

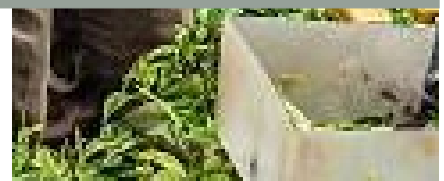


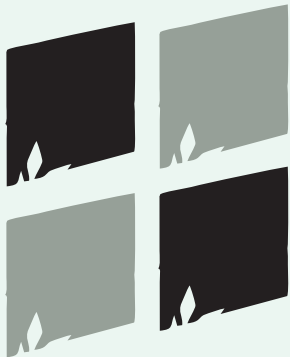
Centre for Democracy & Development

Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

Farmer-Herder Conflict in Northern Nigeria:

Trends, Dynamics and
Gender Perspectives





Executive Summary

The farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria has become persistent and pervasive with debilitating consequences on human lives and their sources of livelihoods. Although scholars, policy makers and development workers have given attention to the conflict, the trends and dynamics of the conflict, as well as the direct and indirect actors in the conflicts, are constantly changing. The constantly changing nature of the conflict makes efforts at resolving it by both state and non-state actors difficult. This research explored the current conflict dynamics, the various actors, causes and triggers, its gender dimensions, as well as the effectiveness of conflict mitigation mechanisms used to date.

The study adopted a qualitative data collection process using focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). Four states - Benue, Kaduna, Katsina and Nasarawa - that are

among those adversely affected by the conflict were selected as case studies. Eight Local Government Areas - Guma and Logo (Benue State), Kajuru and Kaura (Kaduna State), Batsari and Jibia (Katsina State), Awe and Doma (Nasarawa State) - were chosen as the study locations. In all, 48 FGD sessions and 46 KII interviews were conducted with men, women, youth, farmers and herders, traditional rulers, religious leaders and government officials to generate the data, and content analysis was applied to discuss the key findings from the study.

The findings of the research revealed that there are increasing occurrences of farmer-herder conflicts in virtually all the states. In two of the states, Kaduna and Katsina, the conflict has metamorphosed into other forms of generalized criminalities such as armed banditry involving cattle rustling and cattle theft and kidnapping for ransom. The research

48 FGD sessions and 46 KII interviews were conducted with men, women, youth, farmers and herders, traditional rulers, religious leaders and government officials

attributes the root of the conflict to transhumance, under-aged herding, damages to crops by livestock and encroachment on livestock grazing routes and tracks by farmers. The major triggers of the conflict include biased responses of security agencies, corrupt disposition of traditional rulers, use of drugs and hard substances, existing ethnic/communal divides and mistrust, negative interpretation of religious differences and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The main actors in the conflicts included farmers, herders, bandits, kidnappers, migratory herders, security personnel, and other interest groups. Other actors mentioned by respondents during the study included federal, state and local government officials who jettisoned their roles as interveners in the conflict due to perceived interests or by adopting inappropriate approaches in responding to the conflicts.

Findings from the research illustrate how women farmers and herders are portrayed as victims who are disproportionately affected by the conflict. Women farmers reported losses of farmlands and crops because of damage caused by livestock to

their means of livelihood. Some women have lost their husbands; some husbands have lost their wives while both have lost relatives and children during the violence. The varied effects of the conflict forced the victims to adopt various survival mechanisms. Prior to the crises, the daily needs of women were mostly taken met by their husbands in many parts of northern Nigeria; the additional income from their farming activities and livestock rearing helped in supplementing the efforts of the men. With the loss of means of sustenance however, the women as well as the men engage in menial and hard labor jobs to be able to fend for their families. There have been increased cases of early marriages amongst girls as a means of survival. Women have struggled to access loans from government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who offered aid and support to families of victims. Most of the women respondents during the FGD sessions highlighted challenges in getting any support from the government and NGOs despite many attempts at accessing one.

Notwithstanding the direct involvement of women in the conflict, their capacity to act as agents of peace is constrained by their exclusion from decision-making and peace-building processes. It is pertinent to note that, the efforts by the governments, NGOs/INGOs, traditional and religious leaders have generated mixed response in terms of impact. On the flipside however, the enactment and enforcement of some laws such as the Anti-Open Grazing Law of Benue State has forced herders to emigrate, thereby resulting in negative peace. There have been varied responses on the effectiveness of the law which was perceived particularly by herders to produce a win-lose outcome in favor of one party and thus, predisposes a feeling of injustice and victimization. This scenario has the potential of creating pessimism about the capacity of the government to resolve the conflict.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs).



4 states

Benue, Kaduna, Katsina and Nasarawa

8
LGAs

Benue
Guma and Logo

Kaduna
Kajuru and Kaura

Katsina
Batsari and Jibia

Nasarawa
Awe and Doma

Complementing government interventions, INGOs including Mercy Corps, the Red Cross and UNICEF, have aided in terms of rebuilding schools, clinics and boreholes in several farming communities while nothing much was done to the herders. These seemingly lopsided efforts also promoted negative feelings and made the herders to feel even more alienated.

