

VIOLENCE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD: FOCUS ON THE HERDSMEN/FARMERS CRISIS IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The possessive quest for the protection and preservation of farmland and cattle by both farmers and Fulani herdsmen remained a drive for violent conflicts in some parts of Nigeria. Therefore, the study anchored on violence, environment and sustainable livelihood: A focus on the herdsmen/farmers crises in Nigeria. The distrust of sharing common boundaries for farming and cattle rearing has engendered violence. Data for the study were primarily obtained from the secondary sources. The sources revealed that farmers/herders conflict is the bane of sustainable sources of livelihood of the farmers and the entire society. This has threatened the National Food Security and income generating sources to both parties, thereby creating acrimony and tension in the environment. However, it was recommended that government at all levels should establish and practice ranching system to avoid crop damage and destruction. It was further recommended among others that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should sensitize both farmers and the herdsmen on the need for peaceful co-existence. Also, those whose source(s) of livelihood were destroyed should be compensated and rehabilitated.

Key Words: Violence, Environment, Sustainable Livelihood, Crisis, farmers /herdsmen.

Introduction:

The herdsmen are all over Africa, but most predominantly in West Africa. A significant number of them are nomadic in nature, herding cattle, goats, sheep among other, with the trend of migration making them the world largest pastoral nomadic farmers (Eyikpemi, 2016). They are spread over many countries and are found mainly in West Africa and Northern Central Africa, but also in Sudan and Egypt. Their main sub groups in Nigeria are; Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Mbororo, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Gorbhe and Fulbe Borgu (Eyikpemi, 2016). Nigeria as a nation state is under severe internal Socio-economic and security threat which are environmentally and ethnic motivated. The threats have economic, political and environment dimensions which has been a bane to human and

social development . Each of these dimensions has greatly affected the Nations stability which manifest on ethnic and religious conflicts, militancy, insurgency, poverty, corruption, economic sabotage, armed robbery and environmental degradation. (Damba, 2007). Similarly, before the discovery of crude oil, Nigeria depended on agriculture which gave rise to the popular groundnut pyramids, maize, sorghum, yams etc.

The non-abiding spirit, respect for boundaries and human lives, impunity and domineering tendencies among the developing countries like Nigeria have changed the narrative in terms of mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence among ethnic groups. This lack of understanding leads to strife or struggle for peace, to satisfy diverse business interest. While the farmers aspire to grow and maintain their crops, the herders are constantly in search of grass to graze and water for their livestock.

Literature review

The incessant avoidable conflicts witnessed around the tropic have resulted in loss of sources of livelihood, lives, properties, displacement of families and environmental degradation.(Thebaud and Battebury, 2001). The recent attacks by Fulani herdsmen is on the increase occurring in Taraba State and three more communities (Ugondo, Tura and Gabo Nenzev) in Logo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. This turbulence stands out because of the seeming boldness of the perpetrators and the mystery surrounding their real agenda. Already noted, the various conflicts that ensued between farmers and herds men arose from the destruction of farmlands by herds of cattle and the rustling of cattle by the non-Fulani. Government at various levels has not addressed the issue with adequate political will. Studies have shown that conflicts arose in Nigeria, most especially in the Benue valley as a result of loss of land which the people considered as the basis of their social, economic and spiritual existence. In July 2017, the Benue State Government enacted the Benue state anti- open grazing law with effect from 1st November 2017. Based on this, the Fulani reacted through the Benue Coordinator of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN). The association alleged of ethnic bias in the implementation of the anti-open grazing law of the Benue State (Williams and Ahmed 2018)

Comprehensive analysis of herdsmen /farmers crises in Nigeria from January 2016 to May 2017

