

'That extension will not go into extinction': experts' opinion on the public extension service in Nigeria

Eniola Fabusoro, Kolawole Adebayo

University of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Abeokuta, Nigeria - ennydrfab@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract: *Decades of a persistent food crisis in the developing world, particularly Africa, coupled with budgetary crises, threaten the future of agricultural extension. The present state of the public agricultural extension service in Nigeria is a growing concern among practitioners, government officials, international development agencies, the academia, researchers, farmers and other stakeholders. To many, agricultural extension in Nigeria should by now have entered a phase of renewal to meet the importunate challenges of poverty eradication and increased food production. However, the programmes that were blessings to the nation in the late 80's to early 90's have become a burden two decades after the World Bank's funding had ceased. The State Governments responsible for sustaining the funding of the programmes have been found wanting in many areas. This situation has left extension at the mercies of tailor-made external grants and focus budgeted internally generated revenue. This study therefore examines the factors relevant to the sustainability of extension service in Nigeria based on information received from selected experts. Taking the Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme as a case, the study examines the funding structure for extension in the last five years vis-à-vis its budgetary provision in order to ascertain the adequacy of funds for extension activities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study also identifies constraints involved in the implementation of its stipulated activities and obtains experts' opinion on pragmatic efforts for ensuring that extension in Nigeria do not go into extinction. Results obtained reveal that inadequate funding is a major problem to extension services in the State and the opinion of experts selected was not in support of extension privatization. Other issues such as strategies and methods, linkages, packaging and delivery of extension messages, community participation relating to extension fulfilling its role among its clientele were identified and presented. For survival and effectiveness of the public extension service in Nigeria, the stakeholders need to tackle fundamental problems of inadequate funding, unmotivating job and work situation, weak research-extension linkages among others.*

Keywords: *agricultural extension, opinion, Ogun State, Nigeria*

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the present state of the public extension service in Nigeria as being provided by the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs). This analysis is based on the professional opinion of extension practitioners in the academia and the public service. The essence is to provide an 'in-house' assessment of extension service provision by the ADPs and obtain suggestions for improving the public extension service in Nigeria.

Decades of persistent food crisis in the developing world, particularly Africa, coupled with budgetary crises, threaten the future of agricultural extension. The present state of the public agricultural extension service in Nigeria pose a growing concern among practitioners, government officials, international development agencies, the academia, researchers, farmers and other stakeholders. To many, agricultural extension in Nigeria should by now have entered a phase of renewal to meet the importunate challenges of poverty eradication and increased food production. However, the case of the ADPs saddled with the responsibility of carrying out extension activities in Nigeria is pathetic. The programmes that were blessings to the nations in the late 80's to early 90's have become a burden two decades after the expiration of World Bank's funding.

The basis for Nigeria's Agricultural Development Projects was laid in 1953 by the World Bank. During this period, agriculture was the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. However, the use of the World Bank's assistance began in 1975 with the establishment of enclave ADPs in Gombe, Gusau and Funtua.

The success of this initiative stimulated the establishment of more enclave ADPs in Lafia, Ayangba, Bida, Ilorin, Oyo North and Ekiti-Akoko (Omotayo, *et al.*, 2001). As a result of early successes in the enclave ADPs, the Agricultural Development Projects were made to domicile in States of the Federation with the establishment of State-wide ADPs between 1981 and 1989. At this time, the funding arrangement of the ADPs was designed to be a tripartite funding arrangement of the World Bank (60%), Federal Government of Nigeria (10%) and the State Governments (30%).

