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## **AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TRAINING AND VISIT (T AND V ) APPROACH TO EXTENSION SERVICES DELIVERY IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

The training and visit (T and V) approach to agricultural extension delivery is the largest single agricultural extension service in the country today. It was introduced over 15 years ago. The paper has as its major objective, an analysis of the sustainability of this approach to agricultural extension. The specific objectives include: to attempt a definition of the term, "sustainability" in the agricultural extension delivery; to find out why past approaches to extension services were not sustainable; to find out if the T and V approach is sustainable today; and to recommend measures to enhance its sustainability if otherwise. Numerous factors within and outside the extension system caused the previous approaches not to be sustainable. The T and V approach is not sustainable due to several reasons. The paper made a number of recommendations that would make the approach sustainable.

### **Introduction**

The T and V approach to agricultural extension started in Nigeria about two decades ago. It was introduced in the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) primarily to alleviate some problems associated with conventional agricultural extension approaches, thereby enhancing increased local production of food to meet the demand by the teeming population as well as for export.

It was introduced in the ADPs which were jointly financed by the World Bank, the Federal and the State Governments in the country. The World Bank loan was expected to last for 5 years and renewable for another 5 years after which it was expected that the ADPS and consequently the T & V approach would be sustainable. The World Bank loan would then terminate. This is the case with most ADPs in the country, which are the agencies responsible for the implementation of the T and V system.

The general objective of this paper is to find out if the T and V approach is sustainable within the framework of the ADPs. The specific objectives of the paper are (a) to attempt a definition of the term "sustainability" in agricultural extension service delivery (b) to find out why some past approaches to extension services delivery in the country were not sustainable and (c) to find out if the T and V approach is sustainable today and to recommend measures to enhance its sustainability if otherwise.

### **What is sustainability in agricultural extension delivery?**

The term "Sustainability" is derived from the term "to sustain", which, according to the Cambridge English Dictionary means "to bear", "to maintain" or "to support the life of". By this definition, any system or development activity can be seen in terms of its sustainability, it can also be seen as a system which has a non-negative trend in measured output. This definition takes cognisance of the fact that a system has its input and output, which are measurable. Consequently, for a system to be sustainable, the output must be non-negative (i.e. positive). For instance, in agricultural production, if the

cost of the input is higher than the output price (all things being equal), then the output is negative and hence not sustainable.

According to Kesseba (1983), WCED (1987) and Giriffon (1997), a sustainable agricultural system is that system which has the ability to produce profitably for the present generation and would still maintain an equally high level of productivity for the future generations. This requires the efficient use of appropriate and environmentally friendly resources. As a result, there is not destroy the agricultural resources. As a result, there is adequate maintenance of the social fabric of the communities, which are largely responsible for agricultural production.

The USAID (1990) defined a sustainable agricultural system as that which enhances the management of renewable agricultural resources. This will lead to the provision of food, income and livelihood for both the present and future generation and also provide the economic and social productivity of these resources. It is important to observe that only the use of an efficient and environmentally friendly technology can bring about an improvement in economic and social productivity.

Effiong et al (1997) view sustainable agricultural development as having as it's main focus, the raising of the standard of living of the present generation, alleviating human suffering and providing them a respectable source of livelihood and which can maintain the resource base for future generations. If agricultural development, by this definition, does not alleviate human suffering, provide a respectable source of livelihood and maintain the resource base, then the development is not sustainable.

From the above definitions, it can, therefore, be seen that a sustainable agricultural extension services delivery system is that which has the capacity of causing farmers to efficiently use environmentally friendly technologies, which can renew agricultural resources such that the present and future generation can have respectable livelihood and increased productivity. To be able to do this, each approach to extension services delivery has a number of resources. For the T and V approach, these resources, according to Undiandeye (1988), include the use of contact farmers, availability of subject matter-specialists, the VEW/Farmer ratio, other staff, infrastructure and funding. The sustainability of an approach to extension services delivery also call a measure of autonomy by the sponsoring agency.

### **Sustainability of Some Past Approaches to Extension Service Delivery in Nigeria**

Some past approaches to extension services delivery in the country include; the ministry of agriculture; farm settlement schemes; the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP); the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN); the University Extension; Commodity/Sectoral Agency Extension; the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) and the Integrated Rural Development Projects.

