

## Training and Visit Extension System Flourishes in Nigeria

Isaac E. Ilevbaoje<sup>1</sup> Ph.D.

**The T&V extension approach is and has been criticised globally and within the countries where it is used for a range of weaknesses, like for instance too much focus on cereal yield increases, failure to address the diverse service needs of poor smallholders, rigid top-down approach, too high cost, lack of attention to economic and marketing aspects and many more. Nigerian extension specialists draw a different picture and perceive the T&V system in their country as an indispensable tool to support rural development, as Isaac Ilevbaoje explains in his article.**

### Introduction

Daniel Benor's Training and Visit (T&V) extension system was vigorously introduced to Nigeria in 1986 by the World Bank and was subsequently adopted in a most religious and enthusiastic manner. The fastidious and the most sympathetic critics have fired salvos at T&V to the extent that its protagonists (including the World Bank) now sing the elegy of this extension approach. In Nigeria, however, T&V is still guarded with proverbial jealousy because it is regarded as a potent weapon for heralding a true agrarian revolution. For instance, rising from a national professional extension dialogue in July 2002 where Nigeria's extension scientists and practitioners assembled to brainstorm on existing and emerging extension approaches with a view to evolving strategies for sustainable service delivery, the recurring message was vivid – T&V has strengths which far outweigh any weaknesses. Anchored on

the merits inherent in T&V, these extensionists were unanimous in their proclamation that any attempt to replace T&V with esoteric approach, particularly, at such a time, would introduce turbulence and ripples in the nation's agricultural extension practice.

### Background information

The exact origins of agricultural extension in Nigeria are difficult to pin point. If the starting point is defined as dissemination of information to producers without reference to specific organisations or institutions particularly responsible for that dissemination, then agricultural extension occurred in Nigeria as early as its history as indigenous producers learned and adopted a new crop or farming practice. If, however, one defines extension as an educational service performed by an organisation or agency which has been specifically charged with the responsibility to disseminate information to and from rural people, then extension beginning in Nigeria occurred sometime between 1921 when a unified Department of Agriculture was established for the whole country, and 1954 when three separate regional governments were formed, each with a Ministry of Agriculture.

Thus, agricultural extension in Nigeria has a long history. Euphemistically, it can be said that Nigeria is a country with an agricultural extension system in constant evolution. Over the years, Nigeria has experimented with a number of extension approaches and agricultural programmes with strong extension components. Notable among these extension approaches are: (i) the conventional ministry operated extension system; (ii) project based extension; (iii) sectoral / commodity extension; (iv) university-based extension; (v) integrated rural development approach; and (vi) farmer-focused extension. In its determined effort to overcome the seemingly intractable problem of food shortages and spiralling domestic food prices,

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Isaac E. Ilevbaoje (isailevbao@yahoo.com) is the National Coordinator, Extension, in Abuja, Nigeria. He works at the Projects Coordinating Unit, an organization which has both the National and Ministerial mandate for providing technical and professional guidance to all Agricultural Development Projects in Nigeria whose primary function is extension delivery.

successive Nigerian governments have launched and executed many larger and smaller agricultural programmes with elements of extension – with limited success.

One of the more recent innovations in Nigerian agricultural extension is the Training and Visit (T&V) system. The purpose of the introduction of this pattern of extension system was to remedy the weaknesses inherent in the previous approaches. It was also to strengthen research and extension linkages by making research more relevant to the needs of small-scale farmers and by formulating the results so that they are relevant and can be readily put into practice.

### **The training and visit extension system in Nigeria**

#### **Evolution of T&V in Nigeria**

The Nigerian Government utilised part of the World Bank loans to carry out reforms in her agricultural extension efforts through the nation-wide adoption of the Training and Visit extension system. The T&V was introduced to Nigeria on an intensive and programmatic scale in 1986 through pilot testing in Oyo, Kaduna, Imo and Plateau States.

Soon after the mechanisms for implementing the system were put in place in these states through their Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), farmers' response indicated preference for the T&V extension methodology. Guided by the experience from these pilot ADPs, implementation assistance terms (IATs) were mounted by Federal Agricultural Coordination Unit (now Project Coordination Unit (PCU)) to rapidly and systematically replicate the T&V extension model in all the states.