An impact assessment of the performance of Nigeria's extension service under the World Bank funding arrangement showed a positive impact in terms of growth in the output of major food crops and adoption of innovations by farmers. The assessment showed that about 60 percent adoption rates were recorded on improved varieties of cassava, 75 percent adopted fertilizer technology in sorghum and 50 percent adopted maize variety (Omotayo *et al.*, 2001). In terms of growth in output, Nigeria recorded a cumulative growth rate of 8 percent in sorghum, 11 percent in rice, 8 percent in maize and 12 percent in cassava between 1986 and 1996. A similar assessment by National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS), (1997) indicated that almost one million farm families were reached by extension service nationwide. Within the period of the World Bank funding, the ADPs had over 7000 extension agents and operated in 109 extension zones. The ADPs also made significant impact in structuring of the farming areas in Nigeria. A major lesson learnt with the involvement of World Bank in funding the Nigerian extension service that a properly focused and well-funded extension service can serve as a hinge for agricultural transformation and development in a developing country.

The withdrawal of the World Bank funding in the tripartite arrangement and its effects on the effective functioning of the public extension service in Nigeria has been widely documented (Adebayo, 1998; Apantaku and Legacy, 1998; Apantaku, *et al.*, 2000). The studies reveal that the activities of many of the ADPs became crippled soon after the expiration of the World Bank funding. Since that period, the sustainability of the extension services has been under threat as many of the State ADPs could not continue to support services that were provided to farmers. The Federal and State governments responsible for sustaining the funding of the programmes have been found wanting in many areas. This situation has left extension activities at the mercies of tailor-made external grants and focus budgeted internally generated revenue.

In view of the foregoing, the study provides pragmatic initiatives for improving the status of the publicly-funded extension services. To do this, the paper focused on the Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP) by examining its present funding status vis-à-vis its budgetary requirements for remaining in the business of extension. The paper highlights some basic constraints to achieving this objective and proffers the suggestions of experts.

The Ogun State ADP (OGADEP)

OGADEP was created in 1986 as one of the first multi-state ADPs with World Bank support. OGADEP is responsible for improving farmers' knowledge and skills, promoting the adoption of improved production practices and enhancing productivity of farmers in the state. OGADEP covers over 260,000 farm families and operates four-zonal structure namely, Abeokuta, Ilaro, Ijebu-Ode and Ikenne. The zones are made up of blocks while the cells constitute the blocks. The zones are made up of 4 to 5 Local government areas while the block represents each Local Government Areas in the zone. The cells are major communities within extension blocks, handled by the Field Level Extension Agents (FLEAs) and report directly to the block extension supervisor (BES).

This paper was based on secondary data collected from annual reports of OGADEP and the records of the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) Unit of the organization as well as published articles related to the study's objectives. Additional information was sought from 48 extension practitioners. The information provided formed the core of expert opinion presented within the paper. Figure 1 shows the map of Ogun State with an insert map of Nigeria.