#### **The Ministry of Agricultural Extension**

This approach to extension services delivery in Nigeria was carried out by the ministries of agriculture in the various regions (and later states). Obibiaku (1983) outline some specific functions of the ministries of agriculture as; training of personnel, professional staff, technical staff and farmers in the production, distribution processing and marketing of agricultural products; the supply of agricultural input (at subsidized rates) to farmers; assisting in social development and home-making and assisting in youth development.

According to Olayide and Ogunfiditimi (1980), Federal Department of Agriculture (1981), Ekpere (1984) and Patel (1985), the ministries of agriculture operated extension approach could not make the desired impact in agricultural production as a result of some problems. Firstly, the inter-ministerial bureaucratic procedures caused the inputs not to get to the farmers in the desired quantity, quality and at the right time

Secondly, the field staffs were ineffective because they were made to perform non-extension jobs such as the distribution of inputs. Thirdly, training of extension staff was inadequate and outdated. Finally, the extension staff were not well remunerated, thus, giving them low status in their communities

The inability of this approach to extension service delivery to have necessary positive impact on the farmers made it not to be sustainable, hence there was need to try other approaches.

### **Farm Settlement Schemes**

This was an attempt at improving agricultural production in the country during the early and mid 1960s. The farms operated by the scheme were expected to act as model farms from which farmers in the neighbourhood would learn as well as adopt improved agricultural technologies. Young school leavers and other Nigerians repatriated from other countries during this period were settled on large hectares of land acquired by the former regional governments. The settlers were provided with not only land for farming but also with accommodation and some monthly cash allowances (to sustain them till they become self reliant). According to Olayide (1975), some of the schemes objectives include youth development, farm demonstrations, checking of rural-urban migration and improvement of agricultural productivity. Olatubosun (1975), Adegboye et al (1969) and Ekpere (1984) as well as Olayide (1975) found that the schemes failed to achieve the objectives for which they were established. This failure was attributed to poor management, use of inappropriate and out-dated techniques and inadequate planning. The schemes, were thus, not sustainable as the settlers looked on themselves as hired civil servants. As soon as the government discontinued the payment of the allowances, the schemes disintegrated. The schemes, were, thus, not sustainable and government in her wisdom, continued the search for better approaches to extension services delivery.

### **The National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP)**

This was established by the federal government in 1971 to improve the production of six crops that were most commonly grown in the country, namely cassava, millet, rice, maize wheat and sorghum. It was aimed at organizing research and extension on crop basis, training of extension agents, distribution of improved crop varieties to farmers and maintenance of a continuous flow of reliable extension recommendations.

However, the Federal Department of Agriculture (1981), Ekpere (1984) and Patel (1985) rate the programme as a failure. Reasons for the failure were attributed to an acute manpower shortage, gross financial constraints and lack of co-ordination between the 4 components of the programme, namely, research, extension, training and agro-services. Some state governments, in fact, viewed the NAFPP as a Federal Government programme rather than their own and abandoned it as soon as fund stoooped coming from the Federal Government. The programme was, thus, not sustainable as structures were not built for it's continued operation by the state and (perhaps) local governments if the Federal Government withdraw its funding.

### **The Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)**

This was launched in 1976 by the Federal Government with a view to moving the country to self-sufficiency in food production through self-reliance. It was a mass mobilization campaign aimed at creating a national awareness to the food problem. Farm inputs were sold to the public at highly subsidized rates and people were encouraged to use every available piece of land for farming. Some of the advantages of the OFN include; creating public awareness on the national food problem; making agricultural production respectable and giving agriculture priority in the agenda of succeeding administration. The OFN however, failed to achieve its objective. This was attributed to some weakness and constraints which according to Patel (1985), Akinola (1983) and Ewuola (1985), include inadequate planning; improper selection of clientele (as it sought to turn all and sundry into farmers); the non-existence of a commodity programme (giving rise to exploitation by middlemen who bought inputs at official rates and sold at exorbitant prices to the public) and inadequate attention to extension services.



