

## ***Influence of Communal Conflicts on Farming Activities in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria***

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the influence of communal conflicts on farming activities in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. One specific purpose and one null hypothesis were used in the study. Ex-post facto design was adopted for the study. A sample of 512 respondents was selected from ten communities using purposive sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a 2-section, 20-item structured questionnaire developed, validated and administered to respondents. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha method at .74. Data collected were analysed using one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings from the results revealed that communal conflicts has a significant influence on farming activities in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the finding, it was recommended among others that there should be adequate awareness creation and sensitisation to promote change among various communities.*

**Keywords:** communal, conflicts, effect, farming, activities

### **Introduction**

Communal conflict has become a common phenomenon in human societies today. These conflicts have posed a great concern to all spheres of human activities among communities in the warring camps. Human society is made up of individuals and groups with divergent interests and needs. Some of these needs are insatiable and often incompatible with those of other people. This is compounded by the fact that the resources with which to satisfy needs are scarce and therefore much valued (Sambe, Avenger, & Alakali, 2013). Lyan (2001) defined conflicts as any disagreement or dispute between two or more communities which is capable of degeneration into riots or wars. This disturbs the peace, economic life, tranquility and progress of people or communities concerned; this disruption may lead to loss of lives and properties. Communal conflicts pose a severe threat on human security and kill thousands of people each year (Mohammed, 2015). Also, Oboqua, Besong and Besong (2018) opine

that communal conflicts as a type of collective violence is often a trigger of civil war. Communal conflict is defined as a conflict between non-state groups that are organized along a shared communal identity. Conflicts refer to the fact that the parties want to gain control over some disputed and perceived indivisible resources, such as a piece of land or local political power, chieftaincy tussles. Communal disputes have claimed tens of thousands of lives and several thousands more are in refugee camps in different sections of the continent (Sambe et al., 2013).

In Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with a population of about 188 million people (National Population Commission, 2016) with more than 250 ethnic groups, incessant ethnic, religious and political conflicts which periodically erupt into communal conflict have negatively impacted agricultural products (Sani, 2016). Communal conflict has become a word on every Nigerian lips. This phenomenon has endangered farming activities in the warring zone. Today several ethnic militias and armed groups such as Ombatse in Nasarawa State, Oduduwa People Congress, and Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People among others, and quite recently and viciously, the dreaded Boko Haram (Sani, 2016) are evidence of communal conflict which has affected farming activities.

In Nigeria which has most of its population residing in rural areas, communal conflicts have serious implication on access and availability of food, since agriculture is the main occupation of rural population. The production of crops and rearing of livestock is the main economic activity of the people. Therefore, communal conflicts have serious implication on farming activities. Often, warring communities or parties tactically resort to manipulation over access to food and livestock (Messer & Cohen, 2004).

Communal conflicts is correlated to farming activities and, under most circumstances, depresses production and income from cash crops. This reduction in farming activities has serious implication on food security with the capacity to reduce coping capacity of those depending on food resources for their livelihood. Communal conflict, which has a reality of human existence since pre-historic times due to struggles between various factions of the society to satisfy their interests and needs, pose serious threat to farming activities. The struggle by various communal groups in Nigeria and indeed Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State as a result of high scarcity of socio-economic resources such as land for farming, schools, fishing ponds, business, and other daily activities creates conflicts that lead to instability.

The strive for indigeneship and farmland ownership has resulted to various communal conflicts in the study area; such conflicts include: Erei and Urugbam in the month of June, 2020, where lives and properties were destroyed and farmland destroyed, Ikune

in Biase and Oguni in Abia State, Etono and Biakpan in Biase Local Government Area. Other communal conflicts in the State include Nsadop and Isobendeghe in Boki Local Government Area in which many persons were reported to have been killed in those communities. Also, the people of Okumuruktet and Edondon communities in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State started their own communal conflict in year 2021.

Communal conflicts constitute one of the major recurring problems bedeviling the sociopolitical landscape of Nigeria and Cross River State in particular. It is a situation where the relationships among the members of a particular ethnic groups and another ethnic group in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society is characterized with fear and suspicion leading to violence (Osinubi & Osinubi, 2006). Communal conflicts have made Nigeria a turbulent enclave. The manifestation of such conflicts has been the source of deadly conflicts between different communities. Historically, communal conflicts are not new, particularly in socially complex societies defined by a high number of ethnic nationalities and language groups such as Nigeria. The pre-colonial and colonial era of the country has experienced several inter-kingdom dynastic feuds, and inter-community conflicts (Ogban-Iyam, 2005). Many contemporary Nigerian communities have experienced several cases of communal conflicts. Some of the notable examples include the Zango-Kataf conflicts in Kaduna State (1999-2001), Tiv-Jukun Wukari conflict in Taraba State (1999-2000), (Imobighe, Bassey & Asuni, 2002).

