution towards local governance are captured in figure 7.
4.4 Respondents’ Views on Constraints/Effectiveness of Communication Strategies

This study also looked at possible factors which hindered communication in the Assembly. By this, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Assembly’s present communication channels with the communities; if they would agree or not that the Assembly faced some challenges which hindered effective communication with residents of the district, and also to list some challenges if any, that the Agona East District Assembly faced in communicating effectively with the communities.

4.4.1 Respondents’ Satisfaction with Assembly’s Current Communication Channels

Generally, the level of satisfaction among respondents about the communication channels used by the District Assembly to inform community members about issues was fairly satisfactory. This is because the results indicated that 56.4% of the respondents surveyed assessed the
communication channels used by the District Assembly to inform them about issues as satisfactory or better (Table 4, fig.8). The remaining 43.6 percent rated the Assembly’s communication channels as poor or very poor. Out of the 56.4 percent who were satisfied, only 7.4 percent rated the communication channels as very good.

**Table 4: Level of satisfaction with communication channels of sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of satisfaction</th>
<th>Sex N (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>52 (19.8)</td>
<td>4 (3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>71 (27.1)</td>
<td>44 (33.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>96 (36.6)</td>
<td>54 (41.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>26 (9.9)</td>
<td>16 (12.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>17 (6.5)</td>
<td>12 (9.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>262 (66.8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>130 (33.2)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8 below is a graphic presentation of respondents’ assessment of respondents’satisfaction with the Assembly’s present communication channels.

**Figure 8: Assessments of Assembly Communication Channels by Respondents**
4.4.2 Challenges in the Communication System

Community members identified that the District Assembly faced some challenges in communicating with community members.

Presented in Table 5, is the percentage distribution of respondents by the level of agreement that the District Assembly faced challenges in communicating with community members by sex. More than half (52.6%) of the respondents interviewed agreed that the District Assembly faced challenges in communicating with community members. Another 15.6%, representing almost sixteen out of every twenty persons surveyed strongly agreed with the view that the District Assembly faced challenges in communication. Only about three in ten respondents (31.9%) disagreed that the District Assembly faced challenges in communicating with community members. Regarding the gender variations, a greater percentage (80%) of the females interviewed either strongly agreed or agreed that the District Assembly faced challenges in communicating with community members. About 62.2% of the males interviewed also either strongly agreed or agreed that the District Assembly faced challenges in communicating with community members.

Table 5 Level of Agreement to Communication Challenges of District Assembly by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of agreement</th>
<th>Sex N (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>56 (21.4)</td>
<td>14 (10.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>43 (16.4)</td>
<td>12 (9.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>40 (15.3)</td>
<td>21 (16.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>123 (46.9)</td>
<td>83 (63.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>262 (66.8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>130 (33.2)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Factors that Affect Effective Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem/Challenge</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Funds</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inefficient Assembly Staff</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Logistics</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Communication Channels</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in the table 6, less than three out of ten (24%) respondents listed politics as being one of the major challenges that affected effective communication between the Assembly and its publics. Other factors cited included supposed poor communication channels of the Assembly; lack of vehicles and information vans; poor leadership at the Assembly; and illiteracy of the people of the district.

From the interviews, officials also acknowledged that there were challenges in the Assembly’s communication system which affected their ability to implement the mandate of the Assembly. These challenges were not much different from those cited by community members during the survey. Financial constraints were one of the main factors that did not allow the Assembly to hold as many forums as required. Explaining this, the District Co-ordinating Director said, for instance, that in the preparation of the Annual Action Plan of the Assembly, the Assembly was supposed to organise public hearings of the proposed plans at the community level, then at the Electoral Area level, the Area Council level and before it was finally approved by the General Assembly. The Assembly was however only able to conduct these public hearings at the Area Council level before the Assembly approved it due to limited financial resources and logistics.
This practice limited participation of the people. These challenges were highlighted during the discussion with the District Assembly officials and captured below:

*I can also talk of financial constraints which does not allow us to hold as many community forums as we would have wished. We should have had at least an information centre in all of our major communities. As it is now there are only two which belong to the government at Nsaba and Duakwa and even those two are not in the best of condition.*

(District Co-ordinating Director)

.....*Since I was posted here, they have charged expensively and we can’t afford that looking at our financial situation. It is better we use assembly members or the information van. That one isn’t as expensive.*

(District Planning Officer)

*Sometimes you know our electoral area and when you have to travel to the communities especially those communities which are in the bush. You have to use the motor or sometimes when you don’t have money to buy petrol you walk.*

*If the assembly can give us some money, like we can visit them more often.*

(Assembly Member, Mankrong)

*As for the motor and money, every assembly man has the same problem. We have complained on so many times to the administration but they are not doing anything about it.*

(Assembly Member, Duakwa)

Another factor cited as hindering communication between the Assembly and community members was apathy and a lack of understanding of stakeholder consultative meetings on the part of the citizenry. Findings showed that community members were more interested presenting their personal issues and problems at such gatherings. This, when not considered or addressed posed significant challenges to the system as captured in the quotes below:
People tend to present their individual needs rather than presenting a need which is common to the entire community. Sometimes at these meetings you find people soliciting for school fees for their wards or some other kind of personal assistance; and clearly you will agree with me that such forum is not to address individual grievances.

(District Co-ordinating Director)

I must say that there are times when some community representatives have failed to take part in this process because they were not given the chance to present their needs even when they were present; hence they did not see the need for such stakeholder meetings.

(District Chief Executive)

Interviewees were also of the view that the people showed little interest in the activities of the Assembly due to suspicion of the intentions of government officials and development programmes. The study also revealed that people in the communities hardly turned up at the Assembly premises or Community Information Centre to seek information about the Assembly processes. Rather, they preferred to speculate and depend on hearsay from their friends and family members. According to one Assembly Member, community members hardly turned up for community durbars and public forums. Rather, they preferred to speculate and depend on hearsay from their friends and family members.

