

Contemporary Issues in **Agricultural Extension**

and Rural Livelihoods in Nigeria

12



Edited by:

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About the book

It is widely acknowledged, among agricultural extension practitioners, that agricultural extension integrates the concept of rural livelihoods. However, there is a considerable difference of opinion on how both phenomena are conceptualised. Some argue for public/government extension while some others believe it is the amalgamation of the public and private sectors that can make it happen. In both scenarios, what is common is the agreement that agricultural extension in Nigeria is still evolving despite the long standing years of its existence and without which rural development cannot be attained. This thus means that all stakeholders involved must understand the rudiments as well as imbibe the doctrines holistically. This, among others, is the reason for bringing to the fore a book which addresses the dearth and gaps in agricultural extension concepts and rural livelihood issues. It is expected that the book would serve as a resource base first of all, for students and then practitioners in the field of agricultural extension, rural sociology, livelihoods and development. The relevant concepts in extension and rural livelihoods and development that are put together, in the book, are an indication that Extension development in Nigeria is imminent. The book has adopted a simple style that all stakeholders can easily imbibe to guarantee further adoption and dissemination.

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Assimilation of Migrants: The Plight of Settled Agro-Pastoralists in Nigeria

¹Dolapo, A. T.

Introduction: Pastoralism, Pastoralists, and Assimilation

Studies have shown that extensive pastoral production takes up some 25% of the world's land area and produces some 10% of the meat for consumption by humans (FAO, 2001) while supporting several million households worldwide (Pastoralist Knowledge Hub, 2016). It is one of the world's cheapest ways of livestock production and also a form of livelihood that can be practiced where other forms of agriculture cannot survive. However, due to the increased level of sedentarization, pastoralists' cultural heritage is being threatened and pastoralists' culture faces potential extinction.

Assimilation is a process of integration in which alien members of the community (such as immigrants, or ethnic minorities) are fully absorbed into their adopted larger community. It denotes a part of the adaptation process wherein new information and experiences are imbibed and incorporated into already existing ideas. This, indirectly, implies the loss of the characteristics of the absorbed group, such as language, customs, ethnicity, and self-identity (Spielberger, 2004). It is cultural assimilation when the culture of a group comes to resemble those of another group and it can happen to both individuals and groups. Cultural assimilation could be quick or gradual depending on the circumstances of the group.

The Fulani pastoralists in Nigeria who were hitherto found in the arid regions have over time, migrated to semi-arid and forest zones of the country. It is being observed more recently that these pastoralists are beginning to settle permanently in their new locations (Sodiya et al., 2009). Among the reasons for this development are droughts and desert encroachment in the semi-arid and arid zones, an upsurge of cultivated lands as a result of the eradication of incidence of tsetse fly in the sub-humid zones, availability of pasture for cattle for longer periods in the year in the humid zones, and more interestingly; the loss of grazing routes due to enhanced land development. Another possible explanation for the growing sedentary nature of pastoral households is; as much social and political, as economic and resource-based. This suggests that the Fulani agro-pastoralists are only responding to changes in their economic environment. It is as a result of the afore-mentioned that this chapter will be examining the assimilation of settled Fulani agro-pastoralists in Nigeria intending to establish the factors and conditions that facilitate the process. The chapter shall firstly dwell on the forms of pastoralism to be able to clearly understand the rationale for assimilation between agro-pastoralists and their host communities. Thereafter, it shall ascertain the gender roles obtainable in pastoralists' livelihoods whilst trying to assimilate the ways of life of the host community. Finally, it shall determine the

cultural traits assimilated by the agro-pastoralists and the imbibed economic activities being practiced by the agro-pastoralists due to assimilation.

Who are the Pastoralists?

Pastoralists are people who earn their livelihood from tending to large herds of livestock such as sheep, goats, cattle, and camels. In some instances, pastoralists also tend yaks and horses in Central Asia, buffalo in South Asia, llamas and alpacas in South America, and reindeer in the Palearctic region (Jenet et al., 2016). In Nigeria, pastoralists principally tend cattle with only a few of them combining sheep and goats on a minimal scale. Their natural habitat is areas where the potential for crop production is hitherto limited as a result of unfavourable climatic (e.g rainfall) and topographic (e.g steep terrain) conditions that can support crop production (AU, 2014). Hence, pastoralists keep varying types of livestock as dictated by the area they find themselves.

A significant characteristic of pastoralists is the close attachment to their livestock. Pastoralists' social life is not complete without a close association with their livestock. They identify with the nature of keeping animals under conditions that are close to the wild but giving them the benefit of protection and health care (Jenet et al., 2016). The difference in forms of pastoralism is often based on the method of mobility which is a key feature qualifying pastoralism.

