

Herders' Perspectives on Violent Conflicts with Farmers in Selected Local Government Areas in Adamawa State, North-East, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Violent conflict between herders and farmers is prevalent in many states in Nigeria. From north to south, hitherto peaceful communities have been engulfed in violent confrontations between farmers and herders over land for farming versus land for grazing. The resultant consequence is loss of lives, destruction of properties and internal displacement. This study interrogates the nuances of farmer-herder conflicts from the perspectives of herders. The study's geographical scope is Demsa, Larmude, Numan and Mubi north local government areas in Adamawa State. Primary data for the study was sourced from 20 key informant interviews and 8 focus group discussions with herders, herder groups and associations. Secondary data was retrieved from textbooks, academic journals/articles and other relevant peer-reviewed publications. Findings indicate that cattle theft and rustling, blockage of cattle routes by farmers, drug abuse, failure by the government to prosecute persons that attack herders, marginalization of herders, and poisoning of grasslands by farmers are causes of the conflict. Loss of lives and cattle, bitterness, hatred, anger and animosity against herders, displacement/forced migration and an increase in the number of widows due to the killing of their husbands are impacts of the conflict on herders. Empowerment of traditional rulers to manage the conflict, imposition of fines on owners of trespassing cattle, unblocking of cattle routes and provision of water points for herds were identified as actions that can reduce the conflict. The study argues that the reactionary approach of government to management of the conflict is ineffective. The study recommends the need for the government to engage farmers and herders independently to allow them to express their grievances; thereafter, an appropriate conflict management strategy can be designed and implemented.

KEYWORDS: Herders, farmers, conflict, conflict management, Adamawa state.

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INTRODUCTION

Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has grappled with challenges of poor governance and political leadership, which have resulted in poverty, unemployment, and violent ethno-religious conflicts. Within the past few years, the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgent group, terrorism and banditry has worsened the spate of violent conflicts in Nigeria, particularly in the northeast region. The northeast region, previously renowned for robust conviviality and vibrant agricultural activities, has become a shadow of itself. The prevalence of violent conflict in the region has culminated in loss of lives, destruction of properties and distortion of livelihood patterns of the people.¹⁻³ This scenario has been worsened by sporadic outbreaks of violent conflicts between herders and farmers across many states in the northeast region⁴. Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe are the states that make up the region.

The conflicts have continuously threatened peace, social cohesion and inclusion, and economic prosperity in the northeast region in particular and Nigeria at large. Indeed, violent conflicts between farmers and herders in the region have engendered distrust and grievances amongst community members, which have further increased tension. Herders and farmers, who are the principal actors in the conflict, have consistently expressed divergent views on causes, impacts and remedies to the conflict. The need to empirically understand the issues, context and dynamics from the perspectives of herders gave rise to this study.