Sometimes too when you call for a meeting they won’t come. You see, these people, you call them for a meeting they won’t come. They want others to come so that they will ask them what you said or sometimes too when they come and they don’t understand, they won’t ask you the assembly member, they will talk and say anything they like.

(Assembly Member, Mankrong)

Communicating information from the origin to the destination is also faced with challenges. This is because when the right personnel are not used to communicate the information, overtime the original information or message is distorted before reaching the population. Such challenge was
identified during the interview and was seen as hindrance to effective communication between
the District Assembly and the community.

In cases where we have relied on assembly members and sometimes community
leaders to disseminate some information, there have been occasions where
information had been distorted in some form. In such instances, we have had to
go back again with the same message. We depend on them a lot to send and
receive information and when this happens it affects us a lot. When this happens,
we tend to lose the trust and confidence of community members.

(District Co-ordination Director)

Since the District Assembly is the political and administrative authority at the community level,
there is also political interference, which affected communication on development projects
captured in the quotes below:

I think there is so much political interference in running the Assembly and this no
doubt affect communication. …… I think there is so much political interference in
running the Assembly and this no doubt affect communication.

(District Co-ordination Director)

Our political opponents do lot of damage when it comes to information. They go
on the ground and twist the facts about one project or the other.

(District Chief Executive)

At times too when I organise meetings with the community to discuss a project,
because people say I am NDC, the other people who are NPP do not attend.
According to them anything I have to say is to promote NDC so they talk against
it. As for the motor and money, every assembly man has the same problem. We
have complained on so many times to the administration but they are not doing
anything about it.

(Assembly Member, Duakwa)
Summary

The chapter presented the findings of this study. The study found that the Agona East District Assembly employed varied communication methods and channels in its interactions with its publics. The study found that the Assembly used any appropriate communication channels depending on the nature of information they had to disseminate or the nature of any particular development intervention.

In trying to find the communication strategies used by the Assembly, the researcher first set out to find the usual sources of information of respondents. This was to determine if there was a relationship between the sources of general information and the sources of Assembly information. The study found that most people relied on radio as one of the main sources of general information and also indicated that they would prefer for the Assembly to disseminate information using the radio. The Assembly on the other hand as indicated by officials who were interviewed, relied mostly on assembly members and other community leaders to disseminate information as well as receive information from community members.

The study also found that community members, to some extent, participated in the decision making process of the Assembly by interacting with their assembly members and Assembly officials, though these interactions were minimal. It can be said that the assembly engaged more in their interactions with community members using the two step approach. In their interactions with community members, Assembly officials often depended on opinion leaders and community members to give information to the public and also relied on them to receive feedback and community input in the decisions making process. The use of participatory communication by the Agona East District Assembly could be said to be on the minimum.
The study also found that a number of challenges affected the Assembly’s ability to communicate with community members especially in a participatory manner. These challenges as found by the study included political interference, inadequate funds, apathy and a lack of understanding on the part of community members and the absence of a well thought out communication strategy.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, there is a discussion of the findings of the study. The discussion comprises both objective and subjective findings made from the data analysed. These discussions are made based on the set objectives of the study and the research questions raised by the study.

5.2 Communication Strategies Used by the Assembly

In this study, “communication strategies” was defined as methods of communication and communication channels used by the District Assembly and its clients or publics. The definition of communication strategies also covered the views and perceptions of the community members on the current communication practices of the assembly. Such communication methods included community durbars, community meetings and other interactive communication methods. Letters, the information service van and the mass media were other communication channels used.

Findings from the study indicated that both the District Assembly and its publics, especially community members were open to a number of communication channels. They also employed a mix of varied communication methods in order to keep their interaction with each other open.

While the community members indicated that their main source of information of any kind was the radio (38%), the District Assembly on the other hand, rarely used the radio or any mass media communication channels in order to disseminate information to its publics. Radio accounted for only two percent of Assembly related information. As noted from the findings, information from the Assembly on any matter was mostly communicated through the Assembly
Members who are in direct contact with the community on regular basis. Findings indicated that 38 percent of respondents in the survey indicated the Assembly Members as their usual source of information from the Assembly. This was followed closely by community meetings, friends and the information service vans which all received a score of 21.4 percent and 13 percent respectively.

This was corroborated by the interview findings where Assembly officials and Assembly Members said that the Assembly usually communicated with the masses through the Assembly Members or opinion leaders. As indicated in the interviews, the Agona East District Assembly adopted the two-step flow of communication proposed by Katz and Lazarsfield (Severin and Tankard, 2001) by first informing or engaging Assembly Members, community leaders, traditional authorities and other individuals who were more able to convince community members about programmes and projects than Assembly officials. It is seen here what Mefalopolus (2000) terms passive participation which limits participation of the people to information dissemination in order to create awareness about a project or programme.

However, there was also the use of direct interactions between the Assembly and community members through community durbars and other social gatherings where the views of the people were solicited, collated and included in the action plans of the Assembly. The findings present what Mefalopolus (2000 :) calls “participation by consultancy” where project beneficiaries were consulted to identify their needs but are not involved in the final decision making.

Both community members and Assembly officials indicated that a major channel of communicating information about the Assembly was the Assembly Members (38%). Community members, however, preferred for the Assembly to communicate with them using the
Information Service Department vans. They also indicated a preference for the use of the community information centres (20%), radio (19%) and community meetings (16%). They preferred less for Assembly members (13%) to communicate information about Assembly projects to them. It must be noted here that these classifications were not mutually exclusive as some community members favoured more than one channel. Though the Assembly made use of all these communication channels in their interaction with community members, they were not used on the same scale as community members would have wanted them to. A clear understanding of district Assembly officials on these preferences could go a long way to solve the seeming communication gap between the Assembly and community members. The Assembly could take advantage of the many communication channels available in the district and use them to better inform and educate the masses on important policies and programmes.

