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## **Linkages between the Agricultural Development Programme and the Local Government Agricultural Department in Southeast, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The study assessed the inter-organizational relationship between the agricultural development programme (ADP) and the local government agricultural department (LGAD) in implementing participatory extension policy in Southeast, Nigeria. Two sets of questionnaires were used in collecting data from purposively selected 260 staff of the ADP and LGAD personnel involved in the execution of agricultural extension projects of the two agencies. Data were presented and analysed using descriptive statistics. Greater proportion (41.5%) of the ADP staff and LGAD personnel were within the age range of 40-49 years. About 87% of ADP staff and 90% of LGAD personnel were males. There was existence of formal and informal linkage between the two agencies that should be strengthened by governmental effort for more extension coverage.*

**Keywords:** Linkage, Agricultural Development Programme, Local Government Agricultural Department

### **Introduction**

The welfare of the rural people is tied to agriculture with the vast majority deriving their livelihood primarily from agricultural activities. Before the oil boom, Nigeria was relatively self-sufficient in food and fibre production, but later became a net importer of food commodities due to neglect of agricultural sector (Matemilola and Elegbede, 2017). For food supply to meet the demand of the teeming population, Nigeria agricultural extension policy planning and implementation should be seriously addressed, so as to boost productivity (Abdu-Raheem, 2013).

The Federal ministry of Agriculture and Rural development (FMARD, 2016) states that unstable policy framework, non-implementation of political commitment, persistent shortcoming in agricultural technology and extension, infrastructural deficit, poor finance and risk management, and un-streamlined institutional structures have been identified as some of the major problems against meaningful development of agriculture and an attempt to

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ameliorate these constraints by the Federal Government led to the adoption of the agricultural promotion policy (2016-2020). The policy further emphasizes the importance of participatory agricultural extension to the goal attainment of the agricultural sector; hence improvement in agricultural production necessitates appropriate technological generation, transfer and utilization. Technology in this context can be defined as the latest scientific discoveries that have been adjusted to suit local conditions at highest possible degree (Ayanwuyi, Adeola & Oyetoro, 2013).

Nigeria has witnessed great investments on agricultural research (at both national and international research centres) and technological developments which has resulted to significant increase in yield of many crops and livestock, effective diseases/pests control, adequate food quality, among others. Nigeria extension system is one of the most important public service institutions with wide range of responsibilities for agriculture and rural developments. Extension being the bridging link attempts to change the rural farmers through educational methods to adopt innovations that are capable of improving their agricultural practices (Altalb, Filipek, & Skowron, 2015). Highlighting the importance of participatory extension services, Mandalios (2014) enumerated some of the services to include: identification of farmers' problems, transferring same to research for solutions and using the solutions to help farmers for increased skills, knowledge, practice which result in high productivity. Besides, constructing access roads, provision of water, storage facilities, processing units, and linking farmers to market and source credit has been identified as added functions of extension as stated by Enugu State Agricultural Development Programme. These activities of extension can be made more effective and efficient in the atmosphere of inter-organizational relationship with governmental authority that is closer to the local people.

Inter-organizational relationship or linkage is an approach that enables an organization to be more efficient in its service by the virtue of possessing the potential for wider coverage. It focuses on how organizations work together. It is based on the premise that collaboration among community organizations leads to a more comprehensive coordinated approach to a complex issue that can be achieved by one organization. Inter-organizational relationship is one of the important factors that lead to improvement of business performance (Najafian and Colabi, 2014). Inter-organizational relationships are relatively enduring transactions, flows, and linkages that occur among or between an organization and one or more organizations in its environment. This relationship can be on a formal or informal ground. Inter-organizational relationship gives stability and trust to service. It creates access to new ideas, material, and resources, among other benefits.

Nigeria Agricultural Extension policy edict of 1992, directed the states' Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) to establish management committees at the zonal levels with Local Government Agricultural Department (LGAD). The primary objective is to create link between ADP and LGAD for implementing agricultural and rural development projects in the zone. Hence, the study sought to identify the perceived areas of formal and informal linkage between ADP and LGAD in south east Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

The study was carried out in the south east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It lies within latitude 4° 45'N and 7° 15'N and longitudes 5° 30'E in the tropical rainfall with a total land area of 78, 612Km<sup>2</sup>. The zone is made up of five states namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. It has a population of 16,138,729 million people and a density of 241 persons/ km<sup>2</sup>. It was observed that the month of July was regarded as the busiest month of the year for the extension agents (Personal observation). The fact is that July period was regarded as the peak of farm activities and extension personnel (EP) are meant to attend to farmers.

The study covered all the five states ADP units and LGAD in southeast, Nigeria. The top administrators from each of the two organizations were purposively selected. This was because their behaviour is important in guiding the direction of their respective organizations. It is assumed that their behaviour, is a function of their perceived environment.