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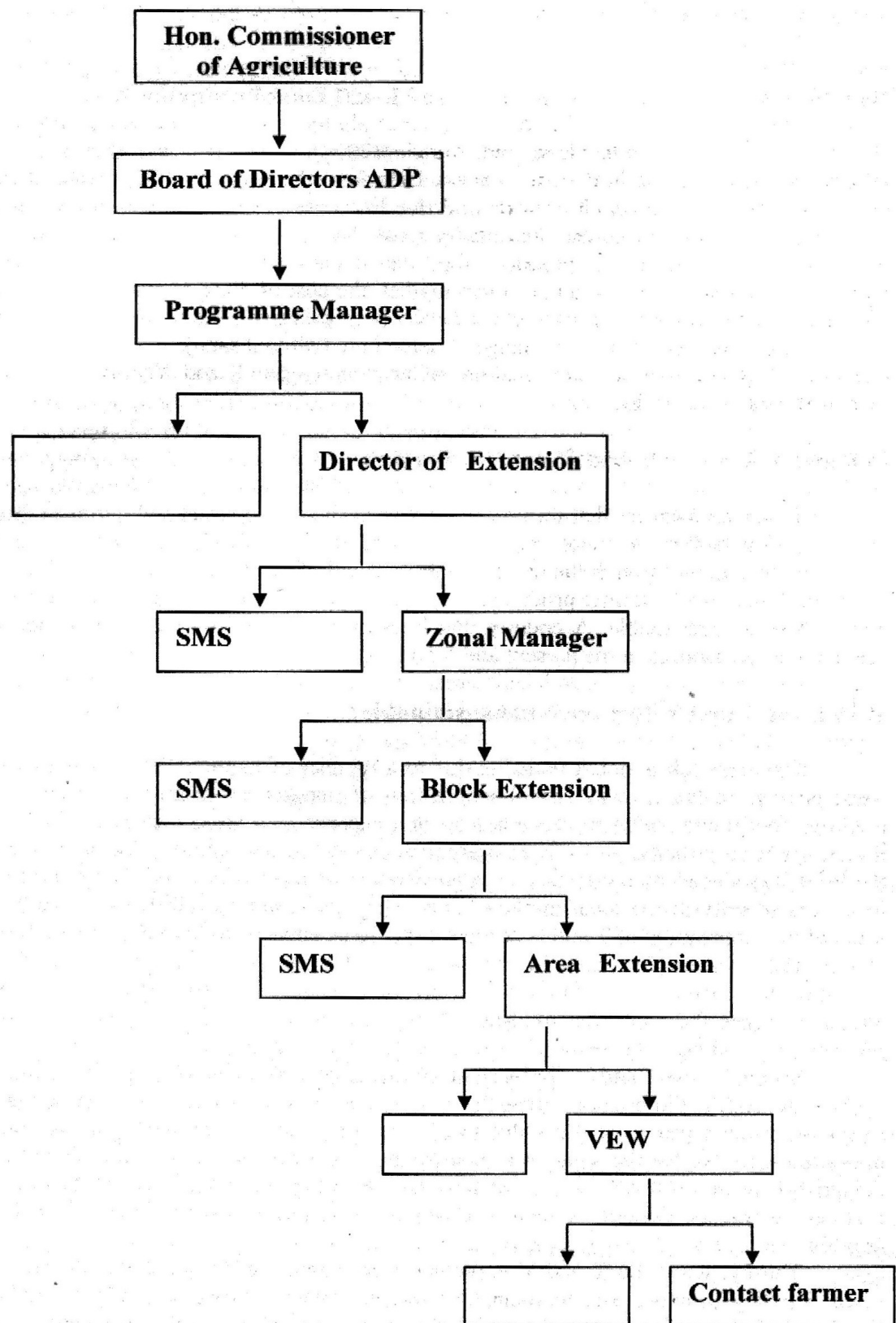
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**Fig. 1: Organization of the T and V Extension in A State in Nigeria**



### **Has the T and V System Led to Increased Local Food Production?**

A survey by Undiandeye and Anogie (2000) shows that hectares for cassava and rice production has decreased in the past 5 years. Data from the Federal Office of Statistics have shown that prices of local food item such as garri and rice have risen astronomically in the country in the past 2 years. Field observations across the country have shown that Nigerians now prefer to eat more of the imported food item to locally produced food items. They attributed this preference to the high cost of these local food items. In Maiduguri main market, the cost of 50kg of garri is about the same price as a 50kg bag of rice. In the same market, the locally produced rice sales at the same price with the imported rice. The imported rice has the advantage of being pure (without sand).