The second objective of this study was to find out the extent of the use of participatory communication in the decision making process of the Assembly with a focus on development projects and programmes. From the findings of the survey and interviews conducted, it was indicative that the Assembly, to a limited extent, provided room for inclusion of local knowledge and expertise in the decision making process. Inclusion in the decision making process concerning developmental issues was mainly through community or public meetings where the people were given an opportunity to express to Assembly officials what they (community members) had identified to be the areas where they face the most challenges.

Participation through these means was, however, limited due to inadequate financial resources to hold public hearings on proposed Annual Action Plans (AAPs) at the lowest possible level as stipulated in the National Development Planning Act. Thus decentralisation which seeks to
include Ghanaians in the decision making process as spelt out in chapter 20 of the Constitution was affected.

Community meetings with Assembly Members, cited by both Assembly Members interviewed and survey respondents indicated, were not regular; sometimes once a year; also allowed citizens to express their concerns. This irregular opportunity was also limited by politics as the few who showed up for these meetings were of a particular political colouring as noted by one assembly member:

*At times too when I organise meetings with the community to discuss a project, because people say I am NDC, the other people who are NPP do not attend. According to them anything I have to say is to promote NDC so they talk against it. As for the motor and money, every assembly man has the same problem. We have complained so many times to the administration but they are not doing anything about it.*

Most respondents assessed their ability to make their concerns known to the Assembly as poor or satisfactory and also rated the assembly’s response to their concerns as poor, officials of the assembly from the interview indicated that individuals often made personal requests to the Assembly to pay fees, hospital bills, assistance to start a business which are not the core mandate of the Assembly. This may account for the low rating scored by the Assembly in this regard. However, it was revealed that where concerns were expressed as that of the community, for instance if there are requests for a new school block to be built or an existing one renovated, it was considered and where possible, appropriate action was taken by the Assembly.

From the interviews held with officials of the Assembly, it was revealed that, most of the time, participation was limited to discussions and deliberations with traditional leaders, opinion leaders and persons regarded highly in the communities. The assumption here is that these persons must have met their community members to discuss their challenges and have already come to a
conclusion about what their immediate needs as a community are and the possible solutions to the identified problems. The opinion leaders and traditional leaders are thus the ‘voice’ of the people.

Of the many factors cited as challenges to effective communication between the Assembly and the community, politics was the most cited. The political environment is a major factor which prevented government bodies from communicating on an issue especially where the said information will have a negative impact on the ruling party or is viewed as being beneficial to the opposition.

There is even the possibility here that opinion leaders and Assembly Members who were entrusted with important information either from the assembly or the community did not deliver the message because of their political colourings.

The negative impact of politics on communication is not limited to the Agona East District or even the Ghanaian environment as many writers and researchers have also cited politics in their findings as one of the many challenges the communication environment in many organisations (Killingsworth, 2009, Liu and Levenshus, 2010). Killingworth for instance opined that, “often by the time the municipality is able to engage in communicating on an issue, it has spun out of control during the political process and the municipality is criticized for having a lack of or poor communication” (Killingsworth).

Another major factor was financial constraints on the part of the Assembly which limited the number of public hearings organised as has been stipulated in the National Development Planning Act. As indicated by officials because of the inadequate funds available to the Assembly, they were only able to hold public hearings at the area council level which only
limited participation. Msibi and Penzorn note their 2010 study of the Kungwini municipality in South Africa that lack of adequate finances affect the work of the communication department of the municipality as just a little budget was allocated to the department. In the case of the Agona East District Assembly however, nothing is allocated for the communication function and as such the Information Services Department which exists to communicate about government policies and programmes as well as the activities of the Assembly is under resourced and can barely carry out its mandate as required.

The absence of a dedicated communication unit at the Assembly greatly affects development at the local level. The study found that though there was the existence of a Community Development and Social Welfare Department at the Assembly as well an Information Service Department, the officers were not adequately trained to carry out any development communication. The assumption here was that communication was easy and that it could be done by anybody. Such assumption could not have been entirely true (Mefalopolus, 2003, Tufte and Mefalopolus 2009).

Among the community members, 24% of the respondents said they believed that the Assembly’s communication channels were poor and this accounted for the challenges faced by the Assembly in its communication efforts. This is not surprising as Assembly officials admitted that the Assembly did not have in place a communication strategy or policy which would have clearly defined the communication structure of the Assembly as well as the communication methods which will be most prudent in reaching the heterogeneous population of the Assembly.

*I did not meet any such document upon assuming duty and we have not yet developed one but this is by no means to say we do not regard the place of communication in the scheme of things.*
Like I said earlier, we may not have what you call a communication strategy but that does not mean we disregard the place of communication. Communication is important in everything we do in this life.

(District Co-ordinating Director)

Again this is evident from the study as most of the survey respondents rated the Assembly’s communication efforts as poor and ineffective. They noted that their preferred communication channels and methods were quite different from what the Assembly used. Whereas community members said they mostly preferred the community information centres and radio as the main communication channel to be used by the Assembly, the Assembly mostly relied on Assembly members and opinion leaders in the community to circulate information.