Types of Pastoralism

Nomadic pastoralism: is a pure pastoral system often characterised by little or no agriculture and by high mobility of people and animals in search of grassland and water. The herders referred to as nomads in this case; follow a seasonal migratory pattern that can vary from year to year. The availability of water and pasture often dictates the timing and destinations of migrations in this category of pastoralism (Odhiambo, 2014). In this type of pastoralism, the nomads do not construct permanent structures, but rather they live in tents or other relatively easily constructed dwellings; the year-round. This is because they would eventually migrate from the area when conditions change. These groups of pastoralists is usually self-sufficient in terms of food and most other necessities. They are termed exclusive pastoralists when they do not cultivate any crops and simply depend on the sale or exchange of animals and their products to obtain foodstuff (O'Neil, 2012).

Transhumant pastoralism: This is characterised by a more or less regular seasonal migration. It is the regular movement of herds between fixed locations to exploit the seasonal availability of pasture. The movement is usually vertical between established points whose routes may be ancient. Older members of the group often remain throughout the year. This shows that pastoralists in this group have steady and established locations within which they rotate during peak and off-seasons. A striking characteristic of transhumance pastoralism is the strong association with

higher-rainfall zones (Jenet et al., 2016). This implies that herders can afford to develop permanent relations with particular locations, for example, houses can be constructed since pastoralists would more likely return to such locations after leaving during the offseason. Horizontal transhumance is also possible over a few years but this is a more opportunistic movement between fixed locations and is often disrupted by climatic, economic, or political change.

Transhumance is closely associated with the production of crops but largely for subsistence use. A distinguishing feature of transhumance in temperate regions is haymaking because snow might normally prevent livestock from accessing pasture. Whereas in the tropics, hay production is less common because the movement of the herds is between higher and lower rainfall zones (Jenet A et al., 2016). Evidence can be seen in the southward movement of pastoralists in West Africa during the dry season and a return movement northwards during the wet seasons. Transhumance is typically known for herd-splitting (Morton, 2008); the men take away the majority of the animals in search of fodder but leave the resident community with a nucleus of lactating females.

Agro-pastoralism: This is a more settled form of pastoralism where members cultivate sufficient areas to feed their families from their crop production. These group of pastoralists hold land rights (Morton, 2008), serves as labour by themselves or may even hire when occasion demands (to cultivate the land and grow staples). In this form of pastoralism, livestock remains a highly valued property (Morton, 2008), but the herds are usually smaller than other pastoral systems. When herd size increases, they would rather send them with the nomadic pastoralists because the pastoral system that they now observe does not allow for enough time to tend animals. This situation may be attributable to the less dependence on livestock and a seemingly frontward shift towards the cultivation of crops. Agro-pastoralists make bigger investments in housing and infrastructure because they are more sedentary.

Agro-pastoralism offers the opportunity to play an intermediary role between the nomadic pastoralists and the host communities since they have a fair understanding of the culture and values of the host communities. They can act as brokers of peace during misunderstandings or altercations between farmers and mobile pastoralists because they share the same ethnolinguistic identity with the pastoralists (O' Neil, 2012).

Influence of Gender Roles on Assimilation for Agro-pastoralist Households

The migration of Fulani agro-pastoralists from the Northern part of Nigeria to North Central and South Western part is an age-long practice (O' Neil, 2012). The act has brought about socio-cultural and economic changes to the sedentary Fulani agro-pastoralists as a result of their day to day interaction with the members of the host communities over a long period; from generation to generation. This encourages the

occurrence of cultural assimilation of the agro-pastoralists, especially the female agro-pastoralists whose major livelihood enterprise is under threat. The female agro-pastoralists' livelihood is said to be under threat due to their heavy dependence on husbands' cattle for milk which serves as their major source of livelihood. However, the men are highly mobile with the stock; thereby leaving the women with no major source of sustenance.

In most pastoral societies across the world, gender roles are strongly marked with women typically being responsible for milking and dairy processing. The sale of the milk may not be carried out by them but they usually have control over the proceeds to feed the family (Njuki and Saginga, 2013). On the other hand, men are the ones responsible for herding and selling meat animals. In systems when a herd is split, the women are required to remain in a fixed homestead with part of the split; while men go away with the rest in search of grazing land and water (Kettel, 1992).

Female agro-pastoralists face so many risks and shocks in securing their livelihoods. Milk, which is the main source of sustenance, is not only a form of dignity but also a measure of authority for a female agro-pastoralist. It is also not debatable that it is the major source of income for the agro-pastoralist women. The sedentary nature of agro-pastoralists has made many households to cut down on herd size since they no longer travel far in search of fodder and water for their livestock. The drop in herd size affects the quantity of milk available to the female agro-pastoralists and this invariably reduces the income generated by the women from milk (Njuki and Saginga, 2013). The event of reduced income in the face of financial responsibilities created the need for female agro-pastoralists to find alternative income-generating activities within the host communities they now reside in.

