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# EVALUATION OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNICATION MEDIA FOR AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION DISSEMINATION IN SOUTHERN ZONE OF AKWA IBOM STATE – NIGERIA

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## Abstract
*The study was conducted to assess the indigenous communication media for disseminationof agriculturalinformation amongarable crop farmers in the southern zone of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents from 75% of the districts that make up the study area. Frequency counts, mean, percentages, Z-test and Likert rating scale were the tools of analysis. Logit regression model was also used to determine significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their perceived effectiveness of indigenous communication media for agricultural information dissemination. The results revealed that majority (51.7%) of the respondents were female and were married with a mean household size of 7 persons. Forty-five percent of the respondents had primary education. Most of the respondents were experienced with a mean of 14years.The result revealed that the commonly used indigenous communication media was village debate (44%) and was (71%) highly accessible and preferred. Majority (62.2%) of the respondents perceived that indigenous media were effective in disseminating agricultural information. The results showed that most (33.3%) of them likened their choices to ease usage and understanding. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made; that extension agents of Akwa Ibom State Agricultural Development Programme (AKADEP) should incorporate indigenous media into agricultural extension innovation packages. More adult educational institutions should be established in the study areas.*

**Keywords:**Evaluation, Indigenous, Media, Dissemination, Southern Zone.

## Introduction
Communities in rural area possess a wide range of indigenous communication channels that has significantly contributed to the improvement of agricultural systems in relations to production and post-harvest techniques. These indigenous communication channels operating in the rural communities have the power to change behaviours of the people, identify and find solution to farmer problems on sources of information. Communication, which is, transmission of information from a point called origin or source to another called destination or receiver (audience) is the bloodstream of every community. Unamma, (2004), reported that there are no explicitly designed communication forms, and agricultural information are communicated through extension agents and mass media which are dominated by the views and interests of government officials and development agents, which rarely entertain peoples' needs. He also emphasized the challenges of inadequate extension staff (especially given extension to farmer ratio is 1:1300), government-operated extension system being top-down cannot listen to farmers demands and dwindling resources affecting the agricultural sector. The mass media such as radio, television, graph, ICT, newsletters, e t c, like everything. Western has dominated the political, social-cultural and developmental spheres of the nation, but they have not been effective in communicating and mobilizing the rural communities which are the food basket and resource base of the nation (FAO, 2011). This is because the farmers mostly poor, illiterate and more so, innovations on agriculture are aired when the famers are either in their farms, busy in kitchen or with foreign language. As such every community has developed its indigenous

modes and channels of communication which characterize its existence organization and development. These communication modes and channels form the basis on which the communities, especially the rural communities progress. According to Ekong, (2010), a rural community is an aggregation of families habitually living together within a definite geographical location. It is more or less rooted in the land they occupy, living in the state of mutual interdependence, supporting some basic social measure of political autonomy in relation to other communities. A community is characterized by the organization of functions on a locality living together within a definite location and interacting on face to face basis (Anyanwu, 2013). Members may also use the common institution and facilities, and maintain a consciousness of oneness through the sharing of common values, norms, traditional, prejudices and sentiments (Nwachukwu, 2013). Most rural farming communities overwhelming majority of the population are small-scale farmers each working with less than two hectares of land. These farmers represent hundreds of different communities with distinct languages and ethnic groups. The majority of these farmers are resources –poor and rural based who derive their livelihoods mainly from agriculture (Nkeme and Ndaeyo (2011) and Makinde and Shorunke, 2013).

Indigenous media, that is, form of media expression conceptualized, produced and circulated by indigenous peoples around the globe as vehicles for communication, including cultural preservation, cultural and artistic expression, political self-determination and cultural sovereignty (Wilson et al; 2008). Moreover, indigenous media address local interests and concerns in the language and idioms that the audience is familiar with and understands, they are appropriate communication channels for populations in rural areas. Hence, research has always shown that most farmers, men and women do not learn about new technologies through the media or the extension services but rather from their friends and neighbours or through their own experiments. Also the food agricultural Organization [9] reported that there is a definite potential in applying indigenous media for rural development. This is because indigenous media offer opportunities for local participation and allow local people to communicate among themselves and with agricultural professionals, using forms they are familiar with. Indigenous media make it possible for messages to be packaged and transferred in locally popular artistic forms (*Essien (2014)*. This cannot be rivaled by any other means of communication with regard to reaching the realities. Example exist where song, drama, debate, dance groups and the like are used for encouraging advances in farming, health nutrition and family welfare, agricultural reforms and to promote campaigns against social evils. From the foregoing, one can see that indigenous communication is indisputably a veritable tool for information dissemination (Nwachukwu, (2013). According to Uwem et al; (2013) and Akpabio, (2015), indigenous communication is "the communication system which existed before the arrival of (contemporary) mass media and formerly organized bureaucratic systems, and still exists today despite changes." (Nwachukwu, (2014 ), who suggested that indigenous media should be used effectively to reach farmers since the mass media have been less effective in disseminating the necessary technologies and information to the farmers. Therefore, the study examines the use of indigenous communication media to disseminate agricultural information to farmers in the rural communities. Specifically, the study was to; identify the various types of communication media available to the farmers in the study area, ascertain the most preferred indigenous media for agricultural information dissemination in the study area, determine the perception of the farmers about the utilization of indigenous communication media for agricultural information dissemination, ascertain the perceived effectiveness of indigenous media.