The field officers from the two organizations were randomly selected. Those from LGAD included the regional agricultural coordinators, area agricultural officers, principal agricultural officers and agricultural superintendent. Those from the ADP included block extension supervisors, subject matters specialist, higher agricultural superintendents, and area extension officers. One hundred and thirty (130) respondents from the ADP and One hundred and thirty (130) from LGAD, making it a total of 260 respondents were questioned for the study using validated questionnaire.

To identify the perceived areas of formal and informal linkage between ADP staff and LGAD personnel, respondents were asked to tick yes or no against list of variables such as joint participatory agricultural extension project conception, joint participatory agricultural extension programme planning, joint participatory agricultural extension project implementation, among others. Data was presented and analysed using descriptive statistics.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Personal Characteristics of the ADP staff and LGAD personnel.**

Table 1 reveals that a greater proportion (41.5%) of the ADP staff and LGAD personnel were within the age bracket of 40-49 years. This implies that the staff of the two agencies were in their productive age, which could be of great advantage in supplying the needed techniques in programme implementation. Groups within the above age range are considered to be motivational, innovative and adaptive individuals. The table also shows that the majority of the ADP staff (86.9%) and LGAD personnel (90%) were male. This implies that implementation of participatory agricultural extension programme was dominated by male. The result conforms to the popular axiom that males are more involved in government paid jobs than females, who mostly dominate domestic work and home-making. This shows gender imbalance in the recruitment of workers. Therefore, it is necessary that agricultural policy on the implementation of participatory extension programmes should take into consideration gender related issues and peculiarities. The majority of the ADP staff (69.2%) and LGAD (79%) personnel were HND/BSc. holders. This indicates that most of the staff had higher educational qualifications; which built them for top positions. It is expected that there will be higher performance in inter-organizational participation in agricultural extension duties which

could result to increase in productivity, enhance ability to understand and evaluate new production technologies as well as achieve the organizational goals and objectives. The majority of the staff of ADP (86.9%) and LGAD (90%) were married. Greater proportion (46.9%, 45%) had household size of 1-3 persons. This suggests that the staff are responsible because they have wards in their care.

The majority (60.0%) of the ADP staff were on salary grade level of 10-13 while the greater proportion (48.1%) of the LGAD personnel were on salary grade level of 4-6. This shows that staff of the ADP are more positional and financially privileged than staff of the LGAD. This could affect ease of association and linkage; people relate more and easily with those of same status with themselves. All staff of the LGAD were members of staff union, while only 60% of ADP staff belong. This could imply that staff of the LGAD have stronger voice and are better positioned to fight for their common good than ADP staff. This is similar to the common adage ``together will stand and divided will fall``. According to Toromade (2018), being a member of staff union increases socialization and cross breeding of knowledge, skills and ideas for effective implementation of participatory agricultural extension technologies as well as capacity building. Greater proportion of the ADP staff (35.5%) and LGAD personnel (43.9%) had work experience of 16years and above. This implies that the staff should be good at what they do, as experience is known to impart knowledge. Counting on the years of experience, it is also expected that there should be higher performance of inter-organizational duties which may result to increase in the realization of organizational objectives. The majority (60%) of the ADP staff were in the rank of zonal managers, chief executive officers and chief technical officers while only about 27% of the LGAD personnel were in that same cadre. Greater proportion (43.07%) of the LGAD staff were in the rank of agricultural assistants, agricultural demonstrators, and field overseers. This suggests the possibility of a weak horizontal relationship between the two agencies, as bonding is always very difficult to achieve among officers of unequal ranks.

**Table 1: Personal characteristics of the respondents**

Socio-economic variables	ADP staff (n=130)	LGAD personnel (n=130)
	Percentage	Percentage
<b>1. Age (years)</b>		
20-29	5.4	17.7
30-39	36.9	26.9
40-49	41.5	41.5
50 and above	16.2	13.9
<b>2. Sex</b>		
Male	86.9	90.0
Female	13.1	10
<b>3. Level of formal education attainment</b>		
FLSC	0.0	0.0
WASC/GCE	8.5	23.8
OND	15.4	10.8
HND/BSc	69.2	60.8
MSc.	6.2	4.6
Ph.D.	0.8	0.0
<b>4. Family size</b>		
1-3	46.9	45.0
4-6	40.0	36
7 and above	13.1	18.5
<b>5. Salary grade level</b>		
4-6	9.23	48.1
7-9	20.76	20.8
10-13	60.0	26.9
14-17	10.0	9.2
<b>6. Membership of staff union</b>		
Non-member	40.0	0.0
Member	60.0	100
<b>7. Work experience (years.)</b>		
1-5	11.5	9.2
6-10	33.1	30.0
11-15	20.1	16.9
16 and above	35.4	43.9
<b>8. Rank in office:</b>		
i. PS; PM; CAO	10.0	9.2
ii. ZM; CEO; CTO	60.0	26.9
iii. HASs; ASs; AASs	20.8	20.8
iv. AAs; ADs; FOs	9.2	43.1
<b>9. Marital status</b>		
Married	86.9	90.0
Single/unmarried	13.1	10.0

Source: Field Survey, 2013.