1.1 An Overview of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in North-East, Nigeria

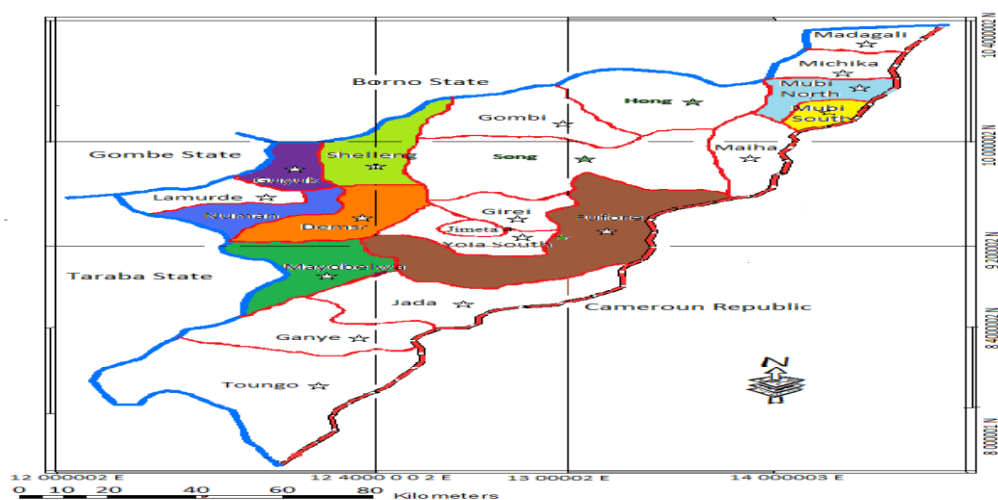
The importance of researching natural resource conflicts is critical to the management of conflicts associated with them. Land as a natural resource has been a source of conflict across Nigeria. Mbah et al⁵ and Rutten and Mwangi⁶ note that violence occasioned by resource-based conflicts has been associated with two major outcomes impacting the society in question: first, resource-based conflicts can be a threat to human and livelihood security and the community at large. Second, resource-based conflicts may act as the engine of social change through which conflict-interest relationships in the community can be transformed into new forms. In this regard, it is necessary to critically examine the dynamics surrounding any resource-based conflict relationship, especially if we are to understand the real causes in their entirety and decide the appropriate programmatic course of action for resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. The current study on perspectives of herders on violent conflicts with farmers in selected LGAs in Adamawa State is therefore designed for this purpose. The motivation for the study, amongst others, is to generate empirical data that provides an entirety of the views of the herders holistically. This is imperative, as several factors could account for the farmer and herder's conflicts. Indeed, Pavanello and Scott-Villiers⁷ alluded to this when they emphasized that, "it is impractical to single out a primary cause and driver: indeed, conflicts that may appear limited and localized to pastoralist dry-land area may be fuelled by drivers in institutional, political, economic and social spheres operating at national, regional and even global levels."

Accordingly, Ntumva⁸⁻¹⁰, posits that as a subset of natural resource conflicts, land conflicts have been among the major sources of complex violent conflicts that have disrupted livelihoods. Land conflicts involving farmers and herders has led to a number of devastating effects including loss of lives, destruction of properties, food insecurity and internal displacement of persons in northeast region of Nigeria. In Nigeria, previous relations between herders and farming communities have historically been harmonious. It was largely a symbiotic relationship in which the wastes of herders' cattle fertilized the farmers' land in exchange for grazing rights. But tensions have grown over the past decade, with increasingly violent confrontations spreading across several states. The International Crisis Group¹¹ reported that herders and farmers' conflicts have occurred in at least 22 of the country's 36 states, with thousands of people killed and displaced. Highlighting the prevalence of farmer-herder conflict in northeast Nigeria, Abbas¹²⁻¹⁴ noted that the conflicts have constituted serious threats to the means of survival and livelihoods of both the farmers and pastoralists. Abbas further posited that the conflicts, through provocative claims over access rights to farmland and cattle routes have become ubiquitous and seem to have defied solutions. Bello¹⁵ noted that the northeast pastoral corridors are replete with conflicts of survival between farmers and herders. The types of conflicts for survival between herders and farmers in the northeast region of Nigeria vary in form and intensity from one community to another. Similarly, Tayo and Nasrullah¹⁶ stated that there have been long-standing tensions over the use of land for livestock grazing between herders and farming communities.

However, within the past few years, the frequency and intensity of the violence have increased, causing alarm and potentially spurring a dangerous securitized approach to the clashes that could wreak havoc on Nigeria's fragile economy. According to the International Crisis Group¹⁷, herding majorly undertaken by the Fulani ethnic group indisputably represents a significant component of the Nigerian economy. The Fulani ethnic group constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat, and the most available and cheap source of animal proteins consumed by Nigerians. Additionally, the Fulanis own over 90% of the nation's livestock population, which accounts for one-third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the nation's GDP. Higazi¹⁸ described the Fulani ethnic group as a large and internally diverse population spread across West and Central Africa, with their largest concentration in Nigeria. In very broad terms, they can be divided into two main categories: (i) the (semi)-nomadic and transhumant herders, who raise cattle and sheep and, contrary to popular belief, usually also cultivate crops on a subsistence basis; and (ii) settled Fulani, who are not herders and live in urban areas and villages as traders, farmers, traditional rulers, and educated professionals. Affirming the dominance of the Fulani ethnic group in herding, Adibe¹⁹ stated that 90 percent of the herders in the country are Fulani; these herders own approximately 90 percent of the national herd, estimated at 19.5 million cattle, about 975,000 donkeys, 28,000 camels, 72.5 million goats, and 41.3 million sheep.