## Methodology

The study was carried out in the southern Zone of Akwa Ibom State, which comprises of five Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely Abak, Oruk Anam, Etim Ekpo,Ukanafun and Ika. It consists of several towns and villages such as Abak Urban, Midim, Otoro-Abak, Obio Akpa, Ekparakwa, Urua-Inyang, Ikot Akpa Ntuk,

among others. It is located on coordinates of $51^0$N, $7^0$37E,/$5.017^0$N, $7.617^0$E.The zone is classified under humid tropical rainforest zone with two distinct seasons: a rainy season (April-October) and a dry season (November to March) with a mean annual rainfall is 350mm while temperature ranges from $29^0$c-$33^0$C. The prevailing climatic conditions favour mostly arable crops; tree crops, crops grown include cassava, maize, melon, sweet potatoes, cocoyam, water yam, okra, garden egg, vegetables, pepper, oil palm, ground- nut, beans, tomatoes and sweet yam. Most residents are of Annang ethnic group and predominantly farmers.

All arable crop farmers in the southern zone of Akwa Ibom State constituted the population of the study. A multi stage random sampling procedures was used to select respondents for the study. The first stage involved a random selection of 60% of the LGAs in the zone: the local government areas selected were Abak, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun. The second stage involved a random selection of 10 districts in each of the selected LGAs. The third stage involved a systematic selection of 4 respondents in each of the selected districts which gave a total of 120 respondents selected for the study. Structured interview schedule and personal observation on the respondent's environment were used to collect relevant quantitative data, while Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was used to elicit qualitative data. Frequencies counts and percentages were used to describe the personal characteristics of the respondents, the use of various communication media and the most preferred communication media for agricultural information dissemination in the study area. The perception of respondents on the effectiveness of the indigenous communication media was achieved using descriptive statistics and Likert scale rating. The first part of this objective was achieved using descriptive statistics. The second part was achieved using Z test while the remaining part was achieved using the Likert scale rating technique. The formula for the Likert scale is presented thus:

$X = \sum fn/nr$

Where:

$\sum$ = summation

f = Frequency of each of the response made

n = Likert value

nr = number of respondents

## Results and Discussion

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents (Table 1), reveals that a good proportion of the respondents (51.7%) were female. Implying that farming activities in the study area were undertaken mostly by women. This result agrees with the research findings of Ekerete and Ufot (2017) as they reported that 80.71% of farmers were women. Patrick, Bassey and Peter (2017) also reported that about 66% of farmers in their study area were female. In terms of age, a moderate proportion (45%) of respondents fell within the age bracket of 51-60 years. This is an indication that farmers were old and conservative in the study area. This finding disagrees with those of Ekerete and Ufot (2017) and Esu (2009) who reported that farmers were young and within the age bracket of 31-40 years in their study areas.

A large percentage (62.5%) of them were married, indicating that the dominant of married respondents is likely to impact positively on farming activities because most of the married respondents are likely to bore children that will assist them in farm work and other farming related activities. This is because farming techniques are transmitted or passed down from generation to generation orally from the elderly to the younger. Esu (2009) and Patrick et al; (2017) also reported separately that majority of farmers in their studies were married. However, this finding conflicts with that of Ekerete and Ufot (2017) who reported that 58.6% of respondents in their study were widow. Considering household size, the dominant household size was 4-8 (45%) persons, with a mean of 6 people. The high household size is an indication of abundant labour for farm work in the study area. This finding corroborates that of Ekerete and Ufot (2017) and Patrick, Bassey and Peter (2017) who reported a mean household of 6 and 10 persons respectively. Educationally, the findings revealed that many (74%) of the respondents had formal education and 26% had no formal education. This implies that in spite of their literacy level, they did not want to have anything to do with complicated channel of

