

FARMERS AND HERDSMEN CRISIS: A MAJOR THREAT TO FOOD PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA (A CASE STUDY OF YEWA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OGUN STATE)

Ogunyemi, Olawale

Department of Hospitality and Technology (HMT), Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State

Email:ogunyemiolawale2014@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges of insecurity on food production in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State. Specifically, the study focused on farmers-herdsmen's violent clashes. Data for the study were obtained through focus group interview from the farmers' and the herdsmen's groups. Data were analyzed using content analytical technique. Through leaders of the two communities (Herdsmen's and the farmers'), farmers and herdsmen directly or indirectly affected by the clashes were identified. Where impossible to communicate directly with the interviewees, interpreters were provided. Data obtained were categorized, main theme identified, compared, related information merged and reassessed in line with content analysis procedures. Findings showed that the clashes were fundamentally over common environmental resources including land, pasture, crop-residue, livestock routes and water points. The effect of the clashes were found to include death, serious injury, stoppage of schooling within a time period, psychological imbalance due to fear, reduction in food crops, deaths of cattle and general economic downturn. Efforts aimed at addressing the menace were mainly inhibited by 'lingual-cultural' barriers, egocentrism and short-term reactive actions by relevant authorities rather than long-term peace plan. It is recommended that intergroup dialogue and compensation being encouraged by the State government should be further promoted.

Keyword: Crisis, Food Production, Peace efforts, Threat

1. INTRODUCTION

Recurring violent conflicts between herdsmen and farmers is raising serious concerns in the country. As aftermaths of such conflicts, lives are usually lost, live-threatening injuries sustained, economic activities halted, women raped, children molested, crops and cattle destroyed among other threats to human security (Fasona and Omojowa, 2005). These conflicts are largely driven by competition for natural resources particularly landmass that serve as grazing roots to herdsmen and crop field to farmers (Nyong and Fiki, 2005; Osinde and Turner, 2007). Although, conflict in resource use is not uncommon and perhaps, not unnatural in human ecosystems, it however becomes not only unhealthy but also counterproductive when it degenerates to violent, destructive clashes (Adekunle and Adisa, 2010, 1).

Violent clashes among Fulani herdsmen and farmers are not new but appear to be occurring at unprecedented rate in recent times. In a newspaper study of crisis in Nigeria between 1991 and February 2005, Fasona and Omojola (2005) found that conflicts over agricultural land use between farmers and herdsmen accounted for 35 percent of all reported crises. In other words, in any three clashes reported in Nigeria, one is most likely to be between farmers and herdsmen. The aforesaid underscores the significance of the clashes to peace and security in Nigeria. Cotula, Toulmin and Hesse (2004) stated that the conflicts have not only heightened the level of insecurity, but have also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the food crisis in Nigeria and other affected countries due to loss of farmer lives, animals, crops and valuable properties.

Apart from the dangers that the clashes portend for the realization of food security objectives, it also poses serious threats to hospitality business. Nowadays, perhaps due to high level improvement in communication made possible by the internet and particularly social media, news on violent clashes are more difficult to censor or go unreported. The clashes and their attendant carnage are often reported instantaneously scaring away intending tourists and visitors to the country. Through this, potential foreign exchange opportunities are lost. Besides, the violent clashes have

tendency to reduce agricultural production leading to high food prices. With high food prices, hospitality firms contend with higher production cost relative to what obtains in other climes putting them at disadvantage against global competitors.

Several reasons have been cited as causes of violent clashes in Nigeria. According to de Haan (2002), while farmers cite destruction of crops by cattle and other property by the pastoralists as the main direct causes for conflicts, burning of rangelands and Fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are major direct reasons cited by the herdsman. Irrespective of differences in dimensions from which herdsman and pastoralists view the causes of the clashes, they were fundamentally caused by competition for scarce natural resources particularly land, water and pasture (Adekunle and Adisa, 2010; Eme *et al.*, 2014, (Tyohmba, 2014).