In order to effectively tackle the conflict, the Nigerian Government has to demonstrate the political will and put in place measures to resolve the conflict in a mutually satisfactory way. Government should adopt a community-based approach that involves direct dialogue with the two parties and provide a proper platform for farmers and herders to interact frequently. All other stakeholders

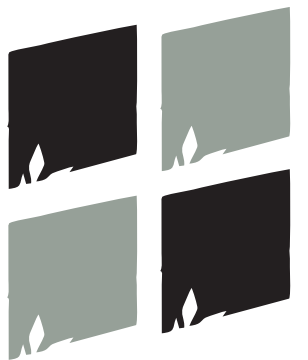
should be invited to participate in conflict resolution processes based on their roles and profession without bias or favor. The role of traditional rulers in community engagements need to be strengthened while those involved in fueling the conflict should be sanctioned.

Women and youth must be given an active role in the negotiation and dialogue process. They are critical stakeholders in either undermining or promoting peace in the community. Also, there should be mass campaign and advocacy by the government and NGOs to revive the culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence in communities. Perpetrators of the conflict should be apprehended and prosecuted to serve as a deterrent to others.

A photograph of two men in a rural setting. The man in the foreground is wearing a patterned shirt and is focused on cutting yellow vegetables into a white plastic bag. The man in the background is wearing a yellow shirt and is also working in the field. A thatched roof is visible on the left, and a green field extends to the horizon under a dark sky.

SECTION 1:

BACKGROUND



INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a precarious phenomenon that poses significant practical challenges to global peace and security. It has dispossessed many people of their life-supporting economic activities thereby flaring divisions and ruining once symbiotic relations among members of societies.

The conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria has received attention by researchers, scholars and analysts. In recent years, however, there has been unprecedented change in the narrative, manner and contexts of the conflict as well as the trend of reporting such conflicts. Thus, farmer-herder conflicts, though not a new phenomenon, is becoming increasingly lethal and dynamic (Bassett, 1998; Tonah, 2006; Bagu and Smith, 2017).

In Nigeria, the frontiers of the farmer-herder conflict have expanded to include states like Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa in the north central and Kaduna, Zamfara and Katsina in the north west as well as Adamawa and Taraba in the north east. These states have recorded casualties (Gever and Essien, 2019) and there is no indication of an immediate resolution of

the conflicts. Considering its current magnitude, the farmer-herder conflict, which has now taken a new crime-related dimension, it can be placed next to the Boko Haram insurgency in terms of its impact on Nigeria. In 2017, it was reported that Fulani herdsman were the fourth deadliest group in the world (Global Terrorism Index, 2017).

However, the attribution of the conflicts to Fulani herdsman (ethnic profiling) has in fact engendered identity separation between farmers and herders, giving rise to misinterpretation by scholars, apparently owing to lack of depth of analysis. Today, the literature on farmer-herder conflict often depicts herders as Fulani and farmers as non-Fulani.

Some analysts have even gone to the extent of framing the herders as Muslims and farmers as Christians (Ademola-Adelehin, 2017; Thematic Report, 2017); a situation that has the potential to trigger religious uprisings. Worthy of note however, is that farmers and herders have lived a symbiotic life in the past (Bagu and Smith 2017: 9); both contributing significantly to the nation's economy.

Consequently, peace between the two parties is germane to the attainment of true national development. It must be added at this point that the trend of farmer-herder conflict is not uniform across the three study areas. It is convenient to attribute the unprecedented bloodshed in the middle belt (Benue and Nasarawa states), the north east (Adamawa and Taraba states) as well as parts of Kaduna state to farmer-herder conflicts. In Katsina State however, farmer-herder conflicts have never been proportionally sanguinary as is being witnessed in recent times.

Such conflicts, typically provoked by the well-known traditional practices of farmers' encroachment into grazing routes and reserves or herders' trespassing on farmlands, have been rarely fatal. Previously they had usually ended up

being settled by community leaders, traditional rulers, the police or the courts. It was only in exceptional circumstances that injuries or loss of lives were recorded. The current dynamics of the conflict is, particularly in north-western Nigeria, engendered by a feeling of alienation and persecution. Consequently, the conflicts involving cattle rustling, banditry and kidnapping - which are conveniently linked to farmer-herder disputes, more often than not - arise out of persecution, reprisal killings and poverty.

This study sought to understand the dynamics of farmer-herder conflicts in northern Nigeria with a view to providing information that would help in changing the response mechanisms adopted by the government, in particular, as well as other stakeholders in bringing to an end an avoidable crisis.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study examines the dynamics of farmer-herder conflict in northern Nigeria with a view to addressing the knowledge gap largely driven by framed reporting of the events and eliciting useful information for policy reformulation. The following constitute the specific objectives of the study:



To investigate the current dynamics of farmer-herder conflict;



To determine the major triggers of farmer-herder conflict



To examine the gender dimension of the conflict;



To assess the effectiveness of policies and intervention mechanisms being pursued to address the challenges.