1.2 Brief Overview of Adamawa State

Adamawa is one of the states that make up the northeast region of Nigeria. The State is made up of 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs). It has a total land area of about 36,917 km²; it shares boundary with Taraba State in the south and west, Gombe State in its north-west and Borno State to the north. Adamawa State has an international boundary with the Cameroon Republic along its eastern side.



Map-of-Adamawa-state-showing-Local-Government-Areas-interstate-and-international
https://www.researchgate.net/figure/_fig1_323240053²⁰

Adamawa State has challenges related to conflicts between migrant herders and farming communities. The rich soil fertility in several LGAs of the State is favorable for herding and farming activities to thrive as well as attract migratory herders into the State. The farming and herding communities in the State have co-existed harmoniously for decades, with each benefiting from the other – farmers from cattle waste products that manure their crops and herders from crop residue.

However, over the last decade, this symbiotic relationship has rapidly deteriorated into violent conflicts between the two parties. In recent times, increased pressure on land usage has constantly brought violent conflict between farmers and herders in several local government areas in the State. While dispute between herders and farmers is a common occurrence in the State, the violence that accompanied the 2017 conflict seems to have laid the foundation for the escalation of violent conflict between herders and farmers in Adamawa State. LGAs where violent conflicts have occurred between farmers and herders in the State include: Girei, Mubi north and south, Larmude, Numan, Demsa, Fufere, Jada, Ganye, Hong, Mayo-Belwa, and Toungo, amongst others. A common feature of farmer-herder conflict in Adamawa State is the propensity of the violence to spread to other adjoining LGAs, thereby resulting in multidimensional impacts and consequences.

1.3 Causes of the Conflict - Understanding the Foundational Factors

Several studies have examined the foundational factors that are the root causes as well as the triggers and sustaining factors for the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria at large and the northeast in particular. For instance, Bello²¹ identified destruction of crops by herds, burning of rangelands and blockage of grazing routes by farmers, theft of cattle, poor management of the conflicts by government as causes of the conflict. Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor²² pointed out that decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, inadequacy of grazing resources due to increasing crop cultivation, increased crop value and non-adherence to relevant policies by government such as the 1988 National Agricultural Policy which sets aside 20% of FADAMA for grazing are causes of the conflict. Ntumva²³⁻²⁸ identified draught and desertification due to climate change, population explosion and loss of grazing reserves, changes in pastoralism and farming practices, banditry and cattle rustling, and increases in the herd population as causes of the conflicts. De Haan²⁹ noted that antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsman have compounded the conflict situation, especially due to failing institutions and fierce competition for resources. Adisa³⁰ attributed the conflicts to inequitable access to land, diminishing land resources, antagonistic values among user groups, policy contradictions, and non-recognition of the rights of indigenous people. Abass,³¹⁻³³ however, argued that the major source of tensions between herders and farmers is economic, with land-related issues accounting for the majority of the conflicts. This can then be situated within the broader context of the political economy of land struggle, traceable to a burgeoning demography in which there is fierce competition for fixed space to meet the demands of the growing population. Several contemporary factors such as climate change, poverty and unemployment contribute to worsening the already existing grievances between farmers and herders in Adamawa State. Environmental degradation is playing a role in fuelling the conflict, with desertification and the shrinking of Lake Chad forcing many herders to move farther into areas outside regular migration routes. Another dynamic is the religious divide between both sides, with the herders being religiously and culturally Muslims, while the farming communities are majorly Christians. Finally, the failure of the government to strategically develop frameworks and policies to effectively manage the sour relationship between herders and farmers continues to exacerbate the conflicts.