Violent clashes between Fulani herdsman and farmers, although reportedly more common in the middle-belt of Nigeria (Eme *et al.*, 2014), the Southern States have now witnessing increasing occurrence of the scourge. Oyesola (2000) reported that the cattle herdsman are moving towards south in search of pastures thereby increasing the possibility of violent clashes in this area. As a matter of fact, Ajuwon (2004) reported farmer-herdsman conflict in Imo State, south east of Nigeria just as Olatunji (2012) reported in Punch newspaper violent clashes in border communities of Ogun State (South-west Nigeria) including Yewa North Local Government Area.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that urgent and enduring solution(s) is required to stem the tide of violent clashes in order to achieve much needed peace for progress in all sectors of the economy including hospitality. To proffer enduring solution to the crisis, empirical information on the remote causes, effect and the active players' perceived solution(s) need to be unearthed. A review of literature on the subject matter, however, revealed that there was dearth of empirical information on the violent clashes in Yewa North Local Government Area of the State. This creates vacuum in knowledge. This study is conceived and conducted to fill the vacuum in knowledge by providing empirical information on challenges of insecurity on food production in Yewa North Local Government Area as of Ogun State.

This study specifically assessed the (i) remote causes of herdsman-farmers/pastoralists clashes in the study area; (ii) the effect of such clashes on the affected communities; (iii) the responses to the conflicts by the affected people and (iv) suggested possible solutions to the crisis from the affected victims and the researcher's points of view.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The Study Area

The study is conducted in Yewa North Local Government Area (LGA) of Ogun State. The LGA is one of the 20 LGAs in Ogun State, Nigeria, known nationally as Egbado North Local Government Area. It covers a land mass area of 2043.60sq kilometre with a population of 183,844 (NPC, 2006). Yewa North Local Government Area is headquartered in Ayetoro. It has border communities bounded by the Republic of Benin. The inhabitants were mostly Yewa-Awori people but home to diverse people from various works of life and ethnic nationalities. The inhabitants of the Local Government Areas are predominantly farmers some of whom have had violent clashes with invading Fulani herdsman.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data for the study were obtained through focus group interview from the farmers' and the herdsman's groups. An interview guide made up of five questions bothering on farmer-herdsman conflicts was used in gathering in-depth data from the respondents adapted from Adekunle and Adisa (2010, 6). The questions were: "(1) what are the causes of farmer-herdsman conflicts? (2) What are your personal conflict experiences? (3) How do you normally respond to the conflicts? (4) What are the factors hindering peace moves on the crisis? And what are the ways by which the conflicts can be managed?" It was pre-tested with five farmers and one herdsman to ensure that the procedure and terminologies were appropriate to the prospective respondents. This yielded no need for a change in the designed interview guide and procedure. Each of the four questions was followed by further probing (corollary) questions without compromising strict adherence to the objectives of the research. Through leaders of the Herdsman's and the farmers' communities, farmers and herdsman directly or indirectly affected by the clashes were identified. The interviews were conducted separately on separate dates to avoid confrontations. Where impossible to communicate directly with the interviewees, interpreters were provided. The interviews, conducted in two stages, lasted between 30 to 35 minutes

per participant. The first stage was for the farmers, while the second featured the herdsmen. Each interview was audio-recorded, followed by verbatim text transcriptions that constituted material for data analysis. Obtained data were analyzed using content analytical technique. Data obtained were categorized, main theme identified, compared, related information merged and reassessed in line with content analysis procedures.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion of the study in line with the study objectives.

Causes of Farmer-Herdsmen Conflicts:

Evidence from the responses to the research questions, presented, by the two conflicting groups shows that the violent clashes in the study area were fundamentally due to competition for natural resources including land which serves as crop fields to farmers and grazing routes to the herdsmen. Water points, alleged destruction of pasture (that the herdsmen cattle would have fed on) and farmers' crops were other causes of the violent clashes between the groups. Mutual suspicion of primordial "bad intent" and ulterior motives against each other appeared to fuel the crisis.