Research Method

Four states - Benue, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Katsina - were selected for the study. Two Local Government Areas (LGAs), from each state were chosen based on the prevalence of farmer-herder conflict in the localities. Qualitative data was generated through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In all, 48 FGDs and 46 KIIs were conducted. The areas were sampled purposively based on the frequency and the scale of the conflict.

Although the context of the study revolves around the dynamics of the farmer-herder conflict, the content investigates the causes and drivers, gender issues, as well as the effectiveness of resolution approaches and interventions. The table below shows the distribution of the FGDs and KIIs across the four selected states.

Table 1: Selected States, LGAs, types and number of interviews

	States	LGAs	No. of FGDs	No. of KIIs
	Benue	Guma and Logo	12	12
	Kaduna	Kajuru and Kaura	12	10
	Katsina	Batsari and Jibia	12	11
	Nasarawa	Awe and Doma	12	13
	TOTAL		48	46

The data obtained from these areas were subjected to content analysis. Ethical issues like, consent of local authorities, ensuring the anonymity of the respondents as well as the confidentiality of the responses were respected at all stages of the research. During interviews, participants were reminded that participation was voluntary; they did not have to respond to every question, and they may choose to stop the interview at any time. All responses included in the final report were anonymized.

SECTION II:

REMOTE FACTORS OF THE CONFLICT



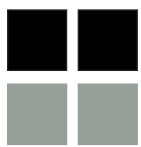


Tenure and Transhumance Insecurity

Tenure insecurity relates to conflict between farmers and herders, caused by multiple factors, such as population expansion, shrinking and drying up of water belts, changing agricultural production system and an absence of good governance (Muhammad 2015). In most of the study areas, crop farming in wetland areas has significantly increased, especially along animal watering points. In addition, extensive and excessive grazing has multiplied in recent times with 21,913.75 km² in the north-central states set aside for such.

The movement of herders in search of fodder and water for their livestock is a usual practice. This movement often ends in the southern part of the country. As the land in the far north becomes arid and dry

between February and May, pastoralists move down south for grazing, water and safety. However, this movement, which involves grazing along the open savanna and farms now creates serious farmer-herder tension because of the violent dimension that now accompanies the practice. It instigates perpetual conflicts, particularly in the north central region. The Nigerian state has often accused foreign herders from the Sahel region of invading settled farming communities in the north-central part of the country (UNOWAS, 2018). The involvement of 'aliens' (i.e. the migratory herders from the neighboring West African countries) in cattle rustling, banditry, armed robbery and kidnapping in the northwestern part of Nigeria provides reliable evidence on the nexus between transhumance and conflict in the region.



Population Explosion and Environmental Scarcity

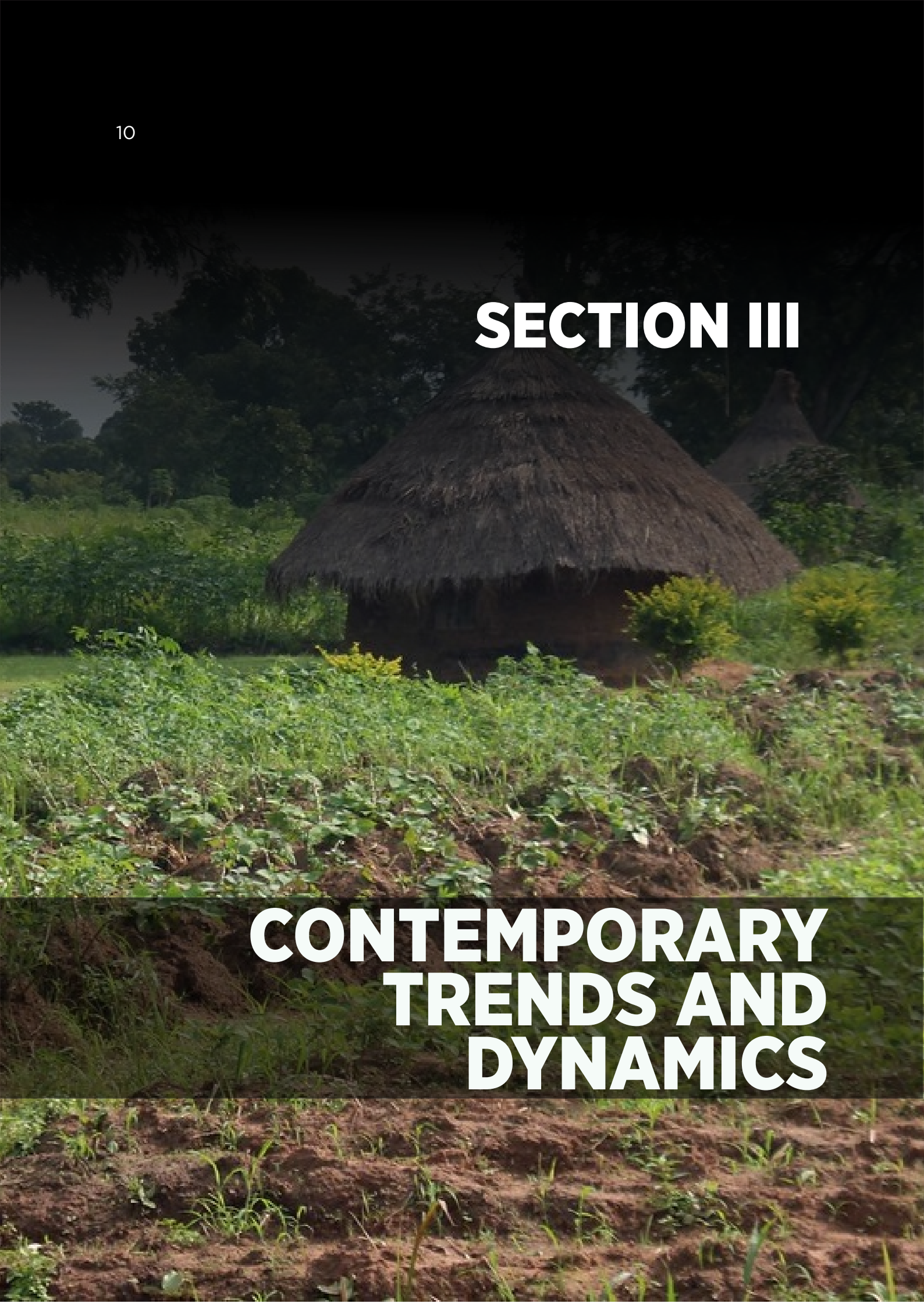
Demographic changes and urbanization are also contributing to the conflict. Nigeria's population has increased from less than 50 million in the 1950s to more than 200 million in 2021. Considering Nigeria's surface area of 91.07 million hectares, a landmass of about 923,768 km² and a coastland of about 850 km² (Amusan, Abegunde and Akinyemi, 2017), its estimated 206 million people (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020) have overstretched the available land for expansion and production. Farming activities have expanded thereby making it imperative for the farmers to encroach into lands that were earlier earmarked as grazing routes and reserves. Moreover, water points and