1.4 Institutional Interventions to Manage the Conflict

Various governments in Nigeria since independence have made concerted efforts to evolve institutional mechanisms and frameworks to manage the farmer-herder conflict. For instance, immediately after independence, the government designated five hundred and fourteen (514) grazing reserves across the current 19 northern states in a bid to prevent clashes between pastoralists and sedentary farming communities. However, Tayo and Nasrullah³⁴ argue that over the years, many of these designated grazing reserves were viewed as lucrative investments by some individuals, who in turn converted these routes and reserves into other uses, thereby creating a shortage of land, water, and other resources necessary for the grazing of livestock. Thus, herders are forced to search for water and pasture for their animals outside the designated routes/reserves, pushing them into confrontation with farming communities. In response to incursions and forceful takeover of grazing reserves and routes by farmers and other interested parties, Adeoye³⁵⁻³⁶ noted that the federal government marked out grazing reserves across Katsina and Bauchi states in northern Nigeria, as well as in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The three planned reserves, intended to serve about 15 million pastoralists, involve demarcating 175,000 hectares of grazing land, building veterinary service centres, and constructing settlements for nomads to use., The project is estimated to cost US\$247 million; however, nothing has been heard about this noble venture.

The government also demarcated a 1,400 km livestock route from Sokoto State in the northwest to Oyo State in the southwest and another 2,000 km route from Adamawa State in the northeast to Calabar State in the delta region³⁷. Due to the potential of the farmer-herder conflict to exacerbate insecurity, worsen the food crisis, and make vulnerable communities in the northeast susceptible to violent extremist organisation's infiltration, the government has continued to make concerted efforts and interventions to curb the menace of the farmer-herder conflict. These interventions include the establishment of the Almajiri schools to provide some level of education to children of migrant herders and the reintroduction of modified Grazing Reserves/Ranching and grazing routes in selected states by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) through its National Livestock Development Plan. Similarly, efforts have been made to provide legal framework for cattle herding in Nigeria. For instance, in 2011, a bill to create a National Grazing Reserves Commission and establish a national grazing reserve and livestock routes did not scale the legislative hurdle. From 2015 to 2016, three bills were introduced at the National Assembly to create grazing reserves, livestock routes and ranches across the country. These also did not scale through due to suspicion, distrust, and controversy about the true motive of these legal frameworks. In the absence of institutional mechanisms at the federal level, the response of various state governments to the farmer-herder conflict has varied. Some states have established state and local Peace Commissions/Committees to promote herder-farmer dialogue and resolve conflicts. Others have enacted laws banning open grazing. The government of President Bola Tinubu is making concerted efforts to manage the issue of farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. the On July 9th, 2024, the government announced the creation of Federal Ministry of Livestock Development. The Ministry is to among other things, manage the issue of farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. The president also inaugurated the Renewed Hope Livestock Reform Implementation Committee to support the government in addressing issues around farmer-herder conflict.

2. METHODOLOGY

The mixed-method approach was employed in order to capture and reflect the variety of views and opinions that responded to the study's objectives. Thus, primary and secondary sources provided data for the study. The study utilized the qualitative method in generating primary data for the study. This was done through the use of key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Secondary data for the study was sourced from desk review of books, journal articles, newspaper reports and other relevant publications. Primary data for the study was collected in four (4) Local Government Areas (Damsa, Larmude, Numan and Mubi north) in Adamawa State. Relevant secondary literature for the study was sourced from academic journals and other relevant peer-reviewed publications and grey literature. Respondents who participated in the study were purposively selected from a pre-determined list of respondent-types. These included chairpersons of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) at the LGA level, women leaders/wives of herders, leaders of Taptal Pulaku, leaders of the Association of Young Pastoralists, and herders who are internally displaced persons. The composition of these respondents ensured that robust viewpoints were generated. Key informant interviews and focus groups (FGD) were used to collect primary data for the study. A total of 20 key informant interviews (5 per LGA) and 8 focus group discussions (2 per LGA with 8 participants each) were conducted with purposively selected critical stakeholders across the study locations. The structured interview guide and FGD facilitation guide served as instruments for data collection. Data generated from the study's key informant interviews and focus group discussions were narratively content analysed. Salient quotations from views expressed by respondents were outlined to showcase unanimity/strength of opinions, divergence of views and emergence of new ideas and thoughts.

