

## ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL LEADERS AND EXTENSION AGENTS INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Individual and/or group involvement in community development activities in study areas is as old as the history of the communities therefore the need for this study. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents. Almost forty-four (43.9%) percent of local leaders claimed that they had weekly contacts with extension agents as against 61.3% extension agents who indicated monthly contacts with local leaders. Differences exist between contacts frequency claimed. Local leaders and extension agents are highly involved in making decisions on community development issues ( $\bar{x} = 4.53$ ;  $\bar{x} = 3.65$ ); and acting as liaison between government and non governmental agencies ( $\bar{x} = 4.36$ ;  $\bar{x} = 3.55$ ). Significant difference existed between local leaders and extension agents in their involvement in community development activities. The contacts between them favoured the extension agents more than the local leaders. The study recommends that more extension agents be recruited in the area of community development. Frequent contacts should be encouraged between local leaders and extension agents; Local leaders and extension agents should be encouraged to be active especially in activities geared towards community development.

**Keywords:** Community development activities, involvement, frequency of contacts, Edo state

### 1.0 Introduction

The development of community and locale people is a collective responsibility. In Nigeria Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) have helped to accelerate community development. No community develops without collaboration. Community-based organizations (CBOs), religion organizations, international organizations, individuals, and local leaders and extension agents have helped in this respect. Individual/groups involvement in community development activities enabled individual/or group harness necessary resources within and outside their community, apply indigenous and non indigenous knowledge for community development. Agba, Ikoh, and Ushie (2013) cited Kretzmann and Mcknight (1993) assertion that effective collaboration involves adequacy, negotiation, and nurturing partnership towards group goals that may result in community

development. So, the locale people wealth of knowledge, manpower and other resources that are of relevance must not be undermined in community development with those sourced from outside the community through change agents/extension agents. The involvement of local people in decision making process, evaluation of development programme/projects promote empowerment of local people, respect for use of their indigenous knowledge (Marsland, 2006). Extension stands to gain if it formally incorporates the community leaders in all its community development efforts (Adams, 1982; Ozor and Nwankwo, 2008; Anaeto, 2012).

The focus of community development (CD) is people and the positive elements in their social wellbeing (Sureshkumar, *et al.*, 2016). Local community leaders and extension agents should be involved in planning and implementation of CD programmes/projects execution. Edo State benefited from collaborative efforts since its creation in 1991. The State Agricultural Development Programme (EDADP), Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) and others CD stakeholders have been very helpful in this regard. There is slow pace of community development in Nigeria in spite of the fact that global communities are closely linked and resources needed for developing communities are at the doorstep of development agents/stakeholders (Osabuohien, Asenoguan and Igbini, 2023). This study assessed local leaders and extension agents' involvement in community development activities in Edo State.

### 3.0 Methodology

Edo State is bounded in the North and the East by Kogi State, South by Delta State and West Ondo State. The State is located between latitudes 05° 44' North and 07° 34' North and longitude 06° 04' East 6° to 43' East with a mean monthly temperature of 27.6°C. The vegetation is of lowland forest type with distinct wet and dry seasons with mean annual rainfall and humidity of 2162mm and 72.5% respectively (NAA, 2019); the land mass of 17,802km<sup>2</sup> (6,873sqm) and estimated population of 4,470,586 (National Population Commission, 2018). Edo State is also divided into 3 agro-ecological zones which are Edo South, Edo North and Edo Central. The State is home to several ethnicities that are culturally linked: Benin, Esan, Afemai, Emai, Ijaw and others. The State has eighteen (18) Local Government Areas. Each of the local government

