

Communal Conflict Impact On Agricultural Extension Agents' Operations In Atisbo Local Government Area Of Oyo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study determined impact of communal conflict on extension agents dissemination of relevant agricultural information and its consequences on farmers utilization level of agricultural information in Atisbo local government area [LGA] of Oyo States Nigeria. The local government was stratified into conflict and non – Conflict areas. Out of 6 viable cells in the L. G. A. 3 extension agents and 150 farmers in the conflict cells were purposely selected using systematic random sampling techniques. It was found that contact farmers cultivated land, were reduced after conflict. Extension activities such as establishment of small plot adoption technologies, demonstration of adoption of non-farm technologies, visitation of EA and Training of farmers were drastically reduced after conflict. There is a significant difference in farmers' utilization of agricultural information mean scores 4.32 before and 2.5 after the conflict with $T_{cal} 2.12 > T_{Tab} 1.96$. Hence an urgent intervention, to promote peace, is needed, if effective dissemination and utilization of relevant agricultural information in the area will be realized.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria small holders had hitherto been responsible for producing the buck of the country's agricultural output. It is the belief that they could further increase production substantially through intensive use of modern inputs, new varieties of crops and livestock technologies. This warrant the establishment of agricultural extension institution like Agricultural Development projects (Ogungbile and Olukosi, 1991). Agricultural extension is a science of social change with the basic purposes of increasing farmers' productivity through efficient production (Adegebo, 1993 in Bolarinwa 2001). Hence it emphasizes among other things the use of fertilizer, improved seeds, and chemicals. In other word Nigerian ADP are farmer oriented programme.

The State wide ADPs that took off in 1989 were designed as a project focusing on small scale farmers' and to relieve a series of exogenous constraints restricting acceptability of new technologies. For instance, Oyo State agricultural development project commenced her Statewide operation in 1989. It is a rural based agricultural outfit; with emphasis on development of agriculture through provision of agricultural extension services. The programme operates through its headquarters at Saki and Zonal administrative offices at Tede, Ibadan, Ogbomosho and Oyo. The over all objective of the programme was to stimulate efficient agricultural production and improve the income and standard of living of 4,5030 targeted farm families in Oyo State (OYOSADP annual report, 2002).

The laudable objectives were accomplished through provision of the following services:

- advisory services and training on proven agricultural technologies to farm families in the state using the extension agents.
- extension agents, paying regular fortnightly visit to farm families.
- training of farm families on various improved methods of farming.
- establishment of small plot adoption technologies on farmers' farm (SPATS). covering , crops, livestock and fisheries.
- Women in agriculture (WIA) unit to train women on modern and improved methods of crop processing and conduct various methods of crop utilization under gender specific activities programme. These operations are normally planned and carried out as ADPS' programme yearly.

Extension agents meeting up with their target set for the weeks, months and year for each operation. These laudable objectives can only be achieved in a peaceful environment. In a situation where individuals or groups seek actively to prevent each other from attainment of their goals through violent means, farmer's adoption of technology level and effective dissemination information by the extension agents may be adversely affected (Ugwunegbu, 1999)

The crisis in Irawo communities in Atisbo local government is one of the federal violent conflict in Nigeria. The conflict stem from struggling for the throne, and scrambling for the control of precious stone area of the community (Durodola, 2004). The conflict led to burning of houses, destruction of farms, farm structures and disrupts both social and economic development of the area. With the conflict situation in Irawo-owode in view, it becomes pertinent to examine impact of the conflict on the farmers' oriented, agricultural extension agent's operations, in the community in order to:

1. determine the extent to which extension agents were able to accomplish their operations or tasks before and after conflict.
2. ascertain the conflict impact on farmers farm size before and after conflict.
3. assess farmers' level of utilizing extension agents disseminated technologies before and after conflict.
4. suggest appropriate solutions to the conflict.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference in farmer utilization of agricultural information means score before and after the conflict.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The local government was stratified into conflict and non-conflict areas. Eight cells make up the local government council with one extension agent in charge of a cell. Three cells and three EA that were in conflict area were purposively selected. Out of 1,502 ADP registered farmers in the three cells 10% i.e. 150 farmers were selected for the study. Data were collected by administering structured questionnaires, and interview schedule and secondary data were obtained through relevant literatures. The sigma Z-score method was used to determine farmers' utilization level. Statistical analysis carried out with the use of frequency counts, percentages and T test.

MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

Extension agent operations is the independent variables while communal conflict impact is the dependent variables. Extension agent operation is measured by comparing the expected operations to be performed with actual performance while conflict impact is measured by comparing performance before conflict with performance after conflict. Farmer's utilization level is measured by comparing farmer's adoption of extension technologies before the conflict with after the conflict.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 indicates extension agents' operations before and after conflict.

Table 1: Farmers Registered, visited and trained before and after conflict:

N = expected performance of extension operations.

Extension Agent Operations.	Expected total no. Of performance of operation per year	Before conflict		After conflict	
		F	%	F	%
No. of visits per EA	2880	2400	83%	800	28%
Contact farmers' groups trained per EA	4608	3680	80%	900	20%
No. of contact farmers trained per EA	960	682	71%	162	17%

Source: field survey 2003.

As shown in table 1, number of visit per EA reduced from 83% prior to conflict to 28% after conflict. There is also 60% reduction of contact farmers' groups after conflict. Contact farmers trained before conflict reduced from 71% to 17% after conflict. It can be deduced from these results that the extension operations within the local government were highly or adversely affected as a result of the conflict situation.