#### **T&V as a management system**

The T&V system is a hierarchically organised and time-bound method of managing extension services. It is designed to deliver selected, timely and feasible technologies to farmers on a strict fortnightly periodicity. The system encourages strong linkages with agricultural research institutions, places great emphasis on a professional approach to extension and requires an exclusive devotion to extension work. In principle, all activities related to the physical handling of inputs and credit applications are avoided. Extension agents are

supposed to liaise with input supply agencies and to advise farmers on sources of inputs and credit. Extension workers at all levels are expected to spend most of their time in the field and to participate in regular localised training sessions designed to inform them of current recommendations and give them opportunity to report back on farmers' problems.

The general organisational structure of the T&V system is based on the total number of farm families to be assisted in a given state or area, and in defining the number of farm families which one Village Extension Agent (VEA) can reasonably be expected to cover. The village extension agents are trained, guided and supervised in the field by Block Extension Supervisors (BES) who, in turn are guided and supervised by Zonal Extension Officers (ZEO). The zonal extension officers are supervised by Chief Extension Officers (CEO) via the Deputy Chief Extension Officer (DCEO) who are both located at Programme Headquarters. The organisational principle involved is to ensure that each level of the service has a span of control narrow enough (6-8) to afford close guidance and support for the level immediately below.

The method of operating the T&V system was to concentrate initial efforts on the major aspects of agricultural commodities and enterprises, which offer greatest scope for increasing yields through relatively unsophisticated techniques. These techniques often call for little or no increase in cash inputs. The recommendations are conveyed mainly to pre-selected and immutable contact farmers who will assist the village extension agents in spreading the new practices to other farmers in the area.

In essence the T&V is an effective management system that enables the efficient implementation of known extension principles. It aims at having competent, well trained extension workers who will visit farmers regularly with relevant technical messages and bring farmers problems to research. The system is sufficiently flexible to be used effectively on any type of farming and under any condition.

## Beneficial effects of T&V

### General problems solved by T&V

The nation-wide adoption of the T&V extension approach is perhaps the most outstanding development in agricultural extension in Nigeria over the past two decades or so. Some of the problems, which the T&V attempts to solve, are:

- a. to improve the organisation of extension by introducing a singular direct line of technical support and administrative control,
- b. to change the multi-purpose of many extension workers to a clearly defined, single-purpose role involving only education and communication activities,
- c. to improve coverage by limiting the number of farm families or household one extension worker is expected to visit,
- d. to improve mobility by providing appropriate transport so that each worker can regularly visit his/her contact farmers,
- e. to improve each extension worker's technical skills and knowledge about improved agricultural technology by providing regular in-service training sessions,
- f. to improve extension's ties with agricultural research through an increased number of subject-matter specialists, who are expected to maintain regular contact with their research counterpart and to secure a continuous flow of information that transmits technology to farmers and farmers' problems back to research personnel,
- g. to improve the status of extension personnel by giving them a relatively clear-cut extension job with reasonable expectations that they can successfully carry out; this will increase their level of respect in the community and begin to build their self-confidence, and
- h. to reduce the duplication of services that occurs when extension is fragmented among different ministries.



*I am a small-scale farmer located in far away village of Pai in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. I crop not more than 1.5 ha.*

*I have been advised on several occasions by an extension worker of the Federal Capital Territory Agricultural Development Project, (FCT ADP) on the need to modify what the extension worker termed "the traditional farming methods", as a way of increasing my farm yields income. For a long time, I demonstrated negative attitude to this unsolicited advice. After much hesitation, I decided to try a new maize variety, on a small portion of my farm with close assistance from the extension worker. To my greatest surprise, I obtained a very impressive yield. Farmers in the neighbourhood who observed the*

*performance of the new maize passed by regularly to my farm and home to obtain information on how they could improve their farming techniques.*

*Now, whatever the extension worker teaches me, I adopt without much argument and together we work cooperatively. Aside from crop production, I now keep some small ruminants, poultry and homestead fish pond. I am now a happy man, with enough resources to meet the needs of my family. My status in the village has suddenly risen while assisting the extension workers to disseminate information to the farmers on a second step. Thanks to the extension workers of FCT ADP.*

### Farmers' adoption of innovations

Studies carried out in Nigeria point to the beneficial effects of T&V on adoption of improved farm practices (Atala et al., 1992; NAERLS, 1997; and Ilevbaoje, 2002). Before 1985 only one of 32 selected innovations was adopted by over 50 per cent of the farmers, whereas by 1990, 20 of the innovations were adopted. Tables 1 and 2 show the levels of adoption of crops

and non-crop technologies in Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno States. The adoption rates range from over 92% to nearly 0. They vary a lot between states but also between different crops and animal type. Overall, Borno has substantially lower adoption rates than the other two states for the investigated technologies.