cattle routes have been infringed upon by farmers; increasing tension among users.

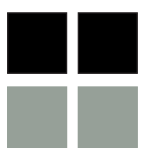
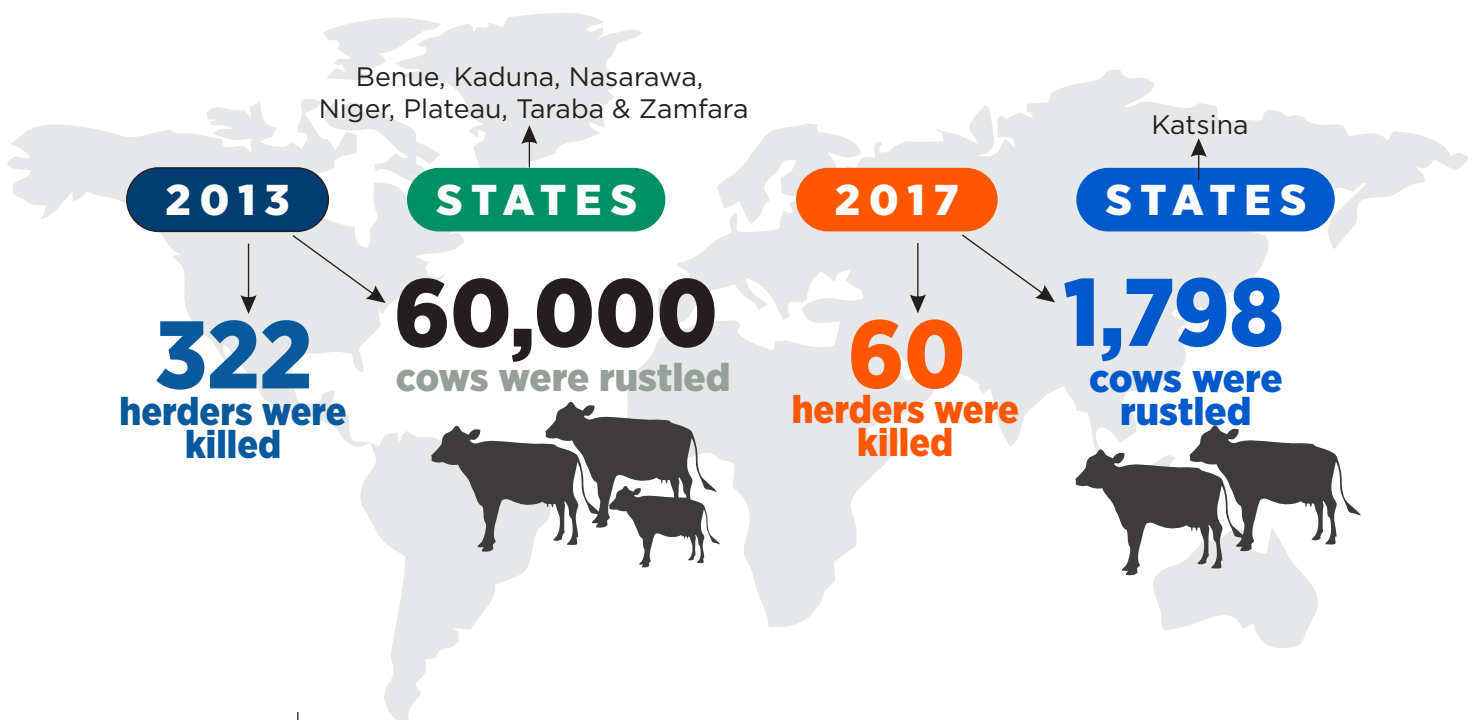
In addition, environmental and resource scarcity contribute to the rising farmer-herder feud. It has created conditions for the marginalization of disadvantaged groups within the competition bracket (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). Other sources of conflict linked to resource scarcity exacerbated by climate change can heighten socio-economic stressors and put adverse impact on sources of livelihoods which could accentuate poverty, which can in turn spur conflict (Babatunde, 2019).