Regarding challenges in the Assembly’s communication system, both survey respondents and assembly officials agreed that the Assembly faced some challenges. Only 29% of respondents indicated their level of satisfaction with the Assembly’s current communication channels, while 56% rated their satisfaction as very poor. More than half (68.2%) of respondents also agreed that the Assembly faced some communication challenges. Among challenges cited by both Assembly officials and community members were the issues of finance, inadequate logistics, apathy on the part of community members, lack of understanding and illiteracy of community and politics. Politics was ranked highest (24%) among community members as affecting healthy communication between the assembly and the community members. Same issue was cited by Assembly officials who participated in the study:

I think there is so much political interference in running the Assembly and this no doubt affect communication. .......

(District Co-ordination Director)
Our political opponents do lot of damage when it comes to information. They go on the ground and twist the facts about one project or the other.

(District Chief Executive)

At times too when I organise meetings with the community to discuss a project, because people say I am NDC, the other people who are NPP do not attend. According to them anything I have to say is to promote NDC so they talk against it. As for the motor and money, every assembly man has the same problem. We have complained on so many times to the administration but they are not doing anything about it.

(Assembly Member, Duakwa)

The Assembly is both a political and administrative entity with the District Chief Executive as both the political and administrative head. This makes it difficult to delineate politics from administration. However, managers of the Assembly would have to embark on a lot of education to detach or reduce the rate of political interference in administrative issues if the Assembly is to get the support of the community members in order to succeed.

5.3 Limitations

This study was not completed without its own set of challenges. Prominent among them was the ability of the researcher to have all the interviewees of the study as they worked on tight schedules and were always engaged in one meeting or the other. There was also the challenge of recruiting assistants to administer the questionnaire without many challenges. In administering the questionnaire, translating into the local language sometimes proved difficult because sometimes the translation led the researcher to suggest answers to the respondents, especially those who had received little or no education.
5.4 Conclusion

The study looked at the communication strategies employed by the Agona East District Assembly to ensure that its constituents were kept in the know of public policies and programmes, the extent to which local people participated in the formulation and implementation of key decisions that directly affected their everyday lives and the avenues available for feedback. The study also set out to find the extent to which the tenets of participatory communication were employed by the Assembly and the views of community members on the Assembly’s communication channels and methods. As has been noted, it is only a well informed and active population who can participate in local governance as demanded by democracy (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2000).

The basic assumption of this study was that as an institution mandated to promote development at the local level and given the strengths of participatory communication in attaining sustainable development, the Assembly would engage communication methods which favoured the participatory approach. Such communication, that is, participatory communication ensures that communities are made an integral part of the development process and that the design and implementation of development projects are driven by needs, expectations and implementation of the development projects are driven by community needs and expectations. Findings from the study lead to the conclusion that participatory communication was practiced only to a limited extent by the Assembly- at the passive participatory and participation by consultancy levels as identified by Mefalopolus (2000).

The results show that the preferred channels of communication by community members were not the same as those being employed by the Assembly. While most community members (55%) preferred for Assembly officials to use the community information centres, radio and community
meetings more often, Assembly officials rarely used these citing financial constraints as a major challenge. This difference in preferred channels of communication and the present channels being used by the Assembly may be attributed to a lack of understanding of these channels on the part of the District Assembly Administration. This could account for some of the tension and protests that various district Assemblies encounter with communities during the execution of development projects for the communities. A more sustained communication strategy would be to use the channels preferred most by community members. A strategy that would converge the main channels employed by the assembly and those channels preferred by the community would make it more participatory and enhance development. Such a strategy would prevent misinformation associated with person to person communication. Preferably, the Agona East District Assembly could prepare regular newsletters to the local radio stations which could be used to inform the communities.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to the District Assembly and its departments, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, The Local Government Service Secretariat, NGOs, International Organisations and other bodies interested in development especially, rural development to improve their communication and enhance sustainable development.

1. Since most of the citizens reported the radio as the main source of information, the Assembly will do well to use the radio to communicate major policies to the public. This could be used to support the periodic community meetings and other two-way
communication approaches used by the assembly where the community members meet
officials of the assembly including the DCE, senior management staff, assembly
members face to face to discuss their problems and together try to fashion out a solution.
This is what Mefalopolus has called the multi-track approach, which borrows from both
“dialogic and monologic communication concepts”.

2. The Agona East District Assembly can better its communication efforts by developing a
communication strategy which will take into consideration all the factors that affect
communication and train community development officers in communication. Such a
communication strategy developed in collaboration with the community members and
other relevant stakeholders will go a long way to enhance participation and programme
and project sustainability.

3. The assembly members, officials of the assembly, especially community development
officers and staff of the District Planning Co-ordinating Unit who work directly with the
communities, as well community representatives, should be trained in communication.
This would enable each of these stakeholders to provide the required support for the
development communication process.

4. It is also recommended that further studies be conducted in other metropolitan, municipal
and district assemblies as well as other government agencies whose core mandate is to
promote effective grassroots development on their communication strategies.
Bibliography

Macmillan Ltd, 42 Ring Road South Industrial Area, Accra

Ghana Universities Press, Accra


Griffen, E.A First look at Communication Theory; (pg.172), 5th Ed, McGraw Hill


Kroaitim, A. H., (n.d) The Communication Problem as a Detriment of Organisational Decentralisation

Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462)


1818 H Street NW, Washington DC20433


APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

RQ. 1. What are the communication strategies/channels used by the assembly to reach its citizens?

1. What is your usual source of any kind of information? (Please tick in the boxes that corresponds with your answer)
   - [ ] Friends
   - [ ] Assemblyman
   - [ ] Opinion leaders
   - [ ] Family members
   - [ ] Radio
   - [ ] Community Information Centre
   - [ ] Information Service Van
   - [ ] Others (please specify……………………………………………………………)

2. By which of these means do you usually receive information from the Assembly on policies, programmes and projects?
   - [ ] Friends
   - [ ] During church meetings
   - [ ] Family members
   - [ ] Radio
   - [ ] Assembly member
   - [ ] Opinion leaders
   - [ ] Unit Committee member
   - [ ] Information Van
   - [ ] Notice Board
   - [ ] Community meetings
   - [ ] Community Information Centre
   - [ ] Others (pls specify……….)