Table 2: Small Plot Adoption Techniques Established On Farmers' Farm. N= Total Expected Spat Established

Sectors	Messages	Expected Total No.	Before		After	
			F	%	F	%
Crop	DMR maize seed early maturing ESRV	75	54	72%	16	21.3
	Introduction of cowpea varieties	75	65	86%	24	35%
	Introduction of high yield soybeans	75	58	77.3	18	24%
Live Stock	Control of mange	75	55	73.3	7	9.3%
	Improved Housing	75	24	32%	4	5.3%
Fisheries	Construction of home stead fish pond	30	15	50%	2	6%

Source: field survey 2003.

S. P. A. T. is essentially a demonstration on a small portion of farmers field 10 x 10m² aimed to teach the farmer new techniques and practices that enable him to compare the results of the old and new practices (Agboola and Tjani 1991). From Table 2, it is obvious that conflict situation in the L.G.A caused a set back establishment of S. P. A. T by EAs in the area. Seventy two percent of D. M. R maize, 86% of cowpea varieties, and 77.3% of soybeans were established before conflict compared to 21.3% maize, 35% cowpea an 24% soybean S. P. A. T. established after conflict.

Table 3: Demonstration on Adoption of non farm technologies. N= expected target

Demonstration	Target	Before		After	
		F	%	F	%
Soybean utilization	25	20	80%	5	20%
Cassava	25	24	96	6	25%
Maize	25	21	84	3	12%
Processing maize	25	15	60	-	-
Yam chip processing	25	23	92	4	16
Water purification	25	23	92	-	-

Source : field survey 2003

As indicated in Table 3 greater than 60% of demonstrations were accomplished by E. A.s before conflicts, compared with less than 25% demonstrations that were accomplished after conflict.

It can be inferred from the Table 3 that the conflict hampered extensions' agent effort to establish demonstration plot on farmers' farms in the area.

Table 4: Contact farmers cultivated land before and after conflict. N= 150

Farm size	Before conflict		After conflict	
	F	%	F	%
< 2Ha	33	22	100	67
2.1-5.0	47	31	32	21
5.1 – 10	58	89	18	12
Over 10	12	8	-	-
Total	150	100	150	00

Source: field survey 2003.

As shown in Table 4 prior to the conflict 33% of the sampled farmers had farm sizes below 2.0 hectares, after the conflicts 67% of the, farmers had farm size below 2.0 hectares. It is obvious that the conflict effect increases the number of farmers in 2hecters cultivation groups after conflicts and reduce the number of large-scale farmers to zero in the study area. The result indicates that farmers farm sizes were highly negatively affected. It can be deduced from the above that peace is paramount, for effective cultivation of land to take place.

Table 5: Utilization of extension technologies
N= 150

• SPAT MESSAGES		Before			After		
		Frequency	%	Scores	Frequency	%	Score
1.	Introduction of DMR maize seed Early maturing	102	68	5.18	32	21	3.54
2.	Introduction of corps with spraying	83	55	5.37	24	16	3.20
3.	Popularization of DMR SR maize variety	94	62	5.0	34	23	3.60
4.	Maize seed dressing using apron plus	115	77	5.4	40	26	3.75
5.	Popularization of cowpea IT 82 E variety	97	65	5.0	25	17	3.26
6.	Soybean introduction	110	73	5.3	10	6	2.24
7.	Control of mänge	88	59	4.92	12	8	2.49
8.	Improved Housing for sheep and goat	45	30	3.9	6	4	1.89
9.	Construction of home stead fish pond	30	20	3.43	6	4	1.89

Source : field survey 2003

• Multiple responses

The data in table five indicate the extent to which farmers utilize the various technologies before and after the conflict. From the table 5 prior to the conflict 68.0% farmers used downy mildew (DMR) resistant variety of maize however in post conflict period the percentage of farmer using DMR declined to 21%. As it is indicated in table five, the communal conflict led to decline in farmer's utilization of technologies.

Table 6: Test of difference between means score of the use of Extension technologies transfer to farmers before and after conflict.

Variable name	Group	Number of cases	IIT Means Scores	T calculated value	T Tabulated value	Decision
Use of improved Technology transferred (ITT)	Farmers' Utilization of ITT before conflict	10	4.32	2.12	1.96	S
	Farmers' Utilization of ITT after conflict	10	2.5			

Source : field survey 2003

Table 6 indicates that a t test statistic was used to find out the difference in farmers' utilization of Extension messages before and after conflict. The calculated t value 2.12 is greater than the tabulated (t – value) 1.96 $p=0.5$). Therefore there is a significant difference between the mean utilization of improved technology transferred scores of farmers before and after conflict.

The reasons for difference in the used of ITT before and after were attributed to farmers' distraction from farm work as a result of conflict and extension agents inability to reach farmers, impact knowledge and gain their attention during conflict.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The communal conflict adversely affected extension agents effective performance of their operations, which in turn reduced farmers level of utilization of technologies in the area. Based on these findings, the study suggests the following solutions:

- (1) setting up of reconciliation committee by the States Government or concerned community members that will look into the remote causes of the crisis.
- (2) organization of "peace keeping workshop for the chiefs, youths and artisans in the conflict area".
- (3) provision of farm inputs and credit facilities to farmers as a relief package.
- (4) office visit by farmers should be encouraged since the extension agents cannot visit them on their farms due to the conflict situation.
- (5) ADPS should device a means of reaching farmers in the conflicting zones e.g. organizing seminars, workshop for farmers.
- (6) apart from extension agents, radio and television should be used as a mean of disseminating information to farmers.

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