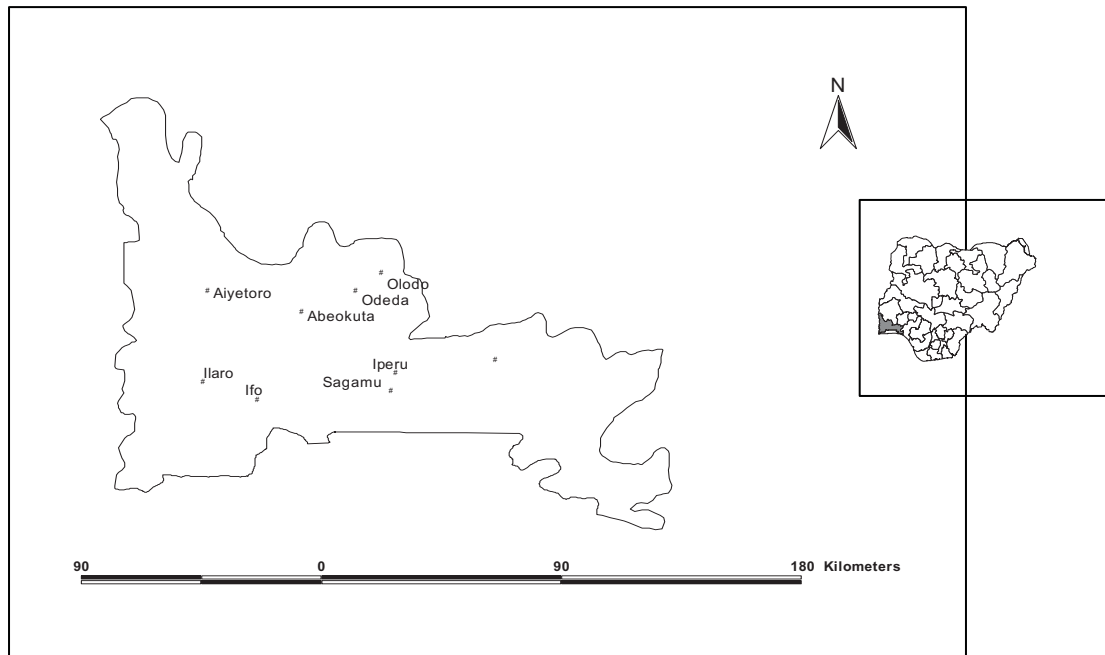


Figure 1. Map of Ogun State with an insert map of Nigeria

Status of funding of extension organizations: the case of OGADEP

A desk review by Adebayo et al., (1999) and Adebayo and Idowu (2000) showed that between 1986 and 1996, The World Bank provided N24million per annum which was about 72% of total capital outlay for funding OGADEP during that decade. Over the period, this was the largest share of OGADEP's funds. According to the OGADEP Annual Report (1997), the contribution of Ogun State Government was about 16% during the period while that of the Federal Government was about 5 percent; International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) provided the balance of 6.9 percent (Adebayo and Idowu, 2000:86-87). By 1997 after World Bank's withdrawal, the average fund available had fallen by 21 percent and the commitment of the State and Federal governments started declining.

In the last five years, the State government has been the sole financier of extension activities. Information obtained from the experts indicates that the Federal Government has not made any contribution towards extension in the State in the last ten years. This has put the entire burden of funding of extension to the State Government. Some of the experts opined that the fund made available by the State Government has not been enough to meet the needs of OGADEP. The agency in recent times has cut down its programmes and activities in order to operate within the available funds. According to information obtained from the selected experts, the organization has not been able to carry out its mandatory functions effectively. For instance, FLEAs do not facilities for mobility and demonstrations that could enhance their efforts. The organization has been performing marginally and has reduced its activities. Table 1 shows the amount actual and approved budget for extension services from 2002 to 2007 and the estimates for the extension programmes.

In the last five years, the actual budget of OGADEP is often cut by about 16 percent. Information obtained from the expert selected indicates that the budgeted amount is not actually sufficient to run the activities of the organization. There are restrictions by the Central Budget Office through a budget ceiling for OGADEP annual budget. For instance, the in the last ten years, OGADEP has not received any capital vote due to the ceiling placed by the government. Therefore, about 95 percent of the organization's budget is for recurrent expenditure.

Table 1. Funding structure of OGADEP (2002-2007)

Year	Actual budget requirement (₦)	Approved budget (₦)	% approved in the actual budget	*Estimate of Expenditure on salaries/ allowances and other emoluments (₦)	*Budget for extension sub programmes (₦) % of approved	*Balance for other expenditure (recurrent and capital) (₦)
2002	na	94,837,705	-	75,870,164	1.23	17,800,308
2003	133,000,000	100,794,726	75.8	76,603,992	1.58	22,594,818
2004	117,000,000	106,287,958	90.8	79,715,969	1.12	25,382,199
2005	136,700,000	80,457,000	58.9	73,215,870	2.02	5,614,111
2006	180,000,000	172,541,380	95.9	86,270,690	1.16	84,264,395
2007	153,000,000	101,960,347	66.6	86,666,295	1.60	13,658,839