3. Are you aware of any project currently being undertaken in your area?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
4. If your answer to 3 is yes, how did you receive information on the project?

☐ Friends  ☐ During a church meeting
☐ Assembly member  ☐ Family members
☐ Opinion leaders  ☐ Notice Board
☐ Information Van  ☐ Radio (pls specify radio station)
☐ Unit Committee member  ☐ Community meeting
☐ Community meeting  ☐ Others

5. How would you rate the general availability and access to information from the Assembly?

☐ Good  ☐ Very good  ☐ Satisfactory  ☐ Poor  ☐ Very Poor

6. Which channel would you prefer the Assembly to use in communication with you?

...................................................................................................................

7. What are your reasons for choosing the channel(s) in question 6?

...................................................................................................................
...................................................................................................................
...................................................................................................................
...................................................................................................................
RQ2: To what extent do local people participate in decision making?

8. How would you rate your ability to express your opinion/view about development project in your area?

☐ Very poor  ☐ Poor  ☐ Satisfactory  ☐ Good  ☐ Very good

9. Do you see the Assembly making any deliberate effort to seek your views/opinions in any major decision making?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

10. By which of these means do you as a member of the community usually make an input into the decision making process?

☐ Through the Assembly member  ☐ Community durbars

☐ Face to face interaction with Assembly official  ☐ Peer groups meeting

☐ Radio phone-in-programmes  ☐ Other (pls specify…………)

11. What channels do you mostly use to communicate your concerns and opinions to the Assembly (please tick as many boxes as re applicable)

☐ Letters  ☐ The Assembly member

☐ Radio phone-in programmes  ☐ Community durbars

☐ Face-to-face meeting with Assembly officials  ☐ Other
12. How would you rate the Assembly’s response to your concerns?

☐ Poor  ☐ Very Poor  ☐ Satisfactory  ☐ Good  ☐ Very Good

13. Your Assembly member is required by law to seek your opinions about any matter to be discussed by the Assembly and provide you with feedback on any decisions taken by the Assembly. Does he/she do this?

☐ Yes  ☐ No.

14. If you answered yes, how often does he meet community members?

☐ Once a month  ☐ Once every 2 weeks
☐ Once every quarter  ☐ Once in a long while

15. On a scale of 1-5 (being the least score), how would you assess the Assembly’s effort in getting you involved in decision making?

☐ Very poor  ☐ Poor  ☐ Satisfactory  ☐ Good  ☐ Very good

16. Using the spaces provided below, please specify how you think the community is involved in programme implementation

..............................................................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................................................

.................
RQ3: What factors hinder effective participatory communication in the Agona East District Assembly?

17. How would you rate your satisfaction with the communication channels used by the Assembly to get you informed about issues?

☐ Very poor  ☐ Poor  ☐ Satisfactory  ☐ Good  ☐ Very good

18. How would you rate the Assembly’s response to your concerns and opinions?

Very poor  ☐ Poor  ☐ Satisfactory  ☐ Good  ☐ Very good

19. Do you agree/disagree that the District Assembly faces some challenges in communicating with community members?

☐ Strongly disagree  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly agree  ☐ Agree

20. Please list four factors which in your opinion account for the challenges faced by the Assembly in its communication efforts?

……………………………………………………………………………………….……………
……………………………………………………………………………………..........................
............................................................................................................................................................
……………………………………………………………………………………..........................

21. In the spaces provided below please indicate how the community members are involved in making decisions on important matters concerning your community.

............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
Demographic details of respondents

22. Sex  □ Male  □ Female

23. Age (please tick in the box that corresponds with your age group)
□ 18-24  □ 25-34  □ 35-44  □ 45-54  □ 55 and above

24. Level of education
□ Primary  □ Secondary  □ Tertiary  □ None

25. Marital Status  □ Single  □ Married  □ Divorced  □ Separated
APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DISTRICT ASSEMBLY OFFICIALS

Introduction:
In partial fulfilment towards the award of an MA degree in communication studies, I am to conduct a research on a topic of my choice. In furtherance to the research on the topic, “A Study of the Communication Strategies of the Agona East District Assembly”, I need to conduct interviews with top key officials of the assembly.

The following questions have been assigned in an attempt to solicit the opinions and views of the managers of the assembly on the extent to which stakeholders are involved in decision making and what barriers if any pose as a hindrance to community involvement. The study will also try to find out the communication strategies used by the assembly. I will gladly share a copy of my final report when it is completed.

With your permission, I would like to tape record our interview.

1. What are the main channels used by the assembly to disseminate information to the public and also receive feedback?

2. Does the assembly have a communication policy?

3. What communication challenges are faced by the assembly Challenges faced in communicating with the community members?

4. As an organisation whose basic objective is to facilitate grassroots participation in decision making, please describe to me how you engage the citizens in decision making.
APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW WITH MS. EDITH E. LAWUVI-DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OFFICER, AEDA