SECTION III

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS AND DYNAMICS



The farmer-herder conflict has several mutative factors that can be considered as the dynamics of the conflict. These range from cattle rustling, ethnicity and politicization of the conflict, framing and criminalizing of identities, giving the conflict some religious coloration – portraying the bandits (i.e. herders) as Muslims and the farmers as Christians. These conflict dynamics are discussed in detail.



Cattle Rustling and Banditry

The act of forceful confiscation of livestock otherwise known as cattle rustling is a major driver of farmer-herder conflict. Respondents from Batsari and Jibia LGAs in Katsina State reported that rustling had impacted both on cattle and the agricultural economy. Most farmers during the FGDs lamented on the acute shortage of manure, soil-tilling bulls and increasing number of jobless ploughmen at the beginning of each rainy season. These are partly attributed to cattle rustling and mass exodus of the herdsman.

Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) reported the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) claimed that a total of 322 herders were killed while over 60,000 cows were rustled in 2013 in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara states. Shehu et al. (2017) estimated that 1,798 cattle were rustled while 60 herdsman were killed in Katsina State in 2017.



Ethnicity

The narrative emerging from identity framers in the media and popular discourse further ignites the conflict. The protagonists in this saga are often presented as being nomadic Fulani cattle herders, who are mostly Muslims, against sedentary farming communities of several other ethnic extractions, who are often, but not always non-Muslims.

This ethno-religious interpretation of the conflict is gradually gaining ground and making an indelible dent on the existing

fragile Muslim-Christian relations in the country. Support for this claim comes from the recent attacks on northern Muslims resident in the southern part of the country as a reaction to the activities of “Fulani herdsman” in those areas, (Bagu, C. & Smith, K;2017). Ethnicity and ethnic chauvinism have permeated the fabrics of Nigerians to the extent that genuine attempts to solve the problems of national security and development are ethnically or religiously interpreted and misinterpreted



Gender Implications

Women and children are adversely affected by the conflict. In most of the pastoral settings milk and butter belongs to the women and children, which are sold to meet daily needs. However, the incessant conflict situation has reduced both the cattle size and quantity of these dairy products, affecting their overall income.

At the peak of the conflict in Katsina and Kaduna, women, children and the aged were unable to visit distant markets or farms for the fear of attack. Attackers do not usually select their victims, they shoot

randomly. However, women and young girls feel and bear the greater brunt of the conflict. Apart from being killed or maimed, there have been several reported cases of rape during the attacks (WARN, 2020: 7).

This has a significant impact on the gender dimension of the conflict. It has evidently created many widows and widowers and helpless young orphans who add to the existing large number of beggars in both rural and urban centers. These victims also suffer varied forms of sexual and gender-based violence (WARN, 2020: 6).



Economic Impact

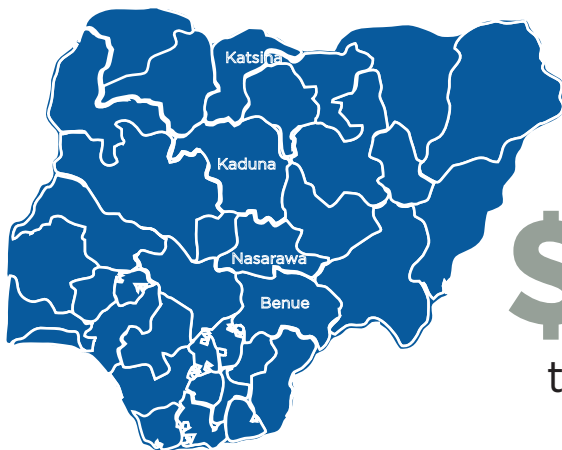
A 2017 report indicated that in Benue and Kaduna States an estimated \$2.3 million or 47% of their internally generated revenue (IGR) in 2015 was lost to the conflict (Thematic Report, 2017). IGR is heavily reliant on rural agricultural production and

considerable parts of the rural areas are marred by insecurity. Farming activities in those places are restricted to nearby farmlands due to the increasing spate of insecurity.