Table 1: The comparison between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers views on the causes of the conflicts

Questions bothering on causes on the conflict	R	Fulani Herdsmen	R	Farmers
What, in your own view, are the causes of the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers?	1	Farmers usually plant crop on well-known grazing roots on which cattle march and feed while grazing. This causes problem	1	The Fulani herdsmen are very stubborn, they match their cattle to farms to consume and eat our crops without compensation. This is the main cause of the conflict?
	2	The cause of the conflict is fight over farmland and grazing routes. The farmers are very stubborn. All land belong to Allah but the farmers don't want use to graze on the land	2	The Fulani herdsmen are intruders into our farm to destroy our crops. We have made complaints several times without solution from relevant authorities. Consequently we result to defending our farms which lead to clashes
	3	Farmers don't want our cattle to drink from the stream. They sometimes poison the stream so that our cattle will die. This causes fight between us and the farmers	3	The herdsmen have no regard for the indigenous farmers. They destroy farmlands and pollute the stream. When we confront them, the result to violence.
	4	We fight because of our cattle and their crops. Farmers don't want use to graze in the bush and claimed they are indigenes. But everywhere belong to Nigeria and Nigerians	4	We suspect that they are secretly planning to take over our land. Even without stopping them from grazing on our farmland, they kill innocent people and molest our women. We can no longer accept this. As a result, we fight back.
	5	We fight due to selfishness of the farmers. They want to use the farmland alone and don't want our cattle to eat. They kill our cattle resulting in violence.	5	The Fulani herdsmen want to lord over us in our land. They destroy our crops, rape our women and you want us not to fight them? The fight will stop when they stop tramping on us.

Source: Field Survey, 2019, R = Respondent number

Effect of Farmer-Herdsmen Conflicts

The responses of the farmers and herdsmen on the causes of the clashes are presented in Table 2. It is evident in the table that the crisis resulted in loss of lives and economic resources. In the crisis, heinous crimes like killing and raping were committed. Both the farmers and the herdsmen sustained degree of losses but the indigenous farmers appeared to be worst hit. The herdsmen's loss was generally economic while the farmers lose both economic resources and lives and sometimes dehumanized by rape. Summarily, the effect of the clashes include death, serious injury, stoppage of schooling within a time period, psychological imbalance due to fear, reduction in food crops, deaths of cattle and general economic downturn.

Table 2: The comparison between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers views on the effect of the conflicts

Question bothering on effect of the conflict	R	Fulani Herdsmen	R	Farmers
What are your personal conflict experiences?+	1	My cattle were killed by the farmers. I had 60 cattle before but they killed 33 out of them. I cannot forgive the farmers	1	I witness one of the clashes where the herdsmen came during the night and started killing people. For months, the community was deserted, children could not go to school for fear, women could not go to farm for fear of being raped. It was terrible my brother
	2	The Yorubawa farmers are bad. They kill our cattle. The cattle that I have been raising for a long time were killed. They killed some of our members with 'black magic'. I don't have money to buy new cattle. They destroy my business	2	The clashes are very unfortunate especially to the indigenous people. I lost a brother that was very dear to me during one of the crisis. Houses were burnt, property destroyed leaving people with palpable fear of being attacked
	3	One day, after our cattle grazed for about two hours. Some of the cattle became tired and could not move. Before we know what was happening, many cattle had died. We suspected that the grassland had been poisoned and lead to violent clash between us and the crop farmers.	3	The crisis has resulted in dwindling agricultural production in the area as farmers and their wards fear going to farm for fear of being attacked.
	4	Our cattle were led to a stream to drink water. The indigenous farmer mobilized their youths to attack us at the stream. We retaliated and resulted in violent clashes for almost 1 month before it was settled.	4	The crisis has made people to avoid coming to the area including potential tourists. I met a man on a trip who vowed never to come to the area in order not to be caught in crossfire
	5	The clashes have ruined many herdsmen business and sometimes resulted in loss of lives.	5	On our way to farm one day, we started hearing screaming of people nearby. Before knowing what was happening. The herdsmen started pursuing us. We were saved by youths in the community who came on the nick of time. We could not go to farm for weeks because of fear of being attacked until the able-bodied men form vigilante group to protect us