DATE: 17/06/2012, TIME: 11:05AM, LOCATION: HER OFFICE

Me: good morning, madam
DPO: good morning
Me: thank you for seeing me
DPO: You welcome
Me: So can you tell me what channels of communication you use as an Assembly with your community members?
DPO: Errmm, what exactly do you mean by channels of communication?
Me: I mean do you use TV or radio or some other means to communicate?
DPO: As for TV no, no, no except when we have a programme and the TV stations come around. Then they will put it in their news and people will get to see. Sometimes, we send announcements of very important information to the radio stations and sometimes we write letters to community leaders to inform them of events or to ask them to give us certain information we need. Or sometimes, we also inform assembly members who also in turn inform community members of any projects in the area.
Me: thank you. So apart from what you have told me, is there any other means you communicate with the people?
DPO: Certainly. You know we also use the information van which goes round to make public announcements on various upcoming national events like framers’ day or 6th march and to invite community members to the programme. We also use the information vans and community information centres to notify the people of new rates and fees usually at the beginning of the year. And you know, like I said before, we sometimes use the chiefs and assembly members to carry out information, especially about new projects and they will in turn tell community members. You see, because they are their leaders, it is easy for them to convince the people.
Me: Thank you. From all that you have said, can you tell me what in your opinion is communication?
DPO: well, I can say it is getting the people informed of what plans the assembly has for communities or to inform them of the new rates introduced by the assembly as well as other information we have received from Cape Coast or Accra which we need to get to the people. Basically, it is giving information. Maybe most of the time.

Me: Hmm, so are you saying then that the assembly only give information to the people but the people don’t have a say?

DPO: No, of course not.

Me: tell me how they have their say.

DPO: ok. First they inform their community leaders and assembly members. Or sometimes, if they are unhappy about anything, they go to radio stations and complain.

Me: you mentioned earlier you did not use TV but sometimes you use radio. Why is that?

DPO: Look, most of our communities are rural and without light so even if we use TV, they won’t know except when their relatives in the big towns tell them they have seen this or that on TV. I mean, since I was posted here, they have charged expensively and we can’t afford that looking at our financial situation. It is better we use assembly members or the information van. That one isn’t as expensive.

Me: Oh, ok. You keep saying you use assembly members to tell the people of any projects in their area. Can you tell me if the people get to have a say in what project goes to their area?

DPO: Ah, yes, certainly. You know the work of the DPCU is mainly to develop the Medium Term Development Plan and the Annual Action Plan. To do this, especially when it comes to the medium term development plan, what we do is to hold stakeholder consultative meeting. So at this meeting, various representatives of the people in the communities come together and inform us which areas they need to develop. So for instance, one community may list school, rehabilitation of roads, and provision of a public toilet or a skip container. When they list their needs, we help them to put them in an order of priority and we tackle them one at a time. So yes before a project is taken to a community, the people must have made a request for it.

Me: you just mentioned DPCU, what is it?

DPO: Oh, it is the District Planning Co-ordinating Unit and it is made up of all heads of decentralised departments. However, it is the Planning Unit which puts everything together.

Me: I’m sure you just described project identification. Are the community members in any way involved in project implementation?
DPO: To an extent yes they are. I mean monitoring teams are not made up of only officers of the assembly. They also include the assembly man and other community leaders or individuals appointed by the chiefs.

Me: Let me take you back a bit. You mentioned earlier that you communicate about projects and plans as well as any information you receive from Cape Coast or Accra. Would you say that you face any difficulties in this?

DPO: Yes. You see, there are times when Cape Coast or Accra may request for particular information on a community which we don’t have at the office and they need within a short time. And it means there is pressure on us and we also put pressure on assembly members to get us the information. But because of time factor, sometimes the information we get might not be so accurate. Then I told you before of our financial situation. Sometimes we delay in getting some information across because you will ask Director for fuel and he says there’s no fuel. It’s difficult really sometimes.

Me: thank you for your time.

DPO: Welcome. In case of anything I’ll be here.

Me: Yeah, sure.
INTERVIEW WITH MR. SAAKA IBRAHIM- DISTRICT CO-ORDINATING DIRECTOR, AEDA

DATE: 17/06/2012  TIME: 11:40AM  LOCATION: HIS OFFICE

Me: good morning sir.

DCD: good morning

Me: thank you for allowing me in

DCD: You are welcome

Me: let’s start by you telling me if your administration has any communication strategy or policy.

DCD: I did not meet any such document upon assuming duty and we have not yet developed one but this is by no means to say we do not regard the place of communication in the scheme of things.

Me: Do you plan to develop one soon?

DCD: it is not in our plan this year. Maybe we’ll consider it in later years. But for now it is not in our plans.

Me: Do you deem communication important for your operations?

DCD: Like I said earlier, we may not have what you call a communication strategy but that does not mean we disregard the place of communication. Communication is important in everything we do in this life. You have a problem with your wife, you talk about it and that is communication. Your child misbehaves; you let him know he is misbehaving. Nothing can be done without communication.

Me: what would you say communication is?

DCD: I would say it is an interaction between two or more persons. It also giving and receiving information on policies and programmes to those who matter.

Me: Thank you. Tell me then what communication channels and methods the assembly uses in its operations.

DCD: Well first of all mostly you know as a government institution most of our communication is through letters, memorandums; we do not do much by word of mouth. If we need any information from the community members, we write to them and if they need the assembly to
attend to any particular issues within their communities, they write to us through their chiefs and sometimes their assembly members.

Me: What of Radio or TV?

DCD: Yes, we do radio too. Mostly radio is used during assembly meetings and other important events organised by the Assembly. This way we are able to reach a wider coverage and we are also able reach even people outside our district. We also do TV but that is on a smaller scale looking at the costs involved. Occasionally we also rely on the print media to carry out information about our projects. But on the whole, we rely on the newspapers to advertise our contracts.

Me: Is there any available means of receiving feedback?

DCD: Yes, mostly community members meet their chiefs and assembly members over their grievances and these are presented to us during our general assembly meetings for discussion. If it is something we can immediately do something about we take action, otherwise we file for reference and consideration in the future. We include them in the next year’s plan. People also walk in daily to make their complaints to us. We sometimes ask them to write to us or consult their assembly member. This help us to take any future actions necessary to solve the situation.