3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

3.1 Perspectives of Herders on the Causes of Conflict and Violence

An analysis of views and opinions expressed by the study respondents revealed that several factors are responsible for the incessant conflict between farmers and herders in the study locations. Summarily, the causes identified by respondents are: lack of access to grazing land/reserves and cattle rustling, blockage of cattle routes, drug abuse and youthful exuberance, increase in human and cattle population, irregular weather/climatic conditions, and injustice/failure of government to prosecute and sanction offenders.

3.1.1 Lack of access to grazing lands/reserves and cattle rustling

Findings indicate that herders do not have access to grazing lands and reserves allocated to them by government. Many of such lands and reserves have been converted to other uses. For instance, some of the reserves have been converted to residential areas while crops have been cultivated on others. This situation has often forced herders to explore alternative options to feed their cattle. Additional findings revealed that cattle belonging to herders are regularly rustled by criminals. Herders claim that rustling of their herds is done by farmers in collaboration with criminals within farming communities. According to a respondent, "The real issue is the lack of lands; we have nowhere to graze, our children are beaten, and our cattle are rustled. The government should provide grazing land for us. Even during the dry season, they beat up the herders. I think it is a feeling of supremacy, but even watering the animals might lead to the children being beaten. Where we are encamped, there is no water, and if the children go to find water, they are beaten; we are encumbered to the top of a graze or mountain without water or pasture (FGD, MACBAN member)."

Findings showed that Numan LGA has good grass and water due to the rivers Benue and Gongola; thus, it is an attractive area for both farmers and herders. However, due to encroachment by farmers, most of the grazing reserves and routes have been converted to farmlands, thereby denying herders space to graze or move their cattle. Accordingly, another respondent added, "In my thoughts, the genesis of this crises is irrigation farming during the dry season. Remember we used to leave these communities for Mashekary to other places during the rainy season, hoping that by the time we came back, the farming activities would have been over and we have the River Benue valley to ourselves and our cattle; but we come back to meet more farming activities in the dry season that is even larger than the rainy season farming and most of our grazing area occupied" (FGD, Young Pastoralists).

3.1.2 Blockage of cattle routes, drug abuse and youthful exuberance

On their part, leaders of herders identified blockade of cattle routes, youthful exuberance among children of herders and farmers, drug addiction among youths and disobedience to elders by youths as reasons for the escalation of violent conflict between farmers and herders. Their views are captured by the opinion expressed below: "The blockage of the cattle routes coupled with the lack of patience on both sides. The world has changed, and our wise elders have passed on; they would have tried to maintain peace by reporting the crises to authorities at its earliest stages. These days, societies have lost control of youths. Everyone know today's youths are hotheaded; some are drug addicts, but they are released from their leashes, and both the farmers and herders bear the consequences. If the youth are oriented and sensitized to be patient with each other, there would be less violent conflict between herders and farmers (KII, Herders' leader)."

3.1.3 Increase in human and cattle population

Respondents identified an increase in human and cattle population with a concomitant effect on competition for scarce resources (land and water) as a major cause of the conflict. According to the respondents, as the population in communities increase, there is a need for more land both for housing and farming since farming is the primary occupation of most communities. Places where no one farmed before and cattle have access to grass in all the seasons are now farmlands, and this leads to trespassing sometimes and most times to conflict. A KII respondent put it thus: "The root cause is increased farming activity, population growth of humans, and even the cattle. All of them are competing for natural scarce resources like land, pasture, and water."