area has chairman as its administrative head. The people of the State are predominantly farmers, with households of 838,107 and 1416 communities in Edo State (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS, 2009). The agricultural resources in the State consist of food crops, forestry products and livestock. The main food crops cultivated include yam, cassava, maize, rice and others. Locally made wooden and metal sculptures are also of commercial and cultural importance especially among the Benin ethnic. The population for the study consists of all community local leaders and extension agents in Edo State. A purposive selection of 2 LGAs based on researchers' prior knowledge of the LGAs high developmental and extension activities was conducted: Egor and Ovia Southwest in Edo South; Edo Central: Esan Central and Esan West; while Edo North: Owan West and Owan East. Second, purposive selection of 5 communities were developmental activities is/are on-going or completed from each of the 2 previously selected LGAs (2 LGAs x 5 communities per LGA =10 communities amounting to 30 communities. A sample frame of 252 local leaders was generated from the 30 communities. The last stage was simple random selection of 157 respondents, which was adequate (Kregcie and Morgan, 1970). All the accessible extension agents in Edo State who interacted with community leaders in community development activities were 32 but 31 extension agents were used for this study because a copy of questionnaire was not properly filled. Data were collected with structured questionnaires was used for the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency count, percentages, standard deviation, mean were used to describe socio-economic profile of respondents. Inferential statistics, t-test was used to test stated hypothesis at 0.01 level of significant.

## 2.0 Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows 68.8% of the local leaders were male. This implies that males were more in leadership positions in community development activities in the study communities. The dominance of male in leadership positions may be borne out of the fact that men in most cases are noted to likely take over decision making platforms in most rural communities. This is because leadership in community development activities entail making decisions for entire members of the community with a view to developing such communities. Similarly, for extension agents, results show that 67.7% of the respondents were male. The higher proportion of male may be attributed to male dominant structure of extension organization structure in many parts of Nigeria. The findings agree with the study of

Abegunde (2004) that reported more male are in executive position of CBOs in Oyo State. This may be due to the socio-cultural attributes of African societies where women will naturally withdraw from such positions due to the assertive and patriarchal nature of the African communities.

On age, 1.3% of the community local leaders in the community development activities were less than 30 years while 35.7% were 30 and 39 years, 26.8% were between 40 and 49 years, 29.3% between 50 and 59 years while 6.9% above 60 years. The mean age approximately 46 years shows that middle age people were more into the activities aimed at developing their community. The implication of this finding is that local leaders in community development activities may have the agility required to be creative, energetic and innovative based on their active age. This is because age has been identified as a positive correlate of creativity and job performance (De Sand, 2000; Amegayibor, 2021; Segundo-Marco, Carrilo, Fernandez and Gonzalez, 2023) findings that identified age and organizational experience as determinants of task performance. On the part of the extension agents, it was observed that 29.0% were between 30 and 39 years, 45.2% between 40 and 49 years while 25.8% were between 50 and 59 years with mean age of approximately 45 years. This implies that extension agents in the study area are still in their productive age. Thus, they may be able to carry out community development activities and guide the local leaders effectively under normal circumstance.

Furthermore, 79.0% of the local leaders were married. Marital status may enhance commitment and responsibility of individuals to their communities. This is because local leaders that are married may be more interested in developing their communities than the unmarried for obvious reasons. The unmarried persons usually have propensity to travel/adventurous or more mobile to places with better opportunities compared to those who are married. The study support previous studies (Fundu, 2005; Puciato, Rozpara, Bugdol and Mroz-Gorgon, 2022) that posited that participation of married individuals in community development was higher than those not married. This higher participation was attributed to the fact that married have more responsibilities and they worked to ensure that their community developed through self-help approach. Similarly, for extension agents, it was observed that 80.6% were married. This implies that being married may influence their commitment towards their job.

On education, 98.7% of local leaders had formal education. The implication of this finding is that local community leaders will find it easier to adopt new techniques and better approaches in community development activities. Also, education status may be a useful resource that may likely help local leaders skills and technical competence acquisition necessary for any community development. Education could

also help in information seeking behaviour and funding raising capability of the local leaders. This result supports the findings of Adisa (2013) that reported that education was a critical yardstick influencing rural women participation in community development activities. This brings about new strategies and better management of community based association. Furthermore, Apesughur, Ashiki, Kim, Yusulf (2014) identified education as a significant factor that determined participation level in self help programmed for community development among women and explained that the educated women had better understanding of community development better and they were able to participate more than those with less education.