Source: Records of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (2002-2007)

*The values are estimates based on averages of expenditure of salaries and allowances and amount allocated to extension component for the period

Conversion ratio: Naira to US Dollar: ₦118 to US\$1 and Naira to Euro: ₦179 to Euro 1

Of the total recurrent expenditure, only about 1.5 percent goes to the extension component of the programme. This, according to the experts is grossly inadequate to fund the Training and Visit (T&V) programme being operated by the programme. According to Adebayo *et al.*, (1999), the amount allocated to extension component during the World Bank funding era was on the average of about N12million which was about 30 percent of the total fund made available. In the last five years, the budget for extension component of the programme has dwindled to less than N2m. Meanwhile, the experts' opinion on this level of funding for the extension components is that it is inadequate and a limiting factor for effective extension activities in the State. The experts opined that the component will require at least N20m annually to function effectively.

Concerns of experts on agricultural extension in the last five years

The concerns of agricultural extension experts on the present situation of agricultural extension service in Nigeria centre mainly on its relevance to agricultural and rural livelihoods development. Nigeria's agricultural development strategy over the years has been informed by the genuine belief that the development of agriculture is a sine-qua-non for the overall growth and development plans, budgets and programmes designed to reflect the vital linkages between agriculture, industry and services. The main thrust of agricultural development planning, therefore has been to increase and sustain the capacity of the sector to fulfill its role. This anticipates the attainment of self-sufficiency in basic food commodities, especially, those in which the country has comparative economic and ecological advantage. It also involves the ability to increase the production of agricultural raw materials to meet the growing need of an expanding industrial sector and increase the production and processing of exportable cash crops with a view to increasing the nation's non-oil foreign exchange earning capacity and generating improved farm incomes to the Nigerian farmers.

Therefore, over the last 5 years, the debate about agricultural extension has focused on the relevance, impact, coverage and financial sustainability of state extension systems to satisfy these development concerns. The challenges facing extension today stem from the generic problems of the state extension system which are bound to its diverse functions, as well as the bureaucratic, political and social operating environments within which extension systems operate (Nagel, 1997; Feder, *et al.*, 2000). Although, the World Bank assisted projects have the ultimate aim of increasing food production and the standard of living of farmers, these have remain largely unachieved due to some structural and institutional problems which have been linked to funding. These funding problems include among others the compatibility of the funding agencies' objectives with local needs and aspirations and even when compatible, the sustainability of such arrangement by national, state and local governments after expirations of such funding arrangements. Most of the World Bank project require high level of funding which might not be sustainable after expiration.

Over the last five years, many of the ADPs have modified the contents of the T&V systems delivered to them by the World Bank due to inability to sustain the funding level required. The fortnightly training

schedules have been modified to monthly meeting while the monthly technology review meetings have been modified to quarterly meeting. These are structures where research and extension meet to review technology and assess delivery process. The inconsistency of these without an alternative arrangement to strengthen the linkage has weakened the effectiveness of extension.

The opinion of the experts sought mainly to the issues of how the public agricultural extension service should provide its services, and what initiatives are needed to achieve more efficient and effective extension services. Central to this is the issue of extension methodology and technology transfer within the present arrangement such that ADPs will remain relevant in agricultural extension service in Nigeria.