PS=Permanent Secretary; PM= Project Manager; CAO=Chief Agricultural Officers; ZM=Zonal Manager  
 CEO=Chief Executive Officers; CTO=Chief Technical Officer; HAS=Higher Agricultural Superintendents  
 AS=Agricultural Superintendents; AAS=Assistant Agricultural Superintendents; CEAs=Community Extension  
 Agents; AAs= Agricultural Assistants; ADs= Agricultural Demonstrators; FOs= Field Overseers

## **Perception of Areas of Linkage by ADP and LGAD**

Table 4 shows that joint monthly technology review meetings (MTRMs) (97.7%), joint funding participatory agricultural extension projects (86.2%), joint participatory agricultural extension project implementation (83.8%), joint training workshop for farmers and other stakeholders' in extension (73.8%), and joint staff training in participatory agricultural extension (62.3%) were areas where ADP had major linkage with LGAD. This shows that ADP value monthly reviewing of technologies with LGAD. This could be to better situate technologies in a way that farmers can appreciate it better. This agrees with the extension principle of ensuring stakeholders' involvement and participation in technology development and dissemination. High level of linkage was also recorded against joint funding participatory agricultural extension projects. This implies that ADP does not bear the financial burden associated with extension project alone but involves LGAD so as to achieve a far more reaching effect of projects. Pulling of resources by two or more bodies towards an end could facilitate speedy project actualization. It could also help to prevent waste of resources through cost duplication, and results in more substantial savings (Martinuzzi, 2017).

Joint participatory agricultural extension project implementation was also identified as area of strong linkage of ADP with LGAD. This shows that ADP engages LGAD in extension project implementation. This could be to garner more presence and coverage among clientele, as most extension projects are time bound. And hence, the services of more personnel could speed up implementation. Joint training workshop for farmers, staff and other stakeholders' in extension was enlisted as area of linkage of ADP with LGAD. This agrees with the core drive of every extension effort in which emphasis is often placed on mainstreaming stakeholders in programme initiation, implementation and evaluation which could engender sustainability of intervention programmes.

Table 4 reveals that LGAD were similar with ADP in their perception on areas of linkage. The results are as follows: joint participatory agricultural extension project implementation (92.3%), joint monthly technology review meetings (MTRM) (92.5%), joint funding participatory agricultural extension projects (90.8%), joint staff training in participatory agricultural extension (76.9%), and joint training workshop for farmers and other stakeholders' in extension (70.8%).

The pooled data show that joint monthly technology review meetings (MTRMs) (95.0%), joint funding participatory agricultural extension projects (88.5%), joint participatory agricultural extension project implementation (88.1%), joint training workshop for farmers and other stakeholders' in extension (72.3%), and joint staff training in participatory agricultural extension (69.6%) were areas where ADP and LGAD had major linkage.

This reveals that there are common grounds for the staff of the two agencies on topical extension matters, unlike the report of Agwu *et al.* (2012) which recorded weak and/or often non-existent of linkages and interactions among actors. These areas of common grounds or linkages must be permeable enough for easy flow of messages and responses with cognizance that when such ground is established then a link is created from the view point. Though, effective implementation of linkage activities can be achieved through different means depending on the forms and basis of interaction, yet it can be predicated that reaching

a formal agreement was in itself a step towards effective condition because with a formal agreement, many of the issues involved in exchange situations could be apparently resolved without much difficulty. This relationship could help in repositioning of extension for wider coverage as extension activities have been known to be manpower demanding.

**Table 4: Perception of areas of linkage by ADP and LGAD**

Linkage areas	Area of linkage with LGAD by ADP (%) (n=130)	Areas of linkage with ADP by LGAD (%) (n=130)	Pooled data (%) (n=260)
Joint participatory agricultural extension project conception	32.3	24.6	28.5
Joint participatory agricultural extension programme planning	26.9	16.9	21.9
Joint participatory agricultural extension project implementation	83.8	92.3	88.1
Joint participatory agricultural extension project monitoring and evaluation	32.3	20.8	26.6
Joint monthly technology review meetings (MTRM)	97.7	92.3	95.0
Joint staff training in participatory agricultural extension	62.3	76.9	69.6
Joint training workshop for farmers and other stakeholders' in extension	73.8	70.8	72.3
Joint funding participatory agricultural extension projects	86.2	90.8	88.5

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study showed existence of inter-organizational linkage between ADP staff and LGAD personnel in joint monthly technology review meetings, joint funding participatory agricultural extension projects, joint participatory agricultural extension project implementation, joint training workshop for farmers and other stakeholders', and joint staff training in participatory agricultural extension. These linkages when properly harness and build upon could reduce to a large extent the manpower deficiency faced by extension and in turn reposition extension for increase agricultural productivity in the nation. This can be achieved via state policy on engagement and synchronization of related governmental efforts towards an end. Government should facilitate the building of healthy, proper and coherent relationship between agricultural extension workers and staff at local government areas, through staff exchange and programme review meetings.

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