On the level of education, it was observed that about 44.6% of the respondents had either HND or B.Sc and its equivalent degrees, 13.4% had M.Sc and its equivalent while only 1.3% had no formal education but 0.5 % had PhD degree. This further confirms that community leaders in the study area had high education level. This implies that they need no force to participate actively in activities that may develop their immediate community as earlier reported by Adisa (2013) and Apesughur *et al.* (2014) in their studies of self-help participation for community development. However, Ehisuoria and Akhimien (2012) in a study conducted in South-south zone of Nigeria reported that though education was a factor that promotes participation but members of community development association who are educated are likely to be difficult to convince to participate in certain developmental programme/projects by the local leaders in community development. This may be so if the members perceive foul play among community association leaders. Among the extension agents, 38.7% had ND, 48.4% had either HND or B.Sc while 12.9% had M.Sc. The educational level of the extension agents would help access information on viable community development strategies that local leaders can benefits from.

Table 1 shows that 5.1% were community leaders, 5.7% as youth leaders, 10.8% as men leaders, 17.8% as women leaders, 12.7% as group leaders while about 17.3% were programme/project leaders. This probably means that all kinds of community leaders were sampled. Furthermore, there is synergy between extension agents and local leaders across all community identified. For the extension agents, 48.8% were agricultural extension agents, 32.3% were block extension agents, only 3.2% were zonal extension managers, 6.5% were CEO while 9.6% were DCEO in ranks.

Results on leadership experience (Table 1) showed that 74.5% of the local leaders had less than 5 years of leadership experience in community development activities, 18.5% had 5 to 9 years of experience while only 3.2% had 15 years and above and the mean leadership experience was 3.38 years. The findings

showed that years of leadership experience of community leaders in the study area was low. This may have significant negative effect on the development of their communities as experience has been reported by Mulwa (2008) and Waweru (2015) to have positive influence on participation in community development. Local leaders also require experience to interact with extension/ social workers in order to get the best out of the relationships between EAs and LLs in community development of community members' desires. For the extension agents, only 3.2% of the agricultural extension workers had less than 5 years of working experience, 16.1% had between 5 and 9 years, 25.8% had between 10 and 14 years while 54.9% had 15 years and above as their experiences in working as agricultural extension workers. The mean age of approximately 18 years is evidence that the sampled agricultural extension workers in the study area had enough experience that will make them perform very well in their various tasks.

It was observed that 40.1% of the local leaders in the study area indicated that they were full timer in private jobs, while 39.5% were full timer in self business enterprises but only 12.2% indicated that they were part-time/temporary government paid jobs and only 8.3% of the local leaders were full time government paid jobs. The findings indicate that most of the local leaders were either on private and self-businesses. The implications of this finding is that those on self-owned businesses may have more time to engage in community development activities more than those in private or government paid jobs. This is because, community development activities require enormous energy and time for moving around which may not be available for those who are on government paid jobs. This assertion is supported by Emeh, Izundu, Okechukwu (2012) who reported that rural development requires time and energy. This makes it easier for groups to achieve better results than individual based development efforts as responsibilities are shared among group members. It was observed that all (100.0%) sampled extension agents were full time employees.

Table 1 shows the programmes/projects implemented in the various communities under study, 12.7% of the community local leaders indicated that they had implemented community based programmes/projects, 75.2% implemented Fadama programmes, 1.3% did a special proramme on food security, 4.5% indicated that they did MTP, 5.7% did SPAT while less than 1% (0.6%) did SPFS programme. This indicates that Fadama programme was the major one implemented in the study area. This may not be far from the truth because Fadama programme has been acclaimed the most successful community development programmes implemented in most rural areas in Nigeria. This has made it to move from Fadama I which started in 1989 with few states in Nigeria through Fadama 11 to Fadama III

that covered the 36 States of the federation. This made Fadama programme the most successful community based programme in Nigeria (Apata and Saliu, 2016).

