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## **Actualizing Agricultural Development Programmes in Nigeria Using Communication Strategies**

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### **Abstract:**

The paper examines how Agricultural Development Programmes can be actualized in Nigeria using Communication Strategies. Data was collected through questionnaire. The population of the study was all beneficiaries of Agricultural development programme fund in Nigeria using multi-stage sampling technique. The finding of the study indicated that some of the beneficiaries of Agricultural development fund were not well informed. This made Agricultural development not to be actualized to its potentials, thereby creating scarcity and lack of Agricultural produce. The paper recommended that, the Federal, State and Local Government officials through which the donors operate, should apply verbal communication strategies in educating the farmers on how to use new technologies and new products in developing agricultural products in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Strategies, Agriculture, Actualization, Communication, Development.

### **Introduction**

The word communication is often referred to the sharing of information

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from one person to another, but there is no consensus amongst the communication experts regarding its definition. Communication can come in different formats either through writing, speaking or gestures. The working definition of this paper is that of Daniel (2013) which sees communication as a process of transmitting information, thoughts, opinions, messages, facts, ideas or emotions and understating from one person, place or thing to another person, place or thing. With the above definition, it can be deduced that communication can be put together to actualize agricultural development programmes.

Communication begins with the person (or organization) who conceives the idea or has a meaning intended to be replicated in the target audience. The message originator normally referred to as the encoder, sender or source, is the person who has a content to pass to another. This message/ communication can be passed on through formal or informal ways but for the purpose of this paper, the concentration will be on formal ways of communication, which entails that communication must flow through established line of authority. It is usually controlled and regulated by the authority of an organization where information is to be shared, with whom, and when is decided upon by the management. It is this method of communication that the paper presents to actualize agricultural development programmes using some of its strategies.

Development in its literary meaning refers to a state of growth and advancement. Toluwase, Oludayo and Uche (2014) state that all Agricultural development programmes have the primary objective of increasing food production and farm incomes for the majority or rural households in defined project regions, thus improving the standard of

living and welfare of the farming population with the hope of reducing abject poverty. It is against this backdrop that this paper focuses on actualizing Agricultural development programmes through communication

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is observed that, donor organizations disburse fund for the development of Agriculture in Nigeria. In some cases, it will not get to the grass root farmers, and some more enlightened people will take advantage of the fund and mismanaged it. Some of this disbursements are done in big cities where communication is purely verbal and done in English language. Most grass root farmers or mechanize farmers in the rural places find it difficult to get in touch with the donors. Most of the distribution of farm seedlings and fertilizers are done by the local government chairmen and their secretaries. In the process of distribution, the funds go through many stages before they get to the end users, thereby making Agricultural development programme not to be actualized in its fullness. It is against this back drop that, this paper intends to present the communication strategy which is the verbal communication strategy in order to actualize Agricultural development programme in fullness.

### **Review of Related Literature**

History has it that the journey of Agricultural development project in Nigeria kicked off in the year 1972, as a result of bilateral talks between Nigerian government and the world bank. The objective of the project is to increase production and raise income of small-scale farmers (Auta and Dafang, 2010). In the integrated supply of farm inputs and

infrastructural support and in their efforts to revitalize and revamp extension systems, the Agricultural Development programmes represent a truly innovative approach to agricultural and rural development in Nigeria (Madu and Wakili 2012). The United Nations Development Program UNDP (1990) in Loyuve, Oriola and Agbele (2017) states that development is a process of enlarging people's choices which encompasses amongst others, opportunities for creation and production, as well as, to acquire self-actualization and self-respect. They stress that development ensures growth in wealth, acquisition, mental enrichment, and the betterment of the quality of living of people. Development of the Agricultural sector is an integral part of national development and several scholars have considered its contribution to the socio-economic development of many countries thus linking agriculture with national development (Daneji, 2011). The National Bureau of Statistics in March 2022 reported that, the Agricultural sector contributed N41 trillion to the country's gross domestic product (CDP) equaling a 23.7 percent of the total nominal GDP of N173.53 trillion for the year ending 2021.