Identified constraints of public-funded extension service in Nigeria

- a. **Inadequate funding:** The failure to sustain the momentum with which public extension services in Nigeria started with since independence and the success of the World Bank intervention is blamed mainly on inadequate funding and lack of commitment on the part of the stakeholders involved in provision of funds for running extension. The manifestations of the magnitude of the problems of fund inadequacy in the ADPs is reflected in their inability to maintain broken down motor vehicles and inability to purchase new ones for extension services, inconsistent salaries and allowances leading to poor morale and job performance of the VEAs, poor linkage between research and extension and inadequate operating resources and technology.
- b. **Ineffective technology transfer:** Technology transfer and diffusion process have been ineffective, largely because of the large size of coverage for VEAs. The recommended VEAs farmer ration under the T&V systems is 1:800 but the organization has fewer VEAs to cover its zonal arrangement making the ration to be as high as 1:10,000 or more. In this case, it practically impossible for the VEAs to cover the entire farming household. In addition, the technology review process has become weak leading to poor technology adoption.
- c. **Inadequate staffing:** The current staff strength of the ADPs is inadequate. The organisation do not have the financial capability to employ required officers. Meanwhile, the available staff are bored by the inability of the organisation to provide necessary incentives to boost their morale and enhance their performance on the job. This invariably tends to overburden the available ones with heavy workload.
- d. **Supply driven nature of extension and research products:** It is apparent that poor adoption of technology by farmers is as a result of poor demand for research products by farmers. Extension in Nigeria is supply-driven top-down rather than having farmers at the driving seat of extension.

Conclusion and recommendations: 'That extension will not go into extinction in Nigeria

For extension not to go into extinction in Nigeria there is the need for concerted efforts of the stakeholders to keep alive the goals of extension. For survival and effectiveness of the public extension service in Nigeria, the stakeholders need to tackle fundamental problems of inadequate funding, unmotivated job and work situation, weak research-extension linkages among others. Current system of extension is not delivering its service with the intensity envisioned and expected. The contact between extension agents and the farmers is infrequent and irregular. In order to ensure sustainability of extension service in Nigeria and prevent its extinction, the following issues will require attention:

Adequate funding

Adequate funding of extension can not be compromised at least with the present arrangement. One of the criticisms against the T&V system is the high cost required to effectively fund its activities. Stakeholders in the funding of extension should make a good assessment of the funding problem and

provide ways by which the system can be well funded. Some of the experts selected for this study have suggested the following as a way out of the funding problems:

- i. **Cost recovery mechanism:** The stakeholders need to consider a cost recovery system whereby some of the cost of extension can be recovered either through partial payment for service or alternative service provision such as training and workshops in agricultural related themes. Although, there is a strong criticism against privatization, the cost recovery system has to start from somewhere to revalue extension and package it as a consumer product rather than a public good. Since, there is weak evidence that farmers are willing to pay for extension services, the government should seriously consider recovering at least part of the cost of delivering extension advice. The introduction of fee based service would extend ownership, and therefore, right to the services to the farmers. This could lead to increased farmers control over the research and extension, and would ensure that the extension services are responsive to the farmers' problems and tailored to the needs and resource availability of local areas. In the case of public sector this would also lead to increased efficiency of the system by encouraging synergy between the three segments - research, extension and the farmers. However, distributional consequences of fee based extension system need to be examined before initiating major policy changes in this direction.
- ii. **Strong Political commitment:** It might sound strange but the situation in Nigeria today shows that every sector is politicized and government commitment to a particular sector is largely due to political interest. This has actually affected funding for agricultural extension as many of the political leader has not paid required attention to extension. The service has been lumped together with other agricultural units and it has become the 'abandoned child' in the hand of agricultural policy makers. A strong political commitment will be reflected in the adequate budgeting and timely budget transfers and allocations. While some States in the northern part of Nigeria spends close to N1billion naira on their ADPs annually, their counterparts in the southern parts spend barely N100million naira which has been found to be grossly inadequate.
- iii. **Collaborations:** Collaborations in some projects coming from development partners and funding organizations such as the World Bank and international donors will assist extension service fund some aspect of its programme. The organization of these projects should be such that the ADPs can play active roles to mobilise local people and provide technical services for such projects. With this, the idle hands of many VEAs will be occupied.
- iv. **Putting Farmers/Rural People As Drivers In Service Delivery Chain:** The call for participatory extension is not new in Nigeria but this approach has not been seen as an opportunity to engage farmers in financing extension. Through participation, farmers can be engaged as drivers in service delivery to reduce cost of personnel and ensure adequate local content in extension approach. Although, the ADPs presently utilize the contact farmers approach, a two-step flow hypothesis, this can be strengthened by engaging more contact farmers and assigning them to fewer farmers, at a group level, to act as a link between the Village extension agents and farmers. To participate in financing extension, ADPs should bring local people into extension and engage them in packaging and delivery of extension messages. By this, they will have a sense of ownership and support to extension financing.