3.1.4 Irregular weather/climatic conditions

Respondents did not specifically identify climate change as a cause of the conflict; they however admitted that irregular weather conditions such as prolonged dry and rainy seasons and flooding are contributory factors to the root causes of the conflict. According to respondents, there is so much uncertainty in weather conditions nowadays, so much so that there is prolonged dry season, which has increased dry season farming. The connection is that many of the routes that herders pass during dry season freely are now used for dry season farming.

3.1.5 Injustice/failure of government to prosecute and sanction offenders

Findings showed that herders believe the justice system in the Adamawa State and Nigeria at large is unfair to them. According to respondents, the law does not prosecute and punish individuals that met out injustice to herders. They claim that no farmer has been arrested, sanctioned or punished for meting out injustice to a herder. Herders believe that there is a conspiracy against them by authorities because they are perceived to be illiterate; hence members of farming communities always taken advantage of them. A respondent opined that "the cause of the recent escalations is tribalism and injustice by our traditional and political leaders through

action and inaction; they tend to avert justice.” Another respondent added, “This crisis started as a result of injustice; for instance, a Fulani man will offend one and he will be punished, while if a non-Fulani person offends a Fulani man, he will be left to go free without punishment; that injustice leads to break down of law and order.”

3.2 Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflicts on Herders

Findings indicate that respondents identified several impacts conflicts with farmers have had on herders. These include: loss of lives/cattle and destruction of property, increase in number of widows, forced migration, reduced nomadic school enrolment, inability to trade/sell milk.

3.2.1 Loss of lives/cattle and destruction of property

Respondents unanimously agreed that lives have been lost due to the farmer-herder conflict by both farmers and herders. Similarly, the respondent's said herders have also lost their cattle, and their means of livelihood and properties have also been destroyed. During a key informant interview, a respondent stated that “I stay with my family in Bare district. The farmers there have made herding impossible for us. They take laws into their own hands by killing every herder that comes close to their farms. The herders have had enough, and so they retaliate by killing the farmers too.”

Similarly, the leader of a herder's association alluded to this in a key informant interview session. According to him, “because of a lack of enough grazing areas, this drives herders to let their cattle graze in the farms; the farmers in turn retaliated by killing the herders, their cattle, and even their families at home; it didn't stop in the bush. It entered the town, and everywhere became chaotic.”

3.2.2 Increased number of widows

Respondents stated that the conflict has resulted in an increased number of widows. According to the respondents, women are worst hit during the conflict because they lose their children (especially males), their fathers, and most importantly, their husbands. Respondents said many women have lost their husbands due to violence. A respondent said: “This crises has made many women widows; some have been abused, and many girls' hopes of completing school have ended because their fathers were killed.”

3.2.3 Forced migration

Findings indicate that many herders have migrated from their location due to increased violence. Respondents said at the height of the farmer- herder conflict in Adamawa State, many migrant herders moved to Cameroon. Reaffirming this view, a respondent said, “Our relatives and friends were killed, and more than 30 cattle and other animals were lost to the crises; even our food stuff kept in the house was burnt completely. We left this community about four years ago to the republic of Cameroon with our cattle and only returned last year in 2021.” Another respondent added that “they've made herding difficult for us herders. There are no grazing lands in this locality now. A herder has to migrate to Cameroon if he wants his cattle to graze peacefully.”

3.2.4 Reduced nomadic school enrolment

Respondents stated that due to the conflict, many of them migrated, which in turn affected their children's enrolment in nomadic schools, particularly since many of the areas they migrated to do not have schools. A respondent said he dropped out of nomadic school due to the conflict.