Communication is a unifying force or glue that has brought countries and organizations of the world into a state proxy and global proximity (Ochulor 2016). it serves the purpose of expressing goals and policies; procedures and mission of any particular organization can be expressed to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. The World Bank (2006) defines development communication as the integration of strategic communication in development processes and programmes based on a strong understanding of indigenous realities. This definition demonstrates the crucial role that local context plays in development and development communication. This is equally in tandem with the

opinion of Mefalopulos (2005) who asserts that programmes geared towards development interventions will result in desired change unless the process is characterized by an ongoing culturally and socially relevant communication dialogue among development service providers and recipients. Development communication is deliberate in sharing information between stakeholders to reach a common understanding which supports and sustains development goals. FAO also adds that development communication is conceived as a social process, intentionally designed to seek a common understanding among all the participants of a development initiative in order to create a basis for concerted action. The imperative is to achieve common understanding among all stakeholders of development in a geography using wide range of methods and tools of communication.

In recent time, foreign organizations and individuals picked interest in Agricultural programmes in Nigeria by either sponsoring the programs or partnering with the organizations that are responsible for the Agricultural Development project. These foreign bodies referred to as donors such as: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom Agency for International Development (UKAID), known as Foreign Commonwealth and Development Officer (FCDO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nation International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), African Development Bank, all with the view to building on the successes and objectives of Agricultural Development Project in Nigeria.

These interventions are implemented across different states of the federation, especially in Northern Nigeria where agriculture is the culture. Donors funding of Agricultural programmes in Nigeria are

usually to give technical assistance and these assistance take the form of the capacity building, grants provision, linkage to market and financing, mobilization for the implementation of policies, leading to the creation of enabling environments among other areas. Agricultural development programmes are delivered and sustained through well-thought-out communication strategies-blueprints for how the information will be exchange

### **Communication Strategy**

Communication strategies are blueprints for communicating information related to specific issues, even situations or audience. Communication strategy could take on different looks, from interpersonal to worldwide campaign, however, the goal is to achieve formulated objectives. It holistically guides communications that is put out across all format media and to audiences, and align them with core values of the organization and desired outcomes of the whole exercise. The focus of this paper is to investigate how to use some communication strategies to actualize Agricultural development in Nigeria. Communication strategy also refers to plans which are followed for a business to achieve its communication goals. They serve as a blueprint for communicating with workmates, customers, and superiors. Communication strategies affect a business by binding business objectives to its core values, resulting in better employee's engagement and boosting their drive to do their work better. They also help a business by providing clear guidelines for its operation.

Communication strategy within the context of development programme is an outline of the plan for message delivery to target

audience while describing the objectives of the intervention and how key performance indexes (KPIS) will be achieved. Communication strategy defines how the implementing organization will communicate internally (to staff) and externally (to stakeholders and beneficiaries of the intervention) with a view to delivering on the mandate of all projects. Therefore, the objectives of Agricultural Development programmes cannot be achieved if communication strategies are not put in place and used to drive the implementation process.

### **Types of Communication Strategies**

Communication strategies are categorized into three types: **Verbal**, **Non-verbal** and **Visual**.

**Verbal Communication Strategy:** A verbal communication strategy is a type of communication strategy that involves words in delivering messages. It is broken down into either written communication or oral communication. In written communication, information is disseminated in symbol forms or writing. Example of written communication are business letters, blog posts and email messages; on the other hand, oral communication involves communicating by words of mouth. Examples of oral communication are conversation with workmates, phone calls, video conference using zoom and group discussion.

**Non-verbal Communication Strategy** depends on the body to relay messages where an individual can communicate without speaking. Non-verbal communication is very impactful as a workplace communication strategy, especially in customer service, agent needs to

be empathetic. Non-verbal communication examples include facial expressions, hand gestures, eye contact, hugs, smiles, a head nod which indicates agreement and handshakes.

**Visual Communication Strategy:** in this strategy, people communicate ideas graphically in effective and efficient ways to creating meaning. Visual communication examples include: graphic designs, films, diagrams, charts, illustrations and data visualization. The focus of this paper is on verbal communication strategy and any other strategy can equally be helpful in the analysis using innovation diffusion theory as a framework.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted for this paper is Diffusion of innovation theory (DOI) which was developed by E.M Rogers in 1962. The theory explains how over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses (or spreads) through a specific population or social system. The product of diffusion of an innovation is that people, as part of a social system adopt a new idea, behaviour, or product. The Agricultural donors in Nigeria are creating new ideas for Agricultural development in Nigeria in order for the citizens to have enough food. The adoption means that a person does something different from what he had previously; it is observed that in Nigeria, farming methods, funding and technology are actually improving compared to previous years (i.e farmers acquiring new products, and performing a new behaviour by using new technologies). The key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behaviour, or product as new or innovative (Boston



University Medical Campus, 2019). Diffusion theory can serve as a framework in humanities to health communication processes and muddled previously district channels. The theory can also be easily used when the innovation being studied is clearly defined, such as the impact of a newly developed technology like television, but when examining complicated and network technologies. The limitation of the theory becomes to bare, according to Lyytinen and Damsgaard (2001).