Source: Field Survey, 2019, R = Respondent number

Table 3 presents the distribution of the respondents by their response to violent clashes between the conflicting groups. A critical look at Table 3 will show that while the herdsmen generally preferred to inform their leader when crisis is imminent, the farmers either inform the community chief or the NSCDC who calls in the police. These findings may imply that to resolve the lingering crisis in the community, leaders of the Fulani herdsmen could be an invaluable asset in taming seemingly aggressiveness of the herdsmen. Relevant authorities might want to consider suitable conflict management training programme for the leaders of the herdsmen and community chief in the crisis domain. The role of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps in managing the crisis is commendable but it appears too skewed towards managing the indigenous farmers. The NSCDC, having being trained, might be equipped to interact with the herdsmen also.

Table 3: The comparison between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers views on how they responded to the crisis

Question bothering on response to the crisis	R	Fulani Herdsmen	R	Farmers
How do you respond to the crisis?	1	We notify our leader of the problem first and he tries to find solution to it. But when no solution was provided, we take to arms.	1	We notify the chief who immediately notify the police. Solutions are sought first but if there is no solution, we try to protect ourselves, loved ones and crops by every available means
	2	Our leaders are notified first after which we confront the farmers if they insist that we leave grazing area	2	We call the members of the NSCDC (i.e. Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps) who alerted the police to the crisis
	3	We talk to our leader about the issue. When solution fails, we try to protect ourselves and our cattle	3	In the event that police could not contain them which is usually the case, we use 'traditional' means to protect ourselves
	4	Our leader is first contacted.	4	The only response is to protect ourselves and loved ones from the herdsmen by all available means
	5	We make sure that we protect ourselves and our cattle at all cost	5	We report the matter to the NSCDC who usually inform the police but most times police complicate the issue instead of resolving it. We just leave everything to God

Source: Field Survey, 2019, R = Respondent number

An assessment of the responses of the respondents revealed that both groups agreed that government reacts to the crisis rather than proffer long-term proactive solution to the crisis. Language and cultural differences were also stated as hindering understanding and amicable solution to the problem.

Table 4: The comparison between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers views on factors hindering peace moves to end the crisis

Question bothering on hindrances to peace moves	R	Fulani Herdsmen	R	Farmers

How do you think the crisis can be resolved?	1	The farmers want us to leave and we cannot. Therefore, personal interest of the farmers and our own interest will not allow the crisis to be stopped	1	Government only reacts to the crisis when it happened. No long-term proactive measures are taken
	2	Government is not sincere in establishing grazing routes as recommended long time ago. This is the main reason why the problem persists	2	It can only be resolved if the herdsmen are mandated to have a range where their cattle will be reared
	3	We don't usually understand what they had to talk about when peace meeting is called. Although there are usually interpreters, they were not effective	3	There should be special law in place against destroying crops planted and when this occur, perpetrators should be brought to justice
	4	Government swing into action only when crisis occur.	4	The herdsmen have ego problem. When they are summoned to meeting, most times, they refuse to show up. They believe they own Nigeria and are superior to other tribes
	5	Moving from one location to another is our cultural way of rearing cattle. The farmers don't want that and we cannot agree to staying in one place	5	The herdsmen should buy land like any other Nigerian and rear their cattle there. They should not trespass other people land and destroy their crops. That is the only way to resolve the issue

Source: Field Survey, 2019, R = Respondent number

The distribution of the respondents by perceived solution to the crisis is presented in Table 5. Evidence on Table 5 reveals that while emphasis of the herdsmen were centered on equality in using land resources available in the communities, the farmers focused on respect for host communities and disarming the herdsmen as perceived solution to the crisis. A respondent from the farmers' group, in addition, suggest improving on intergroup dialog as a means of ending the crisis.