S/N	Place	Date	Mortality And Level Of Destruction
Incidence of 2016			
1	Udeni Ruma, Nassarawa State.	6/1/2016	12 to 38 people were killed
2	Gareji Village in Taraba State	17/1/2016	3 persons were killed
3	Dikajam and Taboungo of Adamawa State	23/1/2016	30 to 60 were killed and properties destroyed
4	Agatu, Benue State	2/2/2016	7 persons were killed
5	Buruku, LGA Benue State	11/2/2016	10 persons were killed
6	Abbi, Enugu State	11/2/2016	2 persons were killed
7	Agatu in Benue State	24&28/2/2016	300 and 500 people allegedly killed
8	Mbaya-Tombo, Benue State	17/2/2016	35 persons were killed.
9	Awgu in Enugu State	26/3/2016	20 persons were killed
10	Ohali-Elu River State	7/3/2016	7 to 16 persons were killed
11	Ilando, Ondo State	9/3/2016	30 persons were killed
12	Angai, Dashole, Dori	10/4/2016	15 to 44 killed were killed
13	Nimbo community Enugu State 2017 incidence	25/5/2016	46 persons were killed
14	Ukwani LGA, Delta State	9/2/2017	5 persons were killed
15	Zango-Katat Kaduna State	17/2/2017	3 persons were killed
16	Ipiga Village in Benue State	24/2/2017	15 persons were killed
17	Jemaia LGA, Kaduna State	24/2/2017	5 students of college of education, Gidan Wana were shot dead
18	Rukumawa Tsafe LGA, Zamfara State	10/2/2017	8 persons were killed
19	Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State	21/2/2017	10 persons were killed
20	Mbahimin community LGA, Benue State	2/3/2017	10 persons were killed
21	Omumu, Ika South LGA, Delta State	6/3/2017	6 persons were killed
22	Mkgovur Village Buruku LGA, Benue State	11/3/2017	7 persons were killed
23	Umuobasikwu Bende LGA, Abia State	14/3/2017	1 person was killed
24	Obio Usiere in Eniong Abatim Odukapani LGA of Cross River State	1/4/2017	10 persons were killed

Source: Authors compilation from the Senate Plenary documentary of Wednesday, 31st May 2017 as cited by Oli, Ibekwe and Nwankwo 2018.

Agricultural production and distorted environment/economy:

The natural and physical endowment in terms of vegetal and water resources is most responsible for the choice of the areas for grazing. Mercy Corps, an International Non-governmental Organization (NGO) reported that the incessant attacks of herdsmen and farmers has caused the destruction of farm crops, destruction and pollution of sources of water, ponds and fishery resources among others. The destructions have direct impacts on the people's livelihood as their economic activities are tied to these environmental resources like Water, Land (soil), Vegetation (herbs, food and cash crops) and fish.

The economic and human effects of these conflicts do not encourage Government in the provision of a sustainable economy and infrastructure to its citizens. Hence, is a bane to environmental sustainability and basic necessities of life such as shelter, food, clothing, security and right to life are mortgaged because of the violent conflicts.

The Mercy Corps, funded by the British Department for International Development (BDFID), in its research between 2013 and 2016 on the causes and effects of the perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria pointed out that ongoing, conflict is thwarting the country's economic development to an enormous extent, and also state's affected by herdsmen and farmers conflict lost an average of 47% of Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) during these attacks. Other economic impacts include: Impeding trade practices, reduction in crop yield, displacement of farmers, loss of lives, loss of products in storage and destruction of public and private properties. The recurrent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria connote conflict of interest which is linked to agriculture. (Oli, Ibekwe and Nwankwo, 2018). The continuous violent killing between herdsmen and farmers has resulted to food insecurity which has negatively affected the nutritional intake of the residence and the larger society. Umeh and Chukwu (2016), identified damaging of crops, climatic conditions, scarcity of fresh water, lack of access to farm or grazing fields among others as factors that have thrown these villages into crises because the people loss their source of livelihood.

The environment, violence and sustainable livelihood:

Conflict arises due to a complex set of variables coming together and reinforcing each other at multiple levels. USAID recognizes that conflict is an inherent and legitimate part of social and political life, and is often a precursor to positive change. Yet the consequences of conflict can also be alarmingly high in the environment. Livelihood comprise the ways in which people access and mobilize resources that enable them to pursue goals necessary for their survival and long - term well being and thereby reduce the vulnerability created and exacerbated by conflict (Ngoufo, 1992). Conflict can result when people's livelihoods are threatened. Other disruptions to livelihood are caused by environmental shocks, which within themselves may result from natural causes or human agency or a combination of these. Conflict is oppositional by nature whether it is internal conflict or inner contradictions within oneself, or problems of global insecurity and structural inequality pitting one nation against another conflict axiomatically challenges something, and therefore can bring about positive change, escalate tensions, or lead to violent suppression to maintain a status quo. Conflict is also competitive, which can lead to a stalemate or stability, advancement in opportunities, further inequality, or increased vulnerability. When considering global or shared vulnerabilities, an emergent, integrated, people-centered, dynamic, and multidimensional paradigm is needed to help understand the challenges to sustaining livelihoods and managing conflicts, or what is colloquially referenced as the "freedom from want" and the "freedom from fear." In other words, "the world will never be secure from war if men and women have no security in their homes

