

Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project Highlights

January 2020

Scholar Program 66

SUSTAINABLE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE NIGERIA AGRICULTURAL POLICY PROJECT'S SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Nigerian Scholars train staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Ebonyi State. On Data Analysis using "R"

What is a good approach to sustainably train Nigerian scholars and State Ministry workers to use the free statistical software named "R"¹ for data analysis? This is a question that the Nigerian Agricultural Policy Project (NAPP) is tackling through the NAPP Project Scholars program.

Under The NAPP Project Scholars Program, top Nigerian graduate students have been identified and sponsored to study at Michigan State University (MSU) for 1 or 2 semesters (depending on their level). These pioneering students were trained on Data analysis using "R", both in Nigeria and at MSU, with the goal of returning home to train others. As a beneficiary of this great initiative I was among the few students identified and trained at home and at MSU. Now I get to pass this knowledge on!

Two other NAPP Scholars (Charles Olumba and Philip Hegarty) and I were privileged to be assigned with the responsibility of training key staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Ebonyi State on the use of R for data analysis, from January 20 to 24, 2020.

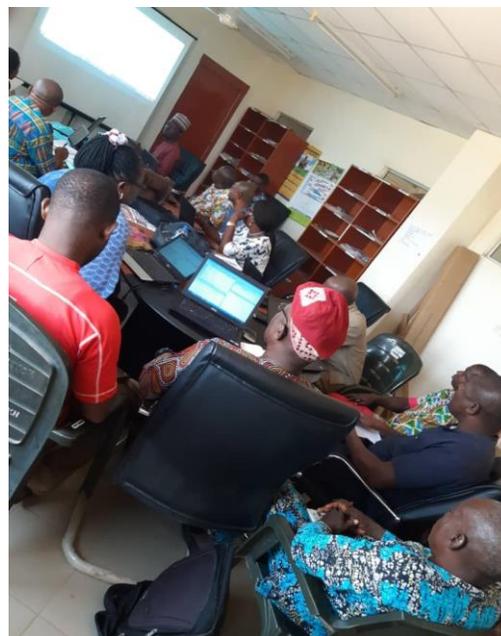


From l to r, Phillip Hegarty (NAPP scholar), Hephzibah Obekpa (NAPP scholar), the Hon. Commissioner of Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources Dr. Moses O. Nomeh and Charles Olumba (NAPP scholar).

The State Commissioner and Permanent Secretary were delighted with the opportunity for their staff to be equipped with a free and powerful tool kit that will enhance empirical research to support evidence-based policies to be developed for the agricultural sector

of the state. Eighteen participants (14 males and 4 females) were trained at the Ministry's conference hall.

On arrival we were informed that only one staff in the ministry was conversant with a statistical software (SPSS). The ministry therefore had a big gap in the area of analysis as most of their staff had no skills to use any software. We introduced R to the staff, showed them the advantages R has over other software and how it can be relevant to the kind of work they do at the Ministry of Agriculture. Training participants were active and indicated they would have appreciated if the training lasted for longer than one week. Responding to this great suggestion, the training team created a "WhatsApp group"² as a strategy to further guide and provide assistance to participants, should any challenges come up in their use of R.



Cross section of participants at the R training organized for the staff of Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Abakaliki,

¹ R is a free programming language and software widely used among statisticians data analysis. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RStudio>

² WhatsApp service allowing users to communicate very inexpensively. It also allows groups of people to share messages, photos and videos. <https://www.whatsapp.com/>

Participants expressed satisfaction especially with the powerful charts and graphs they were able to manipulate and plot using the grammar of graphics in R, a very relevant aspect of the work of the Ministry of Agriculture. This goes to show that the investment in the scholars' program is having a far-reaching effect, building the human capacity of many more Nigerians.

By Hephzibah O. Obekpa

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