These communal conflicts in Nigeria may be associated with religious, political, socio-cultural among other conflict prone causes. The incidence of communal conflict occurrences in Cross River State is a reality particularly in Southern Cross River State. Some of these areas that have had or are still having communal conflicts are as follows: Ikot Ana and Ufot in Biase witnessed hundreds of deaths and properties worth millions of naira destroyed; Adim in Biase and Ugep in Yakurr Local Government Area; Itu in Akwa Ibom State and Ikot Offiong in Odukpani Local Government Area; Old Odukpani and New Ntim in Odukpani Local Government Area in 2017 and 2018; Bene Okpora and Ayaba in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State; Utuma in Biase Local Government Area and Ihe-Osu in Abia State have had issues for more than 50 years now and in April 2018 lives and properties were destroyed.

The communal conflict of Uyanga and Ojor communities in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State has lingered for several years and has claimed many lives and several properties destroyed. People in these conflict prone areas have lost their homes and properties destroyed. Moreso, Uyanga and Ojor in Akamkpa Local Government Area December, 2017 and January 2018, people were killed including a Department of State Security (DSS) personnel. Properties worth billions

of naira have been lost making the people of this area to lose their farmlands and livelihood. The killing of innocent, harmless and voiceless men, women, children and youths have triggered hunger and suffering among the villages involved.

Nwagwu (2016) who stated that chieftaincy tussle in most cases usually has a lot of external influence due to the interest of certain groups/factions could be a result of how wealthy the community/area is in terms of natural resources and thus, may seek to have control of the resources by imposing a chief/traditional ruler on the seat. When many powerful interest groups/factions are involved in the chieftaincy tussles, disputes usually occur which degenerate into communal conflict. Bello (2013) submitted that these conflicts are fuelled by the need to expand land areas by farmers who depend on a relatively small portion of land for their economic activities and survival. Communal conflicts are increasingly becoming a threat to life and property as well as economic activities in Nigeria, and in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State in particular. Communal conflict encourages banditry and other social vices; the consequences of the meteoric rise in communal conflict in Southern Cross River State include subjugation of innocent citizens to undeserved brutality, homelessness, stalled productive activities, among other unpleasant consequences.

Land ownership struggle for clan and kinship, and contest of indigeneship became part of major factors of communal violence in the council area. The majority of the communal groups found within the area are farmers and acquiring land for farming activities is a problem. The communal clash led to the displacement of people, loss of lives and property and deterioration of socio-economic activities which led to high degree of declining food production. Communal conflicts in Nigeria and indeed in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State are tied largely to the issue of identity hence the exclusion of certain set of persons from these benefits such as farmlands, fish ponds, chieftaincy stools, etc. The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in its strategic conflict assessment of Nigeria in 2013 pointed to inter-ethnic rivalry and political struggle. This situation made the politics of the area to be unstable and the level of insecurity became pronounced with armed men attacking people running out from their community for safety.

Communal conflicts also prevent and discourage farming and also interrupt actors in agricultural sector to invest in the sector due to the fear of conflict occurrences. It destroys farm capital, conscripts young and able bodied males and females, taking them away from the farm work and suppresses income earnings occupation. The impact of communal conflict on farming activities often last long after the conflict has subsided because assets have been destroyed, people are killed, populations are displaced; it cripples people and deters them from farming for years over decades after all violence has ceased (Sambe et al., 2013).

Rashid (2012) stated that due to the confrontational nature of communal clashes, loss of lives are inevitable among both parties involved. The author maintained that at the end of the violent confrontations, lives, properties and settlements are destroyed. Sometimes, whole villages are attacked involving heavy casualties, thus the populations of farmers are reduced. Also Fasona and Omojola (2005) stated that serious conflicts erupt between communal groups leading to loss of lives and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for the fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce. Certainly, this could lead to reduced farming activities which could also translate into reduced productivities. Therefore, the thrust of this study is to examine the influence of communal conflicts on farming activities in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of communal conflicts on farming activities in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent to which communal conflicts influence farming activities in Biase Local Government Area.