3.2.5 Inability to trade/sell milk

In Lamurde LGA, findings showed that there is no recent escalation of any conflict between herders and farmers in the communities. However, some respondents noted that when conflict occurs between herders and farmers in neighbouring LGAs, it often has a negative economic impact on the economic activities of herders. For instance, some respondents' said women who travel to sell milk and others whose businesses involve moving along Gombe-Demsa-Biu-Damaturu cattle routes usually avoid such routes to avoid being caught up in such conflicts in other LGAs. Accordingly, a respondent noted that “If a conflict occurs in Numan, it spreads to the other Bachama lands. In Lamurde, there was no conflict, but cars passing on the road are blocked. If a Fulani is seen, he is dragged out and slaughtered in the middle of the road. We have never slaughtered any of their people in Lamurde, but we have lost count of the people or cows that have been lost due to their propensity for violence. The migrators passing through here that have been killed also cannot be known; when they are killed, their cattle are also rustled. When the conflict occurred, we did not know why or what caused it, but they still included us and started killing us. When it was in its high tide, this market was not visited by any Fulani. This forced us to migrate to other lands in Gombe State before we came back gradually. It was after Fintiri became governor that the situation was resolved. In Lamurde, the conflict was once between Bachama and herders, then Firi and Hasa, and this time Lunguda and Waja; they are all farmers, but they have been fighting for more than 4 years. (FGD Session, MACBAN member).”

3.3. Effective Methods to Avoid/Resolve Violent Conflict between Herders and Farmers

Findings revealed that respondents identified strategies that can be deployed to resolve and reduce conflict between herders and farmers. These include: empowering traditional rulers to manage the conflict, imposition of fines on owners of trespassing cattle,

provision of water points and proper demarcation of cattle routes, provision of grazing lands/reserves, stoppage of bush burning by farmers and unblocking of cattle routes.

3.3.1 Empower traditional rulers to manage the conflict

Respondents unanimously opined that traditional rulers should be empowered to manage, coordinate, and oversee farmer-herder relationships with their domains. This is because traditional rulers understand the dynamics within their communities. They are also respected by all; hence they can easily mediate when conflict occur between herders and farmers. Findings showed that respondents vehemently refuted the option of having security agents manage the farmer-herder relationship. Respondents identified the Ardo's (leader) of the herders and the Chiefs (community/traditional leaders) of the farmers as veritable and legitimate intermediaries/peacebuilders that can play positive role in improving relationship between herders and farmers in the study locations.

3.3.2 Impose fines on owners of trespassing cattle and increase tolerance

Findings showed that respondents suggested imposition of fines on owners of herds that stray into farmlands and destroy crops of farmers. Under this system, they owners of cattle caught trespassing into farmlands will be fined justly after estimating the economic value of crops that they have destroyed. Respondents also harped on the need for both parties to eschew the urge to retaliate and explore dialogue, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence.

3.3.3 Provision of water points and proper demarcation of cattle routes

Respondents further identified the provision of water points for the herders to access water for their herds as an effective method to resolve and manage the herder-farmer conflict. Similarly, respondents observed that proper demarcation of the existing cattle routes will go a long way in contributing to the effective management of the conflict.

3.3.4 Provision of grazing land and allow herders purchase/own land

Findings indicate that respondents are of the view that provision of grazing lands by government can contribute to resolving the conflict. Many of the respondents lamented about herders' inability to own land due to the refusal of communities to sell land for grazing to them. A respondent stated that "we should be allowed to buy and own lands for pasture and granted access routes to reach the lands; and for migration. No matter what is deliberated upon, if there is no route for migration for us, there will always be conflict. We need lands where our cattle can rest. Imagine, if we want to migrate from Riganye to Tinno, there is nopiece of land where the herder can camp with his cattle. (FGD session, Tabbital Pulaaku member)."

3.3.5 Farmers should stop burning of bush after harvest

Respondents decried the recent practice whereby farmers burn their bushes after harvesting. In the past, after harvest, farmers usually leave crop residue for herders to feed their cattle. Respondents stated that the practice of bush burning is a punishment to herders by farmers. Thus, findings indicate if farmers do not burn their farmlands after harvesting, it will increase the availability of foliage for herds and engender a good relationship between the parties.