agricultural information dissemination. Therefore, indigenous is preferred. In terms of farming experience, farmers were quite experienced with a mean of 14 years. The high years of experience possessed by these farmers are capable of enhancing their productivity. The finding agrees with Unamma,(2004) who stressed that farmers count a lot more on their years of experience for increased productivity rather than their educational attainment. With respect to monthly income majority (67.5%) of the respondents earned between ₦ 20,000 – ₦ 50,000.This result agrees with the finding of (Nkeme and Ndaeyo,2013), which stressed that the poor income level of the farmers could be attributed to the subsistence level of farming prevalent in the rural areas. In terms of membership of cooperative majority (65.3%) were cooperative members while (34.2) were not. The high involvement of farmers in cooperative activities will enhance their access to new farm activities, hence, improving their productivity. This finding agrees with Ekong (2010) finding which reported that co-operative societies are effective in the rural communities. 77.5% of the respondents had no access to extension service. The implication is that access to modern farming practices will be low in the area. Poor extension contact may be as a result of too many farmers within the cover of an extension agent to take of care at a time.

**Table1: Distribution of Socio-economic characteristics of respondents**

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Sex: | | |
| Male | 58 | 48.3 |
| Female | 62 | 51.7 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |
| Marital Status: | | |
| Married | 75 | 62.5 |
| Single | 13 | 10.8 |
| Divorced | 7 | 5.8 |
| Widow | 20 | 16.7 |
| Widower | 5 | 4.2 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |
| Age: | | |
| Less than 30 | 2 | 1.7 |
| 31 – 40 | 6 | 5.0 |
| 41 – 50 | 35 | 29.2 |
| 51 – 60 | 54 | 45.0 |
| Above 60 | 23 | 19.1 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |
| Household Size: | | |
| Less than 4 | 26 | 21.7 |
| 4 – 7 | 54 | 45.0 |
| 8 – 12 | 39 | 32.5 |
| Above 12 | 1 | 0.8 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |
| Farming Experience | | |
| Less than 5 | 10 | 40.8 |
| 5 – 10 | 20 | 48.3 |
| 11 – 15 | 33 | 27.5 |
| 16 – 20 | 48 | 40.0 |
| Above 20 | 9 | 7.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |
| Level of Education | | |
| No Formal | 31 | 25.8 |
| Primary | 54 | 45.0 |
| Secondary | 26 | 21.7 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Tertiary | 9 | 7.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |
| Monthly Income | | |
| Less than 20,000 | 27 | 22.6 |
| 20,000 – 50,000 | 81 | 67.5 |
| 51,000 – 90,000 | 9 | 7.5 |
| 91,000 – 110,000 | 2 | 1.7 |
| Above 110,000 | 1 | 0.7 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |
| Extension Visit | | |
| Yes | 27 | 22.5 |
| No | 93 | 77.5 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

**Source: Field Survey, 2017**

**Various types of Indigenous Communication Media available for and Utilized by the farmers.**

The various types of indigenous communication media available in their area is presented in Table2. Result revealed that most (43%) of respondents used village debate. Implying that they share other issues and share experiences solutions, which is cost effective. This was followed by town crier (29%) and 20% made used of work/labour groups information dissemination.

**Table2: Distribution of respondents according to types of Indigenous Communication Media available and used by respondents in the study area**

| Communication Media | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Festival | 2 | 1.6 |
| Village debate | 52 | 43.6 |
| Village Meeting (religions, Family and Tradition ) | 17 | 14.2 |
| Folk tales, Proverb and riddles | 8 | 6.7 |
| Songs | 15 | 12.5 |
| Beating of drums | 14 | 11.7 |
| Town Crier | 35 | 29.2 |
| Age Grades | 13 | 19.8 |
| Work/Labour group | 25 | 20.0 |
| Total | 120 | 100 |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017

**Preference forIndigenous Communication Media in the study area**

Table 3: presents the distribution of respondents on their preference for indigenous communication media in their area. Preference here was measured in terms of accessibility and patronage. Result showed that majority (71%) of respondents preferred village discussion since they can gather under tree shades, market squares or other open places in local communities to discuss and argue on specific subject matters that may border on agricultural activities or other pressing issues. Implying that the communication channel provide concrete answers to their questions that prove difficult for a farmer to respond to. The finding also revealed low preference for festival, which agrees with Esu (2009) and Essien (2014) and Ekerete and Ufot (2017), reported low preference for festival as a traditional community media.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on their preference for indigenous communication media in the study area**

| Communication Channels | Highly Accessible | Accessible | Not Accessible |
|---|---|---|---|
| Village Debate | 86(71.1) | 29(24.1) | 5(4.1) |
| Town Crier | 71(59.2) | 34(28.3) | 15(12.5) |
| Work/Labour Group | 53(44.2) | 12(10.0) | 55(45.8) |
| Village meeting | 48(40.0) | 64(53.3) | 8(6.7) |
| Beating of drums | 19(15.8) | 4`(34.2) | 60(50.0) |
| Songs (dance) | 11(9.2) | 37(30.8) | 72(60.0) |
| Age grade | 8(6.7) | 27(22.5) | 7764.2) |
| Folk tales, Proverbs and Riddles | 16(13.3) | 27(22.5) | 77(64.2) |
| Festival | 0(0.0) | 14(11.7) | 106(88.3) |