On the local leaders household size, results showed that about 42.0% had less than 5 persons living together within the same house while 49.7% had between 5 and 9 persons eating from the same pot

and living under the same roof and 8.3% indicated that people living together in the same house were 10 and above. The mean household size was approximately 6 persons per house. This shows that local leaders in the study area had moderate household size based as earlier study report conducted in Nigeria (Anyanwu, 2013).

**Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of local leaders**

Variable	Local Leaders		Extension Agents	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	108	68.8	21	67.7
Female	49	31.2	10	32.3
<b>Age (years)</b>				
<30.00	2	1.3		
30.00 - 39.00	56	35.7	9	29.0
40.00 - 49.00	42	26.8	14	45.2
50.00 - 59.00	46	29.3	8	25.8
60.00+	11	6.9		
Mean		45.69		44.8
Std. Dev		9.31		7.85
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	14	8.9	6	19.4
Married	124	79	25	80.6
Divorced	11	7		
Widow/widower	8	5.1		
<b>Level of formal education</b>				
No formal	2	1.3		
Primary school experience	5	3.2		
Secondary school experience	8	5.1		
ND	34	21.7	12	38.7
HND/B.Sc	70	44.6	15	48.4
MSc	21	13.4	4	12.9
PhD	6	3.7		
Diploma	11	7		
<b>Rank (Local Leader/Ext. Agent)</b>				
Community leader/EA	8	5.1	15	48.4
Youth leader/BES	9	5.7	10	32.3
Men leader/ZEM	17	10.8	1	3.2
Women leader/CEO	28	17.8	2	6.5
Group leader/DCEO	20	12.7	3	9.6
Programme/project leader	27	17.2		
Religion leader	48	30.6		
<b>Leadership experience (year)</b>				

<5.00	117	74.5	1	3.2
5.00 - 9.00	29	18.5	5	16.1
10.00 - 14.00	6	3.8	8	25.8
15.00+	5	3.2	17	54.9
Mean		3.38		17.61
Std. Dev		1.87		6.86
<b>Employment type</b>				
Full time, govt	13	8.3	31	100
Full time, private	63	40.1		
Full time, self	62	39.5		
Part time	19	12.1		
<b>Programme/project</b>				
Community based	20	12.7		
Fadama	118	75.2		
food security	2	1.3		
MTP	7	4.5		
SPAT	8	5.1		
SPFS	1	0.6		
<b>Household size (Number)</b>				
<5.00	66	42.0		
5.00 - 9.00	78	49.7		
10.00+	13	8.3		
Mean		5.47		
Std. Dev		2.96		

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

#### Local Leaders and Extension Agents Frequency of Contact

Figure 1 shows that 29.9% of the local leaders indicated that they had contact with extension agents on weekly basis, 43.9% on monthly basis while only 26.1% had contact on yearly basis. On the extension agents' contacts with local leaders, results show that 61.3% indicated that they had contact with local leaders on weekly basis, 35.5% monthly basis while 3.2% on yearly basis.

The findings showed that both local leaders and extension agents were having differences in the number of contacts at varying times, from daily, monthly to yearly but it could be deduced from the study that both the local leaders and extension agents have regular contacts in community development activities as both have different roles performance in

community development activities. It is generally accepted that self-sustained rural community development activities is vital to economic and social progress of any developing nation like Nigeria. So, the need to further boost ways and means of massively accelerating development in the rural areas where over 80% of Nigeria population reside (Ozor and Nwankwo, 2008), as this would help to actualise national goal of self-sufficiency and control over resources. Interestingly, the resources already exist, but what is missing is the mastery of the practical wisdom and technology to mobilize them for our overall benefit (leadership). The main argument in favour of community development by community people is that community people are deemed to have a better knowledge of the prevailing local conditions.