For over 15 years after its introduction in the country the T and V approach has not significantly increased local food production.

### **Is T and V Approach Sustainable in Nigeria?**

It was seen earlier that for an extension approach to be sustainable, it must lead to increase food production by farmers to meet local demand and that this production must be continued from one generation to another through the use of environmentally friendly technologies. The inability of the T and V approach to make the farmer produce enough food locally to feed the teeming population shows that the approach is not sustainable. A country that lives on imported food may face undesirable political and economic consequences in the present and future.

### **Why is the T and V approach not sustainable?**

The approach is not sustainable due to a number of factors. The first is the poor monetary and fiscal policies in the country. The liberalization of imports has caused our markets to be filled with imported food items. Such food items are often cheaper than those locally produced. This will tend to discourage local initiative in local food production because the imported foods are viewed as superior to the locally produced foods. It may be argued also that most of the locally produced food is exported, hence the scarcity in the local markets. This argument is not tenable because the production, after 15 years of implementation of T and V approach should be enough for both export and local consumption.

The frequent increases in the salaries and wages of civil servants in the country without corresponding incentives to farmers by way of subsidies in farm inputs makes salaried jobs more attractive, hence the continued rural-urban migration of youths. This has adverse effect on local food production as it drains the cream of farm labour to urban centers.

Secondly, the T and V approach is not sustainable because of the poor funding of the sponsoring agency, the ADPs. Experience across the country shows that all ADPs have inadequate funding as their major operational problem. Worst hit by this is the T and V approach, which often has the highest allocation of votes for the salaries and allowances of staff and also for the conduct of the On-Farm-Adaptive-Research (OFAR) and other activities. Funding was jointly by the World Bank, Federal and State Governments. Enough structures were not put in place to sustain the ADPs financially when the World Bank leaves.

Thirdly, when the T and V approach started nation-wide, there was no corresponding national research policy initiative. The National Agricultural Research Project (NARP) started about 10 years after the T and V. even after it started, the NARP itself appeared not to be sustainable, hence the continued problems of Extension – Research linkage in the ADPs.

Fourthly, the input supply is an important component for the effectiveness of an extension approach. The input supplies in all the ADPs have been inefficient as a result of poor funding and corruption in some ADPs. The implication is the poor performance of the T and V approach.

Finally, the T and V approach appears not to be sustainable as a result of some basic wrong assumptions associated with its implementation. For instance, it was assumed that the infrastructural facilities and farm inputs are present. All states of the country lack basic infrastructure facilities. There is also a dearth of agricultural manpower, especially in the area of extension. Inadequate funding prevents the employment of qualified staff. The use of contact farmers may also reinforce local privilege where few farmers (contact farmers) enjoy extension services at the expense of majority of others. It is also difficult to rigidly enforce pre-arranged scheduled visits to farmers because they have other things to occupy them.

## Conclusions

From the above, the following conclusion may be made: firstly, for sustainable agricultural extension to take place, there must be an efficient use of resources for increased food production for the present and future generations through the use of environmentally friendly technologies. Secondly, numerous extension approaches used in the past have not been sustainable due to their inability to bring about increased food production. These approaches often go with the government that introduced them. Thirdly, the T and V approach appears not to be sustainable either, as it is bedeviled by numerous operational problems. These make it difficult for the approach to make Nigeria self-sufficient in local food production.

## Recommendations

In order to make the T and V approach sustainable, it is recommended that:

- There should be adequate funding of the sponsoring agencies – the ADPs
- The NARP should be re-structured and re-vitalized for increased local researches to meet the increasing needs of the T and V approach.
- Government at the Federal, State and Local Government levels should improve their infrastructural facilities, as these would enhance the sustainability of the T and V approach.
- There should be import restrictions on food importation, as this will increase local initiatives.
- Farm input should be subsidized and loans made easily available to farmers at low interest rates.

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