Subsidy for agricultural inputs

Experts still hold the belief that one of the ways to keep extension alive is through initiatives that can encourage production among farmers. Such initiative will need to address subsidy for agricultural inputs particularly fertilizer and improved planting materials. Other inputs such as mechanized inputs will require subsidy by government to enable groups of farmers acquire tractor equipment and machineries. The subsidy will make the inputs affordable; however efforts at ensuring availability should be strengthened.

Strengthened research-extension linkage

The present linkage structure between extension and research is weak and ineffective. The reason adduced for this by experts is inadequate fund for the operation of National Research Institutes (NRIs) that are expected to regularly update the knowledge of the extension services on latest technology.

Since the linkage is weak, therefore, the feedback system is poor and input of the farmers into the research products is poor. With strengthened research-extension linkage, research products will be well packaged and adaptable to local condition. This will improve adoption of technologies and increased production at farmers' level.

A sound agricultural policy

To encapsulate the opinion of the selected experts, a sound agricultural policy is indispensable that will adjudicate for extension service in Nigeria in terms of funding, structure and approach. The need for a sound agricultural policy to repositioning the public extension service in each State is invaluable and will be a legislative tool that will ensure political commitment and structural arrangement that will deliver effective extension service. Such policy should also ensure transitioning to pluralistic extension systems, especially to increase private sector participation, build capacity and facilitate participation, Commitment to the implementation of such policy is however imperative.

References

- Adebayo, K. (1998): Assessment of the Agricultural Development Programmes without World Bank Funding: The Case of Ogun State ADP, M.Agric. Dissertation, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria
- Adebayo, I. A. Idowu, A. M. Omotayo, B. A. Olunuga and S. O. Apantaku (1999): An appraisal of the prospect and constraints to the sustainable funding of the Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme, *Journal of Agricultural Extension* Volume 3, pp28-38
- Adebayo K. and I. A. Idowu (2000): The Aftermath of the withdrawal of the World Bank Counterpart funding for the Ogun State Agricultural Development programme in Nigeria, *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, 17(2/3), pp 79-98
- Anne W. van den Ban (2000): Different ways of Financing Agricultural Extension, ODI Agricultural Research and Extension Network, AgREN, Network paper No 106, July 2000. 8-23
- Apantaku, S. O. and Legacy, J. W. (1998) 'Indicators of a qualitative agricultural education programme'. *Nigerian journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 6(1), pp 18 – 23
- Apantaku, S. O. and Apantaku, F. S. (1998). 'Hertzberg motivation-hygiene factors and job satisfaction of village extension agents of Osun State agricultural development programme' *Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 2, 1998, 23 – 30
- Feder, G., Willet, A. and Zipp, W. (2000). 'Agricultural Extension: Generic challenges and some ingredients for solutions' World Bank Technical Paper, Washington, DC.
- Nagel, U.J. (1997). 'Alternative approaches to organizing extension'. In improving agricultural extension: A reference manual, Food and Agricultural Organization, Rome
- NAERLS (1997): Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Impact of the Training and Visit Extension System in Nigeria. A research report for Agricultural Project Monitoring and Evaluation nit, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Abuja
- OGADEP (1997): Annual Reports 1987-1997,
- Omotayo, A., O. D, Chikwendu, Adebayo, K. (2001): Two decades pf world Bank Assisted Extension Services in Nigeria: Lessons and challenges for the future, *Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension*, 7(3), pp143-152.