and in their jobs. Conflict threatens the livelihood resources of people particularly farming communities due to high dependence on natural resources for survival. Herder-farmer conflicts not only have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved, they also disrupt and threaten the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production in West Africa and beyond. Livelihood in this context includes all forms of economic generation and employment that support health and well-being such as agriculture, small businesses and manufacturing (United State Agency for International Development (USAID, 2005). According to the report, it comprises means by which households obtain and maintain access to the resources necessary to ensure immediate and term long survival. Households use these assets to withstand shocks and manage risk that threatens their well-being. According to the report, conflict restricts or blocks access to one or more of these assets and at its instance, people try to find other ways of obtaining those resources, or compensate for the loss of one resource by intensifying their efforts to secure another (USAID, 2005). Furthermore, the unsustainable grazing of vegetal resources and wanton destruction of other resources such as water and fish, with the re-occurrence of these conflicts are surely having considerable effects on the economy of the two parties (herdsmen and farmers) involved and the government. Agriculture, which is the mainstay of the economy of the local people is been disrupted by these conflicts, making livelihood difficult at both the immediate locality as well as the larger societies that are dependent on the produce from the warring communities. Therefore, food supply is affected in both quantity and price. The pollution of available safe drinking water has serious implications for healthy living. Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) becomes problematic in affected rural community with obvious implication for the prevalence of water borne diseases. This unresolved crisis has grievous dimensions in its effect on the policy of government in providing development opportunities to its citizens. If these conflicts are not resolved in good time, sustainability of both the economy and environmental challenges would become problems to be tackled.

On the other hand, open confrontation results in rural insecurity and out migration (Ngoufo, 1992). In the event of a conflict, properties and lives are destroyed leading to misery, hardship and destruction of sources of livelihood. The socio-economic consequences of agro-pastoral conflicts are felt at three levels. At the social level, misunderstanding between the crop farmers and nomadic famers or grazers creates some mistrust, tension and open confrontations between the opposing groups. Crop and nomadic farmer conflicts, have increased in the last decade because many of those who have been retrenched or retired from service can no longer afford to live in the urban areas. They return to the rural areas and embark on agriculture. Thus, increasing the demand for farm land leading to competition and struggle. This is very visible in the grass-field areas of different parts of Nigeria especially in Enugu State where some rural areas have greater population per square kilometer than others. The nomadic farmers in Nigeria and even the study area practice transhumance to avoid overgrazing the available limited land or reduce the herd size during the dry season when there is scarcity of pasture and water on the highlands. The animals are taken to the low lands and farmer-grazer conflicts become intensified during this period because as the farmers cultivate crops in the river valleys with little or no land for grazing propel tension and conflicts. Therefore, farmer-grazer conflicts pose a serious problem to the people and affect rural development negatively. Evidence shows that children exposed to violence are more likely to perpetuate violence later in life and also have behavioral, emotional and mental health problems during their childhood and adolescence.

Conclusion

This paper traces the intricate linkages between environmental degradation, livelihoods and violence in Nigeria; it argues that conflicts often lead to disruption of immediate economic livelihoods. There are genuine concerns by Nigerians on the need to review the existing constitution in the country. In many parts of the world especially in developing countries, herders clashed with farmers and their host communities over alleged cattle destruction of crops; farmers encroachment on grazing reserves and as well as the practice of bush burning which affect the grazing reserve. The resultant effect is the loss of lives and properties including sources of livelihood. Cattle rearing in West and Central Africa is predominantly the occupation of Fulani ethnic group. Just like the commercial farmers, Fulani sees cattle rearing as a means of livelihood that should be protected. Conflicts are seen as being ancient in nature because it has been in existence as old as man. Hence the need to harmonize existing policies to enhance cordial relationship between the herdsman and host communities.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations to check the incessant conflict between Herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria; there should be an intensive and sustained nomadic education programmes for the herdsman and also an incorporation of safety and security curriculum in the program. There is a need for the review of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution with specific attention on the interest of immigrants, ensuring that they enjoy rights and privileges as the indigenes. The provision of logistical support to security agencies should not be neglected by the Government but should be enhanced. There should be mop up of the dangerous proliferation of small and light arms and weapons to abate violent conflicts in communities.

Government should cooperate with telecommunication companies to enhance communication in case of emergency reporting, also for provision of SIM based trackers to checkmate incidence of trespass and enhance surveillance and monitoring of all forest activities especially in areas where Fulani herdsman and farmers are dominant. Adoption of modern cattle rearing practice of ranching for better yield and management should be promoted to reduce violence conflicts between farmers and herdsman.

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