Some donors, always disburse fund through the government of the state to the end users, without actually communicating with them. None teaches the end users on how to make adequate use of fund in their possession. The governments of the states sometimes, use the funds to get seedlings, machines, or fertilizers without educating them on how to use them. In the process, some farmers end up selling some of the machines, fertilizers or the seedlings given to them because, they are not enlightened on the usage.

It is also observed that it is not everyone that applied for Agricultural development program fund is into agriculture/farming business. Some individuals are selling the products thereby stagnating the development of Agricultural product in Nigeria. This paper is set to enlighten the Nigerian government through which the donors operate to organize a programme to educate the end users on how to use the products and fund given to them by communicating to them verbally on a particular location like town halls, schools, or any designated place within the reach of the end users.

## Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The paper uses a descriptive survey research. The target population is the beneficiaries of the selected agricultural intervention programmes. The population is drawn from different states of the federation. The sample size is purely beneficiaries from six states with each representing a geopolitical zone in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique using 20% of respondent in each stage is used to select beneficiaries for the study because of the large number of beneficiaries unevenly and dispersedly spread all over Nigeria and also to overcome problems associated with geographically dispersed population. This multi-stage sampling technique is grouping the beneficiaries irrespective of their donors into six clusters according to the geopolitical zones namely north-east, north-west, north-central, south-east, south-west and south-south.

The instrument for data collection is mainly questionnaire and email interview. The questionnaire is administered downstream beneficiaries of the programmes while email interviews would be adopted for implementing organizations.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

Variable	Responses	frequency	percentage
Gender	Male	215	62%
	Female	130	38%
	Total	345	100%
Age	18-29 years	175	50%
	30-39 years	120	35%
	40-49years	50	14%
	50 years and above	10	3%

	Total	345	100%
Marital Status	Single	231	67%
	Married	106	31%
	Divorced	3	1%
	Widowed	5	1%
	Total	345	100%
Qualification	Diploma	81	23%
	Bsc/HND	138	40%
	MSC	61	18%
	Others	65	19%
	Total	345	100%
Occupation	Farmers	99	29%
	Trader	70	20%
	Student	114	33%
	Other	62	18%
	Total	345	100%

The table above presents the demographic data of the respondents. The data reflect that 62% (n=215) of the respondents were males while 38% (n=130) were females. Also, the age distribution frequency of the respondents shows that 50% (n=175) of the respondents were within the age range of 18 to 29 years; 35% (n=120) were within the age range of 30 to 39 years; 14% (n=50) were within the age range of 40-49 years while 3% (n=10) were within the age range of 50 years and above. These findings indicate that the male gender constituted the majority of the respondents as well as those within the age 18 to 29 years. Furthermore, the marital status distribution frequency of the respondents shows that

67% (n=231) of the respondents were single 31%(n=106); those who were married 1% (n=3) and those who were divorced while another 1% (n=5) were either widows or widowers Again, the qualification distribution frequency of the respondents shows that 23% (n=81) of the respondents were diploma holders 40% (n=138); those who were BSC/HND holders were 18% (n=61); those who were MSC holders were 19% (n=65); while other qualifications include PHD, SSCE, NCE or primary school certificates. These findings indicate that majority of the respondents were singles. Additionally, the majority of the respondents were BSC/HND holders and they were closely followed by diploma holders.

Lastly, the occupation distribution frequency of the respondents shows that 29% (n=99) of the respondents were farmers 20%. (n=70) were traders; 3% (n=114) were students while 18% (n=62) had other occupations which include humanitarian workers, journalists, lecturers, drivers, civil servants, clergy men and researchers. These findings indicate that majority of the respondents were students closely followed by farmers. This indicates that the sample population in this study cuts across gender as well as educational qualifications and feature adult with males constituting the majority. It also implies that sample populations are educated to a reasonable extent; as such, they understood the items of the questionnaire. It therefore means that all the responses and data provided by the respondents are accurate and valid for generalization.