Cultural Assimilation for Agro-pastoralists in Nigeria

Assimilation is a process in which a person or group belonging to one culture adopts the practices of another, thereby becoming a member of that culture. Full assimilation only occurs when members of a society have fully imbibed the culture of the dominant group and it becomes difficult to tell the difference. Assimilation could however occur naturally or forced. It is forced when a person or group is compelled to take on the practices of another culture. This is evidenced in the adoption of another culture's language and religious traditions. An example could be seen when Britain colonised Nigeria and the later was forced to adopt English as its official language. In unforced assimilation, one is free and not compelled to take the practices of another culture. In most cases, this type of assimilation occurs gradually and overtime in host communities.

Assimilation is conceptualised as a way in which a person or group of a particular culture (such as immigrants) might respond to or blend with another culture, or possibly the way a minority group would relate to a dominant one. In order to assume

a close to perfect cohesion with a host community, people (minority migrants) may need to adopt certain cultural artifacts of the larger group. These could include but not limited to fashion trends, musical tastes, norms, dress codes, slangs, attitudes, body language habits, hairstyles among others. It should however be noted that the process of assimilation is something that should be done willingly for it to be a success (Jonasson, 2016) especially between pastoralists and members of their host communities.

The host community is where the agro-pastoralists have migrated to and have settled. They are usually of different cultural backgrounds from the agro-pastoralists and the majority of them are usually involved in farming. These communities are usually peri-urban and are chosen because of their easy access to the market and the creation of opportunities for other income-generating activities. The co-existence of both settled agro-pastoralists and members of the host community would have its benefits. Nonetheless, due to cohabitation and sharing of resources between the two groups, there are bound to be challenges. Though these challenges vary from community to community, there are some that cuts across. The next section shall focus on some of the challenges faced by the members of the host communities and the agro-pastoralists in general.

Challenges faced by Settled Agro-pastoralists and Members of the Host Community

Competition for use of natural resources: most natural resources available for production purposes are limited, thus the use of land, water for crop production, and livestock management could create competition between the duo.

Destruction of crops and farmland: The grazing of farmers' crops and the destruction of farmland by cattle have been an age-long area of conflict between the farmers and all forms of the pastoral system. No permanent solution has been found yet; and the crises have degenerated to armed clashes leading to numerous deaths.

Killing during clashes: this occurs when clashes between the agro-pastoralists and the members of the host community are allowed to linger and are not resolved quickly.

Threats to the homeland: when clashes are left for too long leading to too many killings and destruction of properties, then people may begin to consider the community as unsafe for both groups; consequently, people may consider relocation to new areas.

Cattle rustling and Livestock theft: Cattle rustling is the act of stealing cattle. It is a crime in Nigeria. In the past few years, rustling activities have resulted in the loss of a huge number of cattle, death of people, and the destruction of property. Reports

have shown that cattle rustling has significantly contributed to the increasing security challenges facing Northern Nigeria (Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016).

Disease infestation: livestock production, apart from the demand for adequate fodder and water management, also requires proper disease management. Disease management is a critical aspect of livestock production. Unfortunately, the varying degrees of pastoral production do not favour disease control. For example, staying or remaining in particular locations for too long may increase livestock exposure to certain diseases.

Conflict: so many factors lead to conflict between the agro-pastoralists and members of host communities. Some of the reasons for conflict have been discussed under farmland destruction, competition for natural resources, cattle rustling, e.t.c. Conflict among the two parties can also arise from a variety of other things such as cultural traits.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The chapter has shown that pastoralism is highly beneficial to the economy of the country. It was established that the co-existence of pastoralists and members of their host communities calls for cultural assimilation for the two groups to maintain peace. The investigation into the assimilation of settled agro-pastoralists indicates that the sedentarisation of agro-pastoralists can lead to reduced herd size, the building of more permanent dwellings, imbibing the host community cultural traits, looking for alternative economic activities, e.t.c. These variables are all borne out of the change that manifests from relocating from their natural habitat, which has directly affected the major source of livelihood of agro-pastoralist women and has mandated a change in the lifestyle (culturally and economically).

It, therefore, becomes imperative to give the following recommendations:

- i. Due to the assimilation of host community cultural traits, the government can introduce the teaching of Fulani culture and languages in schools of host communities where there is a high number of Fulani settlers.
- ii. NGOs and members of the Fulani community that can afford it could do radio programmes that would teach and enhance the Fulani culture and language. This will further enhance cross-cultural assimilation between the agro-pastoralists and host communities.
- iii. NGOs, development agencies, and government working on livestock issues need to improve and mainstream agro-pastoralist women in their programs, interventions, and activities.
- iv. Security of lives, properties, resources, and land for both groups and agro-pastoralist women in particular; need to be advocated and supported as part of development intervention.

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