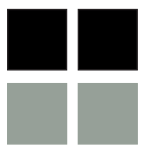
The same applies to the numerous bustling rural, regional and international markets located in the states. Market attendance, patronage and transaction, has significantly reduced as a result of the conflicts. All these have direct bearing on the IGR of the affected areas.

Nigeria in general, is said to be losing an average of \$13.7 billion annually to the farmer-herder conflict (Mercy Corps, 2015).

The crisis has exacerbated unemployment and economic hardship, putting rural dwellers into chronic penury. It also limits market development and economic growth by 'destroying valuable property, preventing trade, deterring investment and eroding trust between market actors' (Thematic Report, 2017). As reported by Amaza (2018), the conflict equally has a consequential effect on food (in)security



NIGERIA LOSING
\$13.7 BILLION ANNUALLY
 to the farmer-herder conflict



Conflict Management Approaches

The Anti-Open Grazing Law enacted by Benue, Ekiti and Taraba States, which forbids pastoralists from grazing openly in undesignated routes and fields has only complicated and compounded the existing tensions and conflicts between farmers and herders. Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State signed the bill into law in 2017. Governor Darius Ishaku of Taraba State signed the Bill into law in 2018 while Former Governor Ayodele Fayose of Ekiti State also signed the Bill in 2018. These bills promoted the alienation of herders, even though some of them have lived in such states for over a century.

Beyond legal measures, several other efforts have been made, and are still being

made, in an attempt to resolve the conflict. Apart from the conspicuous efforts of NGOs in promoting community dialogue, state governments and religious leaders as well as community leaders are taking part in such efforts.

There have been several negotiations between state governments and the bandits for example in Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara states. However, they have failed to yield any fruitful results. The Dr. Ahmad Mahmoud Gummi peace and dialogue initiative which started in 2020, and remains ongoing, has also yet to prove useful. He is engaging the bandits in dialogue and preaching against across different parts of North-West.

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But opinions are divided when it comes to the commitment of the Federal Government in resolving the farmer-herder conflict. A study conducted by Afrobarometer (2018) and International Crisis Group (2018), shows that both citizens and civil society organizations are of the opinion that the present administration has not invested enough effort in addressing the farmer-herder question.

The government mainly relies on the use of force in resolving such conflicts by deploying armed personnel to the affected

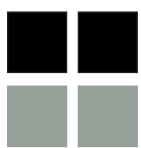
communities rather than adopting community-based approaches. Most of the deployed personnel have neither knowledge of the local terrain nor understanding of the identity of these bandits, which often resulted to the killing of innocent citizens. Above all there is no synergy amongst the deployed security operatives.

The Police, Army, Airforce and DSS have an inherent rivalry that invariably affects their success.

SECTION IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS





Conflict Dynamics

The farmer-herder conflict has been changing in form and intensity in various locations of this study. For instance, both farmers and herders in Katsina and Kaduna States suffered from armed banditry, cattle rustling and kidnapping for ransom. Many herdsmen have fled due to the incessant rural insecurity.

Also, there is an increasing recruitment of able-bodied youth, both male and female into the kidnapping syndicate. Most of the recruits are involved in spying for either the kidnapers or the bandits. A village head in Bastari LGA, Katsina State mentioned that 'the intensity of the recent attacks and

