

Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project Highlights

December 2019

Scholar Program 65

TAKING A CHANCE ON ME! THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF THE NAPP CAPACITY BUILDING MODULE OF TRAIN ONE TO TRAIN OTHERS

I joined the Nigerian Agricultural Policy Project (NAPP) under the leadership of the Lead investigator Professor Saweda Liverpool-Tasie in 2017. This was even before I became a Visiting Scholar when I began acquiring new skills while still in Nigeria. First was the NAPP STATA Statistical training project for staff of the Delta State Ministry of Agriculture and faculty from the Delta State University. The training was held at the Faculty of Agriculture, Delta State University, Anwai Campus, Asaba, from June 28-30, 2017. Knowing that we badly needed this skill the project sponsored all of the selected intending 2017/2018 visiting scholars to attend. At that time, my experience with statistical software was next to zero. My situation was therefore significantly improved after my introduction to the world of statistical analysis using STATA. Thanks to the NAPP project not only did I learn how to use Stata, I am now competent in using other software including SAS and the R programming language.



Professor Saweda L. (lead investigator NAPP) and Me

Under the leadership of NAPP Scholars in collaboration with Michigan State University, there is now a movement of R statistical programming package users in Nigeria. Several training sessions on R programming have been conducted across the country in Ministries of Agriculture and Tertiary institutions by MSU and the scholars. We alumni of the project understand that only a limited number of Nigerians can participate in the scholars program at MSU. We have

become ambassadors taking the knowledge and skills we have gained home to many more Nigerians.

In the course of our one-year tenure at MSU, we were exposed to new models of executing tasks including, excellent hands-on activities in laboratories, as well as article writing skills for journal articles, policy briefs, technical highlights and non-technical pamphlets on topical issues. We learnt how to nurture and build confidence working in teams and how to foster relationships through networking.



Professor Snapp S. (MSU adviser and mentor) and me

A far-reaching effect of the NAPP program came from the farmer manual titled “A guide to account for soil physical properties and fertilizer use in maize based systems” that was produced by the project. The manual was translated into the TIV language (TIV is a major language used in Benue State in Nigeria) and plans for its translation to other Nigerian languages are in the pipeline. Impressed with the translated farmer manual, a reader considered it a possible model for passing research findings to a non-scientific audience in the Nigerian agricultural sector. The reader contacted me to do a joint paper (with Associate Professor Anthony Igyuve of the Mass Communication Department at Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nigeria) under the UNESCO theme of the 2019-year “International year of Indigenous Languages”. The paper was presented at the 2nd International Meeting of Science Communication and Development in Africa” <http://www.isdevcom.ng>, <https://scicom2019.isdevcom.ng/> with the theme “Humanizing Science: Optimizing Innovation and Communication for Development in Africa”. We were both

sponsored for conference registration and accommodation where we networked with international colleagues. I was subsequently invited to be on a panel to discuss ways of effectively and efficiently communicating scientific research findings to non-scientific audience. This is all because of the insightfully translated farmer manual created by NAPP.



Facilitating an R Statistical Programming Language Training at Kebbi State Ministry of Agriculture Sponsored by NAPP.

Another ripple effect is the recent invitation by my MSU Adviser under NAPP, Prof. Sieg Snapp, to participate in a new initiative “African Resilience through Innovations in Soils Ecology and Extension (ARISEE) under the Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) aap.isp.msu.edu. A fully funded opportunity to join a brainstorming session with great intellectuals from many

disciplines and several African countries. An experience more than words can describe. I may never have participated in this great event without my NAPP links.

I came under NAPP as a Ph.D. student with the soil science department of the Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi with minimal statistical knowledge and skills. My quest to learn, coupled with great guidance and warmth from my tutors and laboratory colleagues, helped me in conducting the analyses for my Dissertation. Today I have my doctoral degree! Through me, the NAPP project has successfully graduated its second PhD student.

All these outputs were hatched when NAPP decided to take a chance on me! The relationships between Nigerian scholars and advisers with their colleagues at MSU; the mentoring whilst a visiting scholar at MSU and even thereafter on return to Nigeria is the very essence of NAPP. The achievements of NAPP cannot be quantified. I, and all the 12 other scholars, who are doing awesome things in their own spheres of specialization, are very grateful to the NAPP project for indeed taking that chance on us.

By Blessing Iveren Agada Ph.D.

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