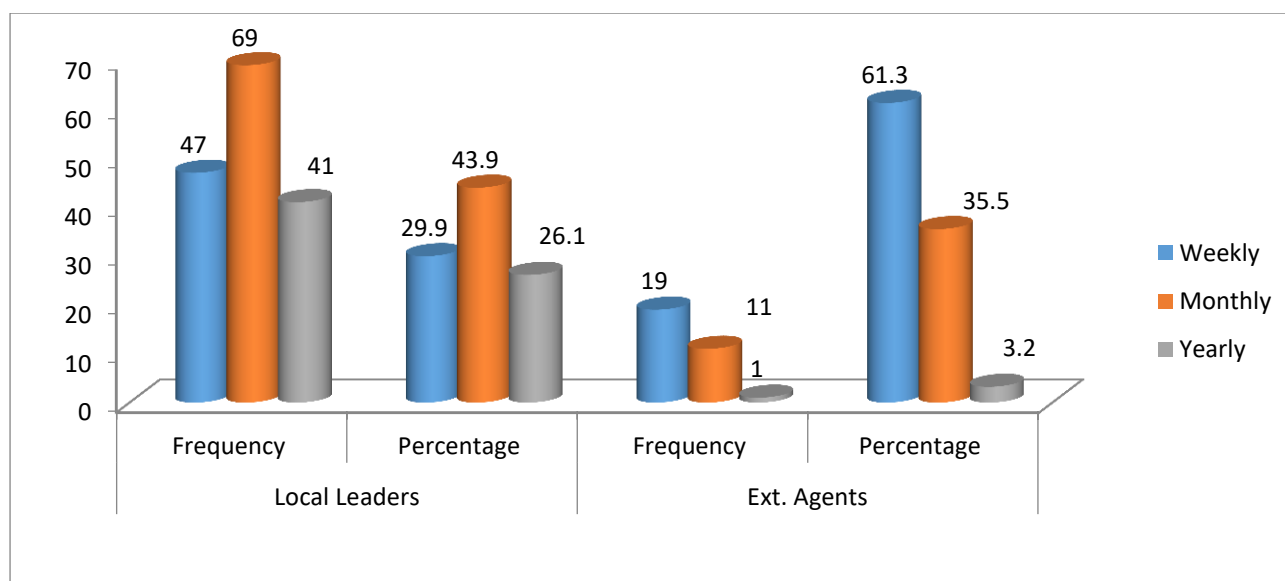


Figure 1: Contact of local community leaders with extension agents

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

**Extent of Involvement in Community Development Activities**

Table 2 shows extent of local community leaders and extension agents' involvement in community development activities using the grand mean scores as benchmark. Local leaders were involved in 30 (96.8%) of the identified CDAs while Extension agents were involved in 27 (87.1%). Similarly, grand mean percentage of local community leaders and extension agents' involvement in community development activities were 96.8% and 87.1% respectively. The table revealed that making decisions on issues ( $\bar{x} = 4.53$ ) and ( $\bar{x} = 3.65$ ) were activity that local leaders and extension agents were highly involved in, acting as liaison between government and NGOs ( $\bar{x} = 4.36$ ) and ( $\bar{x} = 3.55$ ) was an activity that the local leaders and extension agents were highly involved. Similarly, all other identified activities related to community development had high extent of respondents' involvement except the activity that involved arrangement of marriage partners within their communities while community road construction ( $\bar{x} = 2.71$ ) and advising/making arrangement for marriage partners were the only

activities that had low level of role performance among the extension agents. The results are probably an indication that local leaders and extension agents are highly involved in CDAs in study areas.

The findings show that both local leaders and extension agents had high extent of involvement in activities related to community development in the study area. The high extent of involvement in community development related activities may be useful in ensuring that rural communities are developed through self-help approaches as government has relented in the provision of basic amenities to both rural and urban communities in Nigeria (Emeka, 2013). Rural areas are very significant in human survival as most food consumed are mainly produced in rural areas as earlier observed (Steve and Williams, 2012). In order to ensure that rural areas are not continually neglected, people must come together, put resources together for the primary purpose of developing their rural areas for their benefits (Emeka, 2013). This is the best way to ensure that rural areas are not deserted by people through migration

Table 2: Extent of involvement in community development activities by respondents