**Table 1: Adoption of crop related farm practices in three states of Nigeria**

CROPS	TECHNOLOGIES	STATES			TOTAL
		ADAMAWA	BAUCHI	BORNO	
CASSAVA	Improved varieties	41.1	34.4	0.8	25.4
	Pesticide Use	33.5	19.6	1.6	18.2
	Fertilizer Use	35.1	29.4	5.7	23.4
	Storage	34.3	34.0	0.8	23.0
	Mean	36.0	29.4	2.2	22.5
MAIZE	Improved varieties	66.5	92.0	25.4	61.3
	Pesticide Use	48.8	68.3	12.3	43.1
	Fertilizer Use	67.3	66.4	20.5	51.4
	Storage	64.1	95.2	10.7	56.7
	Mean	61.7	80.5	17.2	53.1
RICE	Improved varieties	51.6	95.5	17.2	54.8
	Pesticide Use	41.1	78.1	3.3	40.8
	Fertilizer Use	52.0	90.1	18.0	53.4
	Storage	45.2	90.1	5.7	47.0
	Mean	47.5	88.5	11.1	49.0
MILLET	Improved varieties	30.2	83.4	27.9	47.2
	Pesticide Use	27.4	90.6	13.9	44.0
	Fertilizer Use	31.1	93.1	36.9	53.7
	Storage	31.1	92.2	19.7	47.7
	Mean	30.0	89.8	24.6	48.2
SORGHUM	Improved varieties	56.1	92.5	27.9	58.8
	Pesticide Use	45.6	93.6	13.1	50.8
	Fertilizer Use	64.9	94.3	41.0	66.7
	Storage	51.2	88.3	19.7	53.1
	Mean	54.5	92.2	25.4	57.4
YAM	Improved varieties	28.2	17.3	9.8	18.4
	Pesticide Use	29.8	6.9	18.0	18.2
	Fertilizer Use	27.8	7.1	5.7	14.2
	Storage	28.9	15.3	2.5	15.2
	Mean	28.9	11.7	9.0	16.5

**Table 2: Adoption of animal husbandry technologies in three states of Nigeria**

SPECIES	TECHNOLOGIES	STATES			TOTAL
		ADAMAWA	BAUCHI	BORNO	
Cattle	Improved breed	44.0	51.2	8.2	34.5
	Health mgt.	37.5	44.3	18.9	33.6
	Feeding	43.6	37.2	9.8	30.2
	Housing	36.7	37.8	5.7	26.7
	Mean	40.5	42.6	10.7	31.3
Sheep/Goats	Improved breed	34.7	59.0	9.0	34.2
	Health mgt.	37.1	57.2	13.1	35.8
	Feeding	36.7	58.9	13.9	36.5
	Housing	34.3	55.6	5.7	31.9
	Mean	35.7	57.7	10.4	34.6
Rabbitry	Improved breed	25.8	27.5	0.8	18.0
	Health mgt.	25.0	27.0	3.3	18.4
	Feeding	25.4	19.5	1.6	15.5
	Housing	23.8	27.5	0.0	17.1
	Mean	25.0	25.4	1.4	17.3
Fisheries	Improved species	22.6	17.1	0.0	13.2
	Health mgt.	22.2	20.0	2.5	14.9
	Feeding	23.4	19.2	1.6	14.7
	Housing	24.2	19.5	0.0	14.6
	Mean	23.1	19.0	1.0	14.4

## T&V is just irresistible

### The voices of Nigeria's extensionists

Adjudged from the National Professional Extension Dialogue - a workshop in which extension specialists of different levels and institutions from all over the country took part, it is evident that T&V has a popular appeal to Nigeria's extensionists. There was a consensus that T&V has the following strengths:

- the system has a well-defined structural and institutional arrangement,
- it promotes and encourages professionalism,
- it has in-built mechanisms for capacity/confidence building measures.
- it has an in-built monitoring and evaluation system,
- it has built-in supervision mechanisms which makes staff to work more accountably,
- it has effective feedback mechanisms,

- it is flexible in terms of accommodating other agricultural and rural development projects,
- it enables high potential contact with large numbers of farmers, and
- it promotes greater ties among research extension, farmers and input agencies, and thus ensures a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing the issues of agriculture.