3.3.6 Unblock cattle routes

Findings showed that respondents believe that if existing cattle routes, including riverbanks, are cleared of all blockades, it will allow herders to move freely, thereby reducing tension and conflict with farming communities. Speaking, a respondent observed that: We need the cattle routes to be reopened; in the past, we could migrate from Taraba State to Adamawa State and then to Borno State through the cattle routes, but now, the routes has been blocked by farmers and buildings; there are also no resting points. In the past, farmers left the riverbanks as passages for us, but now even that is blocked, you have to use the same roads that cars use. We want the government to make it official – the cattle routes, the resting points, camping sites, and water wells. There should be policies that also protect us and the should be enforced by the government. (FGD session, MACBAN member)"

3.4. Institutional Versus Traditional Interventions for Managing Farmer-Herder Conflicts

Findings from the study indicate that respondents are of the view that traditional leaders are the stakeholders they trust that can manage conflicts between farmers and herders in their domain. However, in reality, traditional leaders in Nigeria can only play mediatory roles in such conflicts, as the Nigerian Land Use Decree of 1978, combined with changes in Local Government powers, has shifted the balance of power significantly against traditional institutions, thereby disempowering them from significantly contributing to the management of farmer-herder conflicts. The 1978 Land Use Decree essentially made the Government the owner of all land. The Decree removed from traditional leaders the power to allocate unused or abandoned lands. The Governor of a State has the authority to allocate up to 5000 hectares of land for agricultural or industrial use, and a Local Government Chairman has the same rights over 500 hectares. The 1976 local government reforms removed enforcement powers of traditional leaders to fine and imprison defaulters of land regulations in their domain, making their role more ceremonial than effective. Although traditional leaders are still respected in northern Nigeria, they do not have legal influence. Thus, in many places, the Chairman of the Local Government has effectively displaced them. The implication of this is that farmer-herder conflict, which is a land resource conflict

that ought to be managed by a traditional ruler in his domain, is left to be managed by state and federal government institutions. Sadly, these institutions are mostly bugged down by bureaucratic bottlenecks that often inhibit their performance, thereby making the management of farmer-herder conflicts intractable.

4. CONCLUSION

The threats posed by violence associated with the farmer-herder conflicts to the safety of lives and property, inter-group relations, social cohesion, and inclusion, as well as its multiplier effects on income and livelihood in the target LGAs, cannot be overemphasized. Despite apparent challenges, the respondents expressed willingness to embrace well-coordinated intervention efforts to end the violence. Traditional and religious leaders as well as leaders of associations such as MACBAN, Tabbital Pullaku and Young Pastoralists, amongst others, remain critical stakeholders in the management of farmer-herder conflict in the study LGAs. There is a dearth of trust in government; knowledge about climate change and new grazing practices is low. This provides opportunities for more engagement and programmatic interventions. Finally, the views expressed herein are solely those of herders.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were identified by respondents as solutions to farmer-herder clashes in the study location:

1. Implementation of Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA) and ranches and restoration of existing grazing reserves. Many respondents affirmed the need to implement herder-friendly policies by governments such as RUGA. They also stated that old grazing routes and reserves should be reclaimed and restored by the government. Also, some respondents said ranching should be adopted.
2. Consistent Dialogue: Findings indicate that respondents believe that there is a need for continuous and consistent dialogue amongst the conflicting parties.
3. Avoid self-help/taking laws into their hands: Respondents stated that both parties should be discouraged from taking the law into their own hands by way of retaliation whenever there is an incident of disagreement between them and farmers, rather, they should report such to appropriate authorities. A respondent opined that "leaders should warn both farmers and herders against taking laws into their hands because it is lack of patience that make people take laws into their hands, and that is not good. Even now, there is no absolute peace in the community, but with peace talk and dialogue among the farmers and herders, things will resolve."
4. Establish Community Dialogue Platforms and documentation of herders: Findings indicate that respondents recommended the establishment of a community dialogue forum by government where herders and farmers can sit together and have open and honest conversation. Respondents also suggested that herders should be properly documented as soon as they enter into any community.

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