***Figuresinparentheses are percentages**
**Source: Field Survey, 2017**

**4: Distribution of respondent base on reason for choice of preferred media**

Table 4 shows the distribution of respondent base on their reason for choosing their preferred media. From the result, 33.3% likened their choice to ease of use and understanding of the media, 19.2% based their choice on the readily availability of the media, 25% likened it to low cost while 12.5 and 15% attributed theirs to feedback and energy saving ability of the respective media channels.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents base on reasons choice of preferred media**

| Reason of Choice | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Easy to use and understand | 40 | 33.3 |
| Readily available for use | 23 | 19.2 |
| Low cost | 30 | 25 |
| Feedback not delay | 15 | 12.5 |
| It is energy saving | 12 | 10 |
| | **120** | **100** |

**Source:** field survey, 2017.

**5. Effectiveness of Indigenous communication media in the Study Area**

Effectiveness was measured in terms of the perception of respondents on the use of the respective media for agricultural information dissemination. In the context of this study, respondents' perception was ascertained in two dimensions. First, respondents perception on the effectiveness of the media was ascertain holistically. Secondly, their perception in term of which media was more effective was also ascertained. Results are presented in Table 5 and 6. Table 5 presents the perception of respondents on the effectiveness of the entire indigenous communication media. From the table, 83 respondents (62.2%) responded that indigenous communication media was effective while 37 (38.8%) responded that it was not effective in the study area. The Z test which was used to test the differences in mean perception showed a significant different at the 5% level of probability. This is evidenced on the calculated t value of 2.58 which was greater than its tabulated value of 1.48

**Table 5: Distribution of respondent based on their perception on the effectiveness of Indigenous communication media**

| Perception | No | Frequency | T calculated | T tabulated |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Effective | 83 | 62.2 | — | — |
| Not effective | 37 | 38.8 | 2.58 | 1.46 |

**Source: field survey, 2017**

### 6. Perceived effectiveness for each of the indigenous communication media

To further ascertain the degree of effectiveness for each of the indigenous communication mediaandwhich of the media was more effective than the other, the Likert scale was used and the result is presented in Table 6 below. The findings revealed that each of the indigenous communication media were effective with varying degrees as village discussion was ranked with (M= 3.58) as the most effective media, followed by town crier (M = 3.4) except folk tales, proverb and riddles (M= 2.42) and festival (M = 2.08). The finding disagreed with the studies of Anyanwu, (2013), Essien (2014) and Ekerete and Ufot (2017) as they reported town crier as a major information dissemination tool. However, in Anambra State, Onwubeya et al; (2015) reported that village meeting was the most effective means of disseminating agricultural information followed by town crier.

**Table 6: Perceived effectiveness for each of the indigenous communication media**

| Indigenous Communication channels | Most effective (4) | Very effective (3) | Effective (2) | Not Effective (1) | $\bar{X}$ level of effectiveness | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Village Discussion | 70 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 3.58 | 1st |
| 2. Town crier | 48 | 72 | 0 | 0 | 3.4 | 2nd |
| 3. Labour/work groups | 40 | 55 | 18 | 2 | 3.27 | 3rd |
| 4. Village Meetings | 30 | 80 | 8 | 2 | 3.15 | 4th |
| 5. Beating of drums | 37 | 60 | 14 | 9 | 3.04 | 5th |
| 6.Songs | 31 | 60 | 29 | - | 3.01 | 6th |
| 7. Age grade | 25 | 38 | 60 | 0 | 2.78 | 7th |
| 8. Folk tales, proverb and riddles | 20 | 30 | 50 | 20 | 2.42 | 8th |
| 9. Festival | 10 | 30 | 40 | 40 | 2.08 | 9th |

**Source:** Field survey, 2017

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that arable crop farmers in study area utilized indigenous communication media successfully which were effective with varying degrees in their agricultural production activities. The study showed that all the listed media were effective except that there was a decline in the use of festival and folk tale, proverb and riddles as a means of communication channel. The study also revealed that the use of indigenous communication media in agricultural production is still effectively and should be encouraged. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made. More enlightenment campaigns should be launched to sensitize arable crop farmers on the benefits of indigenous communication media through workshop, seminar and training. Extension agents should incorporate indigenous media into agricultural extension innovation packages.

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