Looking at the T&V more dispassionately, the extensionists point to some weaknesses which do not necessarily invalidate the reasonable level of success achieved as a result of the implementation of the system. These weaknesses include:

- poor funding due to lack of political will,
- less focus on the non-crop sub-sectors (livestock, fisheries, marketing), and
- low (not absence) level of participation in planning and funding of extension.

In spite of the weaknesses highlighted above, participants at the professional extension dialogue recommended that rather than discard T&V, it should be strengthened. They suggested the following measures for improving the T&V:

- in line with FAO's recommendation, 25% of the nation's annual budget should be allocated to agriculture,
- in order to ease the funding problems in extension delivery, 50% of the total allocation to the agriculture sector should be channelled to extension,
- the contact farmer concept should be implemented with the group approach; and
- methodologies for the dissemination of technologies in the non-crop sub-sectors of livestock, fisheries, agro-forestry, land management and marketing should be developed so that their mode of dissemination should become more effective and less cumbersome.

#### Food security orchestrates T&V

The Food Security Project which is being currently implemented by the government of Nigeria in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations provides for the re-introduction of the monthly technology review meetings (MTRM)



Grafting and budding of fruit trees

which became a quarterly affair following the recommendation by the National Agricultural Research Project (NARP). By re-introducing the MTRMs, the Food Security Project declares its support for certain aspects of T&V as MTRMs constitute an integral part of this extension approach. It is the main venue of in-service training for subject-matter specialists and of regular contact between extension and research.



Practical demonstration of the skill taught during monthly technology review meeting (MTRM) – fish feeding in a concrete homestead fish pond

### NGOs lend support to T&V

Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) is the most widespread non-governmental organization in Nigeria. It started as a result of a formal request to Sasakawa Africa Association by the Government of Nigeria to establish a project in Nigeria. The declared objectives of SG 2000 are:

- diffusion of improved technologies to small scale farmers through the public ADP extension agents,
- assisting in developing quality extension services through training and provision of some logistic support; and
- strengthening of linkages amongst research, extension service and farmers in order to transfer the improved technology from researchers to farmers.

Sasakawa Global 2000 ensures that participating farmers apply fully the technological package so that the optimum expected yield is achieved. This practical package is prepared to suit the small-scale farmers who form the bulk of participants in the demonstrations of about 0.25 ha termed Management Training Plots (MTP).

### Conclusion

T&V extension which has received widespread condemnation elsewhere, is indeed regarded as the “darling” extension approach in Nigeria. Nigeria’s extensionists are not prepared to part ways with the T&V as this extension approach represents a “cornucopia” in a mythological sense. Thus, T&V flourishes in Nigeria and is further supported and strengthened by recent programmes (e.g. The Special Programme for food Security) and even the NGOs (notably, Sasakawa Global 2000).

### Bibliography

- Atala, T.K.; T. Arokoyo and P.A. Amata (1992). The impact of the Training and Visit (T&V) system of extension on adoption of farm innovations and farm output in Kaduna State, Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Agricultural Extension*, vol.7 (nos. 1 & 2): 59-70.
- Benor, D. and M. Baxter (1984). *Training and Visit Extension*. The World Bank. Washington, D.C.
- Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and FAO (2002). *The National Special Food Security Programme: Plan of Operation (Project UTF/NIR/047/NIR)*. Special Programme on Food Security, Abuja.
- Ilevbaoje, I.E. (2000). *Evaluation of the operations and impact of T&V, NGOs and private sector extension systems in Nigeria*. Research report on Adamawa, Bauchi and Borno States. Submitted to National Agricultural Research Project.
- National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (1997). *Evaluation of effectiveness and impact of the Training and Visit extension system in Nigeria*. A research report submitted to Agricultural Projects Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (APMEU), Federal Department of Agriculture.
- Williams, S.K.T., (1978). *Rural Development in Nigeria*. University of Ife Press, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.