Table 4:2

### Examining the Communication used in Agricultural Development Programme

	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Face to face (verbal) in town halls is one of the communication strategies used for Agricultural development programmes	No	217	63%
	Yes	33	10%
	No idea	95	27%
		345	100
Mass broadcast on television or radio is one of the strategies used in agricultural development programmes	Yes	270	78%
	No	22	7%
	No idea	53	15%
		345	100
Sign billboard are one of the strategies used by Agricultural development programmes	No	224	65%
	Yes	40	12%
	No idea	81	23%
		345	100

The table above examines the communication strategies used for Agricultural development programmes. The findings show that 63% (n=263) expressed that the face to face (verbal strategy) is not one of the communication strategies used in Agricultural development programs. 10% (n=33) said that face to face communication is one of the communication strategies used for Agricultural development programs in Nigeria while 27% (n=95) had no idea whether or not face to face is

one of the communication strategies for Agricultural development programme.

Again 66% (n=227) expressed that house to house distribution of fliers is not one of the communication strategy used in Agricultural development programmes in Nigeria; 9% (n=31) said that house to house distribution of fliers in a communication strategy was used for Agricultural development programmes, while 25% (n=87) have no idea, if house to house distribution is used for Agricultural development programme.

78% (n=270) said that mass broadcast on radio and television is a communication strategy used by Agricultural development programme, and 7% (n=22) responses said that mass communication is not a strategy for Agricultural development programme, while 15% (n=53) have no idea if mass communication is used as a strategy in Agricultural development programme.

The respondents on billboard signs 65% (224) said billboards are not one of the communication strategies used for Agricultural development programmes in Nigeria. 12% (n=40) said that the billboard is one of the communication strategies used in Agricultural development programmes in Nigeria while 23% (n=81) have no idea whether billboard is used as a strategy used for Agricultural development programme in Nigeria.

### **Discussions and Findings:**

From the table above, it is indicated that 65% of the respondents said there is no face to face communication (verbal communication) strategy used for Agricultural development programme, while 66% said that

there is no house to house distribution of fliers (written communication strategy) and 78% agreed that there is mass broadcast or jingle from the television or radio while 65% respondents said there is no billboard (visual strategy) communication for Agricultural development programme. This entails that the Agricultural development programme in Nigeria is mostly carried out from radio and television jingles making it difficult for a lot of people in the rural areas to hear about and participate in developing agriculture through the programme.

Agriculture is mostly carried out in villages more than in big cities due to mass land in the villages. It is a known fact, that it is not everybody in the villages that have access to electricity, making it difficult for them to listen or watch the radio or television programme that advertise or announces the release of Agricultural product, as well as, how to increase in productivity using them. The television and radio jingles are not enough strategy to educate the end users on how to use the product in their care or proper use of the fund released to them by the donors.

The television and radio programmes strategy are not enough to monitor the end users of the product. There is no proper follow up of the users, and no criteria good enough to ensure that these products (Agricultural) or funds get to the right people. Sometimes, those that have access to the information take advantage of it and collect it. They either sell it to the wrong people, or use the fund for other things making Agricultural programme underdeveloped after the foreign organizations might have invested much on them.

It is therefore recommended that face to face communication strategy should be used in developing agricultural programmes in Nigeria. The organizers can get in touch with the farmers, through the local government and talk to the users on one to one. They need to educate them on some of the products especially the fertilizers so as to ensure that the fertilizers meant for seedlings are not used for vegetables. Also, the pestilences, the farmers should be educated on how to use it in order not to kill their crops. In this manner, Agricultural development programme will be actualized to the extent of people having excess food production in the country.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined how Agricultural development programmes can be actualized using communication strategy. Actually, it established the fact that there are Agricultural development programmes in Nigeria and there are foreign donors who are out to encourage farmers to produce more goods in the country. But the development programmes are not actualized due to lack of good communication strategy. The paper therefore recommends verbal communication strategy as the best option in actualizing Agricultural development programmes in Nigeria which will benefit both the donors and the end users of the product as well as the country at large.



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