Community developmental activities	Local Comm. Leaders		Extension Agents	
	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev
Making decisions on issues	4.53*	0.96	3.65*	0.98
Acting as liaison between govt. and NGOs	4.36*	1.04	3.55*	1.21
M & E of projects	4.32*	1.10	3.84*	1.16
Raising funds through levies etc	4.65*	1.22	3.19*	1.56
Developing a plan of work	4.30*	1.11	3.35*	1.52
Diffusing/Educating rural people	4.21*	1.09	3.03*	1.52

Make assistance gets to people	4.21*	1.07	3.13*	1.57
Coordinating rural projects	4.21*	1.11	3.58*	1.06
Removing factors that slow devt.	4.17*	1.11	3.45*	1.29
Ensuring friendly relationship	4.32*	1.19	3.10*	1.74
Maintenance of peace and harmony	4.35*	1.04	3.06*	1.65
Determining suitable CDPs	4.48*	0.96	3.19*	1.56
Providing information	4.42*	1.04	3.10*	1.56
Providing informal technical advice	4.29*	1.14	3.52*	1.50
Providing enabling environment	4.18*	1.18	3.23*	1.67
Enforcing government laws	4.19*	1.15	3.13*	1.63
Awakening people political awareness	4.05*	1.33	2.35	1.52
Developing proposals for funding	4.09*	1.19	3.19*	1.56
Administering punishment	4.05*	1.29	3.71*	1.10
Settling of household and other disputes	4.03*	1.27	3.58*	1.29
Ensuring peace and security	4.08*	1.18	3.55*	1.21
Advising/Arranging for marriage partners	1.15	1.14	1.45	1.41
Community road construction	3.86*	1.35	2.71	1.62
Promoting Poverty eradication efforts	3.96*	1.25	3.74*	1.73
Provision of portable water	3.90*	1.31	3.32*	1.56
Human capacity building	3.90*	1.28	3.48*	1.46
Promoting Technology development	4.04*	1.21	3.55*	1.77
Ensuring peace and justice	3.96*	1.28	3.48*	1.48
Promoting Rural infrastructure	4.03*	1.11	3.03*	1.49
Promoting increased income	4.01*	1.16	3.68*	1.01
Human and environmental health matters	4.08*	1.10	3.90*	1.08
<b>Grand Mean ()</b>				

Source: Field survey, 2019 \*Mean ≥ 3.0 = High

**Frequency of Contact between Local Leaders and Extension Agents in CDAs**

agent; the contact was frequent. The present situation of extension contact shows that there is limited number of Results showed that significant difference in contact extension agents and this will impact their contact with between local community leaders and extension agents the clientele as reported (World Bank, 2004; involvement in community development activities exist, Ramjathan, Chowdbury and Ganpal, 2018; Nlahai, with local leaders showing lower mean scores Goldey; Jones, 2020) that limited number of extension compared to the extension agents. The t-test value of –personnel in Nigeria will have negative impact on poor 4.82, df (156); p ≤ 0.01 shows that contacts between farmers who extension is designed to meet their needs. extension agents and local leaders was significantly This will also affect their contact with local leaders in different at 0.01 level of significance. This is an community development as extension activities are indication that contacts between them were notholistic. favourable to the local leaders but to the extension

**Table 3: T-test value of difference between local leaders and extension agents**

	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean dif.	Df	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Local leaders	18.5	11.52	-20.8	156	-4.82**	0.00	S
Ext. Agent	39.3	3.15					

Source: Field Survey, 2019

\*\*Significant at 1%

### Conclusion

The study established that local leaders and extension agents were highly involved in activities to bring about community development. But significant difference existed between them in their frequency of contacts despite similarity in their involvement in certain CDAs. Inferential statistic results indicated that contacts between local community leaders and extension agents were more beneficial to the extension agents than the local leaders. Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. More extension agents should be recruited to drive community development efforts and further promote local leaders involvement in community development.
2. Frequencies of contacts between local leaders and extension agents should be encouraged by sensitization, giving of necessary incentives and promulgation of appropriate policies in this regards.
3. The local community leaders and the extension agents consciousness should be re-awaken and re-engineered towards active participation in affairs and activities that are aimed at developing communities that will be of great benefit to them as a result of their interaction with extension agents.

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