Me: in determining projects for various communities, how involved are the community members themselves?

DCD: usually for every four years the assembly develops the Medium Term Development Plan which is spearheaded by the DPCU. The MTDP; that is the Medium Term Development Plan usually feeds the Annual Action Plan for the next four years. In preparing the Medium Term Development Plan, we usually meet community members at the Area Council level to solicit their views on any projects based on their needs as a community. These enable the assembly to determine which activity or plan to include for which community.

Me: So you bring all communities and their members together in a common forum?

DCD: Ha, no. Not all community members. Usually before the Area Council meeting with the Assembly, they would have met at their various community levels with their chiefs, assembly members and unit committee members and decided on which needs to be presented at the Area council forum. And so at the Area council, what we have is a representation of the various communities which make up any particular area council.

Me: what of implementation and monitoring of projects?

DCD: They are involved as well. In project supervision and monitoring, we try as much as possible to involve members of beneficiary communities and their assembly members. However there have been times when community representatives have not been available for site
monitoring. For social intervention programmes like the School Feeding Programme, members of beneficiary communities are involved at various levels and so we have the School implementation committee which is responsible for monitoring the programme at the school level.

Me: What challenges does the assembly face in its communication efforts?

DCD: In cases where we have relied on assembly members and sometimes community leaders to disseminate some information, there have been occasions where information had been distorted in some form. In such instances, we have had to go back again with the same message. We depend on them a lot to send and receive information and when this happens it affects us a lot. When this happens, we tend to lose the trust and confidence of community members.

It is also difficult for us to say that we are able to get the views of all communities lined up at the area council meetings. You see at the area council level, a number of communities come together and it is difficult for me to say as the Co-ordinating Director that the felt needs of all communities are captured. Remember I told you that the needs presented here is what has already been decided on at various community meetings held with the community leaders. I must say that there are times when some community representatives have failed to take part in this process because they were not given the chance to present their needs even when they were present; hence they did not see the need for such stakeholder meetings. What they fail to understand is that if a hundred people turn up for the community stakeholder meeting, it would be difficult for all hundred of them to be heard considering limited time factor. Then again sometimes, people tend to present their individual needs rather than presenting a need which is common to the entire community. Sometimes at these meetings you find people soliciting for school fees for their wards or some other kind of personal assistance; and clearly you will agree with me that such forum is not to address individual grievances.

Me: I see. So what other challenges can you talk about?

DCD: I think there is so much political interference in running the Assembly and this no doubt affect communication. How can I for instance as the co-ordinating director only get to know that the president is visiting my district only a day before the supposed visit when the DCE had known days ahead without informing me. And it’s not like he was coming for a political rally. What better arrangements can I make to receive him? Such attitude puts so much pressure on me as an administrator. Not only do they interfere they delay information as well. There will be times, an organization would approach us as an assembly to offer assistance and these interference again rears its head. There was a time… I think last year when the Latter Day Saints people wanted to help us provide water to some of our water ailing communities and instead of the DCE to refer the issue to the Water and Sanitation desk, he refers to his party executives. What business do they have in running the affairs of the assembly? They ended up listing
communities which were already earmarked to benefit from a similar project funded by the Community Water and Sanitation Agency.

I can also talk of financial constraints which does not allow us to hold as many community forums as we would have wished. We should have had at least an information centre in all of our major communities. As it is now there are only two which belong to the government at Nsaba and Duakwa and even those two are not in the best of condition. There are only two information officers handling the whole district and we cannot recruit more due to our financial situation even on temporal employment agreement and the ministry is not recruiting any new officers. And even these two officers are not qualified in terms of being trained communication people. They have just been through the system and what they do mostly is to disseminate information and sometimes answer questions as well as report on national activities to the regional and national offices.

Me: Thank you very much sir for your time.

DCD: My pleasure talking to you.
INTERVIEW WITH HON. MARTIN LUTHER OBENG, DISTRICT CHIEF EXECUTIVE, AEDA

DATE: 21/06/12 TIME: 2:00PM VENUE: HIS OFFICE

Me: good afternoon sir.

DCE: afternoon. Hope this will be short, I’m a busy man

Me: yes, it will be. Thank you for your time

Me: honourable, my first question is how important is communication to you as an Assembly?

DCE: It is very important to us in our operations especially for me as the figure head representative of the president, His Excellency John Atta Mills in the district. By the confidence the president has invested in me, I take particular interest in ensuring that government policy and other programmes are communicated to the people, my people in such a way that will enhance the better Ghana agenda. You see, for the people to know what his Excellency is doing for them, as the figurehead here I must be able to let the people know the exact work we are doing for them on the ground. And to do this, we have to have effective communication with the communities and my people so they’ll feel the better Ghana agenda. So for me as DCE communication is very very important to this assembly and we don’t joke with it at all.

Me: communication then is very important to you. So by what means do you communicate about government policies and the Assembly programmes to the people?

DCE: Look my sister, we use all possible means. For me especially I make it a point to visit the communities from time to time to meet them with their chiefs and brief them on what we are doing as an assembly for them. The party has communication people at our various branches and I also meet them and give them the latest information to give to the people. They need to know the efforts we are making to better their life. You see most of the time people are ready to listen to those they trust and that is other people in the community like these our party communication people, their chiefs and assembly members. As a DCE for the people, I also make myself available to the local radio stations and engage the people through radio programmes. You see the NDC government is a government for the people so my doors are always open for anyone to walk in and seek information from me. We use all means possible my sister, to communicate with our people.

Me: And how do you also receive information from the people. Like receive feedback on information you have sent or get to know of what the people might want you to do.