### **Hypothesis**

**Ho1:** Communal conflicts do not significantly influence farming activities in Biase Local Government Area.

### **Methodology**

Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. According to Isangedighi (2012), ex-post facto design is a non-experimental design in which the phenomena of interest have already occurred and cannot be manipulated in any way. The population for this study comprised of 1,024 respondents. From this target population, a sample of 512 respondents was drawn from twelve communities of six political wards of Biase Local Government Area. Simple random and accidental sampling techniques were used to select twelve communities from the six political wards; in each political ward, two affected communities were selected, at the community level. Accidental sampling technique was used to sample 512 respondents to participate in the study. Accidental sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique in which the evidence of having been drawn by chance is limited in selecting sampling for the study (Isangedighi, 2012).

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled, Communal Conflicts and Farming Activities Questionnaire (CCFAQ) designed by the researchers. The instrument had two parts, A and B. Part A contained respondents' demographic

information such as sex, age, educational status and occupation; While part B has 20 items in the form of modified four point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with scores 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by three experts while Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability and the coefficient yield 0.74. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the subjects and collected by the researchers with five trained research assistants. Data collected were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

### Presentation of results

**Ho1:** Communal conflicts do not significantly influence farming activities in Biase Local Government Area.

**Table 1:** Summary of one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of the communal conflicts on farming activities

Communal conflicts	N	Mean	SD		
Lowly	74	24.24	11.70		
Averagely	343	19.11	5.54		
Highly	95	17.19	6.39		
Total	512	19.50	7.23		
Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig
Between groups	2223.221	2	1111.611	23.120	.000
Within groups	24472.777	509	48.080		
Total	26695.998	511			

Significant at .05, critical f- ratio =3.00

Result of the analysis in Table 1 showed that the calculated f-ratio of 23.120 is greater than the critical f-ratio of 3.00 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 509 degree of freedom. This means that there is a significant influence of communal conflicts on farming activities in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate upheld. A post-hoc comparison test was carried out using Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) method to discover the pair-wise group means difference responsible for significant influence. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Summary of Fisher’s Least Significant Difference (LSD)

<b>Communal conflicts</b>	<b>Lower (n=74)</b>	<b>Average (n=343)</b>	<b>High (n=95)</b>
Lowly	24.24	5.13	7.05
Averagely	5.76	19.11	1.92
Highly	6.53	2.40	17.19
(MSW) = 48.080)			

Significant at .05 level.

- (a) All group means are along the principal diagonals
- (b) Differences among group means are above the principal diagonals
- (c) t-values are below the principal diagonals.

Results of Fisher’s test analysis in table 2 showed that there were significant pair – wise comparison as follows: Lowly farming activities versus averagely farming activities ( $t=5.76$ ,  $p <.05$ ), lowly farming activities versus highly farming activities ( $t=5.3$ ,  $p <.05$ ) and averagely farming activities versus highly farming activities ( $t=2.40$ ,  $p <.05$ ); the results shows that the higher the communal conflicts, the lower the farming activities in the study area.

### **Discussion of findings**

Based on the findings of the study, communal conflicts have significant influence on farming activities on the lives of the rural dwellers. Communal conflicts have negative effects on the well-being of inhabitants of various communities associated with communal conflict. The finding is in line with the study of Sambe, Avenger and Alakali (2013) who reported that communal conflicts on farming activities often last long after the conflict has subsided because asset have been destroyed, people are killed and population are displaced. More so, destroyed farmland cripples people and deter them from farming for years even after all violence had ceased. The finding of the study is in consonant with the view of Bello (2013) who submitted that these conflicts are fuelled by the need to expand land areas by farmers who depend on a relatively small portion of land for their economic activities and survival. Communal conflicts are increasingly becoming a threat to life and property as well as economic activities in Nigeria, and in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State in particular. Also, the findings of this study is in line with the view of Fasona, and Omojola (2005) who stated that serious conflicts erupt between communal groups leading to loss of lives and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers, for fear of being attack, could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce.

### **Conclusion**

The outcome of this study revealed that communal conflicts significantly influence farming activities in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State. The finding of this study also indicates that most of the communal conflicts affecting farming activities are mostly caused by man in pursuant of their various interest and cattle herds men.

### **Recommendations**

This paper recommends that there should be adequate awareness creation and sensitization to promote change among various communities. Quick response centres should be established in all the communities to avoid communal clashes. Traditional rulers should maintain peace in their communities.

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