Table 5: The comparison between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers views on solutions to the crisis

Question bothering on perceived solution to the crisis	R	Fulani Herdsmen	R	Farmers
How do you think the crisis can be resolved?	1	Government should demarcate grazing routes that will be used only by herdsmen	1	Government should persuade or force the herdsmen to embrace modern cattle rearing practice in range rather than the archaic extensive system
	2	The farmers should stop claiming that they own the land. Every land belongs to Allah and the Federal Government. They should stop claiming sole owner of the land. If they do that the problem will go	2	The herdsmen should be banned from carrying weapons. Why should only them be allowed to carry weapon. Why the special privilege?. That weapon gives them the effrontery to maim at slightest provocation
	3	The farmer should be warned to stop killing our cows under the pretext that they destroy their crops. That is the only solution	3	The Fulani herdsmen should respect their hosts. They should not behave like they own our farmland. The type of grazing being practised by the herdsmen should be banned.
	4	There should be grazing routes designated for that purpose. That is the way to permanently resolve the issue	4	Carrying weapon by the herdsmen should be prohibited. It makes them prone to attacking farmers when protest is made about crop destruction by cattle. Crisis will only be solved if the killing tendency of the herdsmen is stopped
	5	Farmers should desist from claiming that they are the only one who have the right to use the land. Everybody should be. If this is adhered to, the crisis will be over.	5	Intergroup dialog should be encouraged to solve the crisis

Source: Field Survey, 2019, R = Respondent number

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that herdsmen-farmers' crisis in the study area is serious deserving serious attention from relevant authorities. The cause of the crisis is fundamentally competition for use of land, grazing route/crop field as the case may be, and pasture. Death, serious injury, stoppage of schooling within a time period, psychological imbalance due to fear, reduction in food crops, deaths of cattle and general economic downturn. Efforts aimed at addressing the menace were mainly inhibited by 'lingual-cultural' barriers, egocentrism and short-term reactive actions by relevant authorities rather than long-term peace plan.

4.2 Recommendations

- It is recommended that intergroup dialogue and compensation being encouraged by the State government should be further promoted
- Government should look into establishing grazing routes for the herdsmen and convince them to embrace it
- NSCDC should try to interact also with the Fulani herdsmen

- Leaders of the two groups should be trained on crisis management technique as a proactive step in resolving the crisis

REFERENCES

- Adekunle, O. A. and Adisa, S., R. (2010) an empirical phenomenological psychological study of farmer-herdsmen conflicts in North-Central Nigeria. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1-27
- Nyong, A and Fiki, C. (2005). "Droughts-Related Conflicts, Management and Resolution in the West African Sahel." Human Security and Climate change International Workshop. Oslo; GECHS, CICERO and PR20. Pp 5-16
- Osinde, R. and Turner, M. (2007). 'Competition for Water: Are Water Riots Greater than Water Wars?' Id21 insights. P.7. Retrieved on 4th March, 2008 from <http://www.id21.org/nr/links1.html>
- Fasona, M. J. and Omojola, A. S. (2005). "Climate Change, Human Security and Communal Clashes in Nigeria." Paper at International Workshop in Human Security and Climate change, Holmen Fjord Hotel, Oslo Oct. 21-23, 2005. Pp. 3-13
- De Haan, C. (2002). Nigeria Second Fadama Development Project (SFDP), Project Preparation Mission Report, Livestock Component, World Bank. Pp1-13
- Tyohmba, K. (2014), "Food Scarcity Looms over Herdsmen, Farmers' Clashes", *New Telegraph*, Friday, May 30, P. 34.