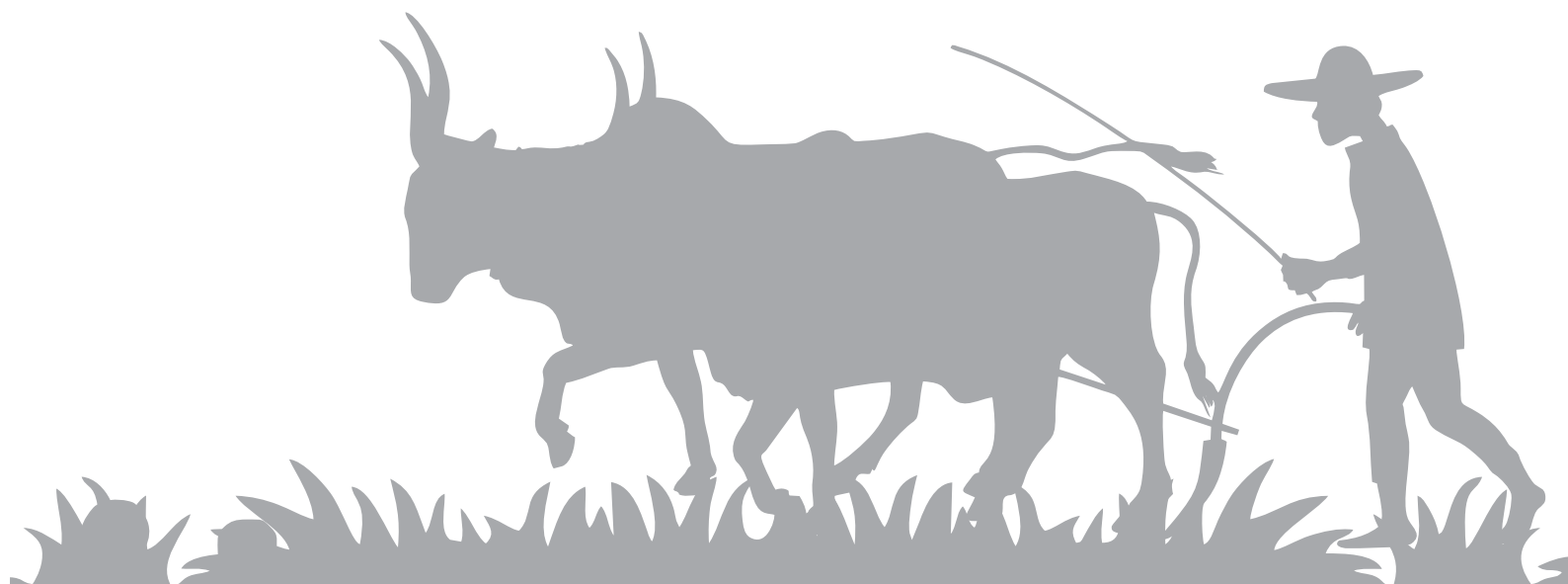
kidnappings are unimaginable, the gravity and deadly nature of these incidents were partly due to the active roles of these insider-spies who provide first-hand intelligence to the bandits to facilitate carrying out their heinous crimes'.

He further added that most of the pastoral communities in his district have sold their livestock and migrated to urban centers, while the few left behind have abandoned pastoralism for agriculture and other forms of sedentary life. The situation is so severe that the bandits operate freely with impunity in the face of the inability of the security agencies to effectively contain the threats posed by bandits.

In Kaduna State, the farmer-herder conflict heightened between 2012 and 2013, de-escalated between 2013 and 2019 but has recently re-emerged with intensity of attacks and heavy casualties in 2020. Owing to the thin dividing line between ethnicity and religion, the conflict in Kaduna State has taken on ethno-religious dimensions.

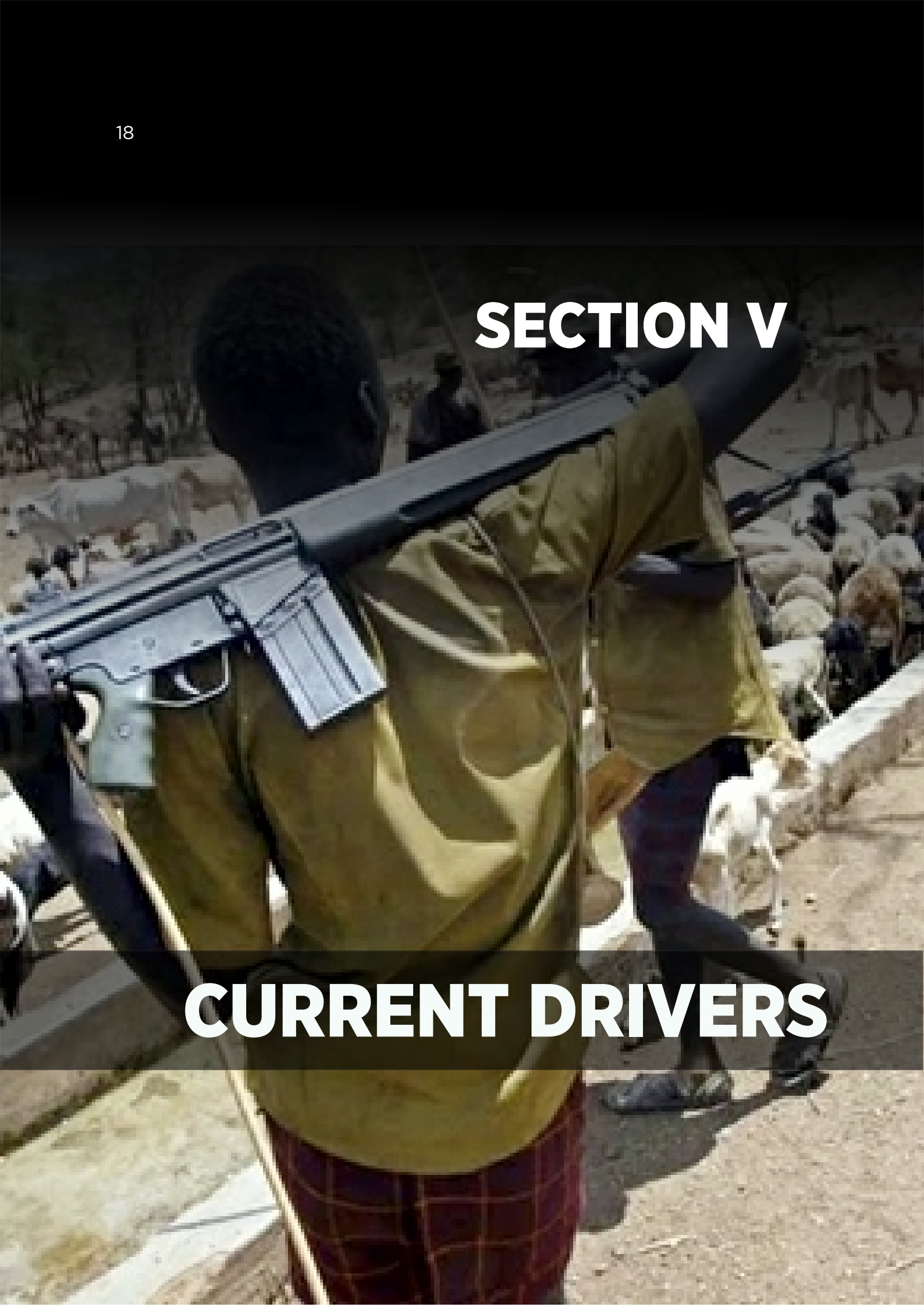
In Benue State, farmer-herder conflicts have been a frequent occurrence which escalated between 2014 and 2019. The conflict reached its peak in 2018 after the enactment of the Anti-Open Grazing Law by the State Government that forced many herders into neighboring Nasarawa State. The maxim *wagaaor wausu* (ranch or ruin your cattle) in Tiv language became the new norm in Benue State. The activities of government security agents and the livestock guards in the state also contributed to the intensification of the conflict. The conflict similarly assumed an ethno-religious dimension in the sense that Tiv farmers accused the herders of trying to wage a holy war with the sole intention of appropriating their farmlands. During a FGD session, the herders said they were treated as second class citizens; an assertion also known as indigene-settler that is often pervasive in Nigeria. The Anti-Open Grazing law appears to usurp the herders' rights to land in favor of the indigenous farmers in Benue State. The move will potentially continue to ignite violence if the herders feel a continued sense of alienation.