DCE: again I use the communication people a lot. They inform me of anything they hear from their people and I take action if I should. I also make it a point to monitor radio stations every
morning and evening. This way I am able to know of what people think of many things the assembly is currently involved in. you know with the advent of radio call-in programmes, you are able to learn a lot you would not know by just sitting in the office. For me I interact with the community members and their leaders a lot and I get to know more. They inform me of what they would like the assembly to do for them to enhance their lives and for the sake of the better Ghana agenda, I present this to my management and the executive committee for redress. I try to make myself available. Sometimes together with some of my officers we go on radio programmes to try to explain certain issues to the public. And then at other times they invite met to their programmes like harvest or festivals. We also receive letters from them.

Me: in all this, do you or the assembly encounter any challenges?

DCE: yes. We face challenges every day. Sometimes the people you rely on to give information give you the wrong information. It is therefore important that any information I receive, I cross check with other people to be sure. Then because going on radio is expensive we don’t do it often except when the station itself invites us for a programme then we won’t have to spend much. We recently received a proposal from a TV station to take part in a programme which will help us tell the people more about the current programmes and projects of the assembly and we’re considering it. Secondly, our political opponents do lot of damage when it comes to information. They go on the ground and twist the facts about one project or the other. Because we are limited in our finances, we can’t do every project as the same time. As soon as you start on in some community, your opponents will use it against you in the other community, telling the people things that are not true and that is very disturbing. We don’t do politics that way.

Me: so apart from what you have outlined above, how else do you get the people to tell the assembly of their grievances and to support programmes and projects initiated by the assembly?

DCE: Like I said I meet with them sometimes in an informal setting and they tell me of their challenges and what the assembly should do to support them. So mostly, projects we send are those the people have requested for themselves and it’s easy for them to support such projects. There are few times where we have taken an intervention to a community and we have faced opposition especially from those who do not support our party. During such times we fall on the chiefs and other respected persons to help us convince the people to support. Then again from time to time we do meet them in stakeholder meetings where they have the opportunity to tell us about their needs. These are considered and included in our plans. All this is apart from the occasional requests and petitions made by their chiefs and assembly members on their behalf.

Me: thank you once again for your time, Honourable.

DCE: You are welcome.
GROUP INTERVIEW WITH FIVE (5) ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

DATE: 21/06/12    TIME: 2:30PM    VENUE: ASSEMBLY HALL

Me: good afternoon Honourables
ALL: afternoon

Me: Thank you for your time; this will be a short discussion.
ALL: ok

Me: So can you please tell me what your role is as assembly members in the development agenda of the district?

Duakwa: I bring my peoples’ problem to the assembly and I also tell the people what we agree at assembly meeting (others nod in agreement). For example if the road not good, I tell PM and DCE and Director and they fix it. Is just that sometimes you tell them aaahh and they don’t do anything and the people get angry and they say you are not doing your work.

Me: So how do you know of your peoples’ problems?

Duakwa: Oh easy. Every 3 months we meet and discuss our issues. So I put them down and when we go for meeting I present them. Also, when the people see you, they come to you and make a complain about something and I get to know.

Nsaba: on my part what I do is to meet with the unit committee members to discuss issues with them. I also go round listening to what the people are saying and the issue most people talk about is what I see as their most pressing need. I send this to the assembly or sometimes to the appropriate sub-committee committee.

Mankrong: I also put information I gather as I go about my work every day together. Sometimes too I’ll be in the house and various groups of people like the youth group and the keep fit club come with ideas of how they think we can develop the community, I present some to the assembly and those we can take care of as a community I inform the chiefs and if they agree we take it up. And during Akwambo too we discuss issues of concern to us and present to those who matter.

Kwanyako: on my part before any assembly meeting I make it a point to meet the community and discuss with them issues which are of major concern to them and present to the assembly. Sometimes too a department of the assembly organise a programme where we all go to discuss issues like the area council forums organised by the DPCU. Last year too the education office organised a stakeholders meeting where we discussed how to improve education.

Me: so what are some of the problems you face in trying to communicate about projects?
Mankrong: sometimes you know our electoral area and when you have to travel to the communities especially those communities which are in the bush. You have to use the motor or sometimes when you don’t have money to buy petrol you walk. If the assembly can give us some money, like we can visit them more often. Sometimes too when you call for a meeting they won’t come. You see, these people, you call them for a meeting they won’t come. They want others to come so that they will ask them what you said or sometimes too when they come and they don’t understand, they won’t ask you the assembly member, they will talk and say anything they like.

Duakwa: at times too when I organise meetings with the community to discuss a project, because people say I am NDC, the other people who are NPP do not attend. According to them anything I have to say is to promote NDC so they talk against it. As for the motor and money, every assembly man has the same problem. We have complained on so many times to the administration but they are not doing anything about it.

Me: who else has anything to say?

ASAFO: You see, we are the assembly, we take the decisions and have the power, but sometimes, you’ll see the DCE and the technocrats doing things without informing us. When you complain, they say it is an emergency. But we are on the ground; the people ask us all the questions before they will come to the assembly. If you don’t know the answers, then the people will think you are not doing your job as assembly man. We the assembly men know what the people want but they just get up and do anything they want.

Me: so if the administration has any information to give, what do they do?

Nsaba: Well most of the time they call to inform us so we’ll also inform the people concerned. Or they make announcements at the information centre and also the van goes round to make the announcement. They also write to the churches and mosques to make some announcements for them.

Kwanyako: at other times too they put up notices in public places. But like my brother said most of the time they tell us and we tell the people and the chiefs.

ASAFO: when you listen to the local radio stations too, you’ll know a lot about what the assembly is doing.

Me: thank you all for your time Honourables. That will be all for now. Thank you once again.

ALL: thank you too.