In Nasarawa State, farmer and herder conflict is reported to be associated with the spiraling effects of the unrest in the neighboring Benue State. According to some respondents, on the average there was a daily movement of at least 50 herdsmen into Nasarawa State from the neighboring Benue State from 2018-2019. This exerted pressures on existing resources in Nasarawa communities, heightening the risk of conflict. In addition to migrants from Benue State, herders also came to Nasarawa from Bauchi State in search of lush green pasture for their cattle as well as water especially around the banks of River Benue. This competition for common resources in addition to ethnic violence between Jukun and the Alago from Keana have fanned the flames of conflict in the state.



SECTION V

CURRENT DRIVERS



Activities of under-aged Herders

A common occurrence reported by farmers across the study areas was encroachment into farms of young cowboys; children aged 8 to 18 years who are saddled with animal grazing responsibilities. In some instances, the boys are contracted from other families from within and outside the homestead settlement.

Although this is seen as part of the endurance training in accordance with the pastoral cultural canon, unfortunately the

cattle overwhelm their guides, and when they stray they often destroy crops. The act of crop damage by stray herds is sometimes deliberate, so as to meet food requirements of the animals easily fattened. But farm destruction is most often a result of negligence or the inability of the under-aged herders to control the livestock. In Katsina State, the peak of the conflict usually coincides with harvesting periods, when the migratory herdsmen move northwards and encroach into farms.

Drug Abuse and the proliferation of small arms

Use of drugs is also identified as a major cause of the conflict. Findings of this study showed that the aggressive behavior exhibited by some of the herders, bandits and kidnappers is influenced by hard drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, marijuana, alcohol and tramadol.

According to a respondent in Jibia LGA of Katsina State, there was in recent times, a proliferation of sub-standard pharmaceutical centers in the area from where bandits and kidnappers purchased intoxicants. Another respondent during the FGD in Batsari testified to the fact that illicit drug business is on the increase in the villages around the border areas of the state. Most of the hard drugs come through

the land borders. Respondents further confirmed that some youths in towns and cities were involved in supplying drugs to the criminals living in the forests as a quick means of getting money.

Access to and the availability of small arms and light weapons, and indeed sophisticated assault weapons have helped in magnifying the conflict. A KII respondent in Kaduna State explained that as long as Nigerian borders remained porous, conflicts of varying magnitude are imminent. Consequent upon the ease of access to deadly weapons, a respondent in Jibia, stated that “every pastoral family in the rural areas of Katsina State either has an AK47 rifle or has easy access to it”.

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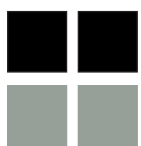


Role of Traditional Leaders

Settlement of dispute has been one of the cardinal objectives of traditional rulers in the country. But as traditional modes of conflict resolution between farmers and herders have broken down, the destruction of crops has increasingly led to communal conflicts between the two groups.

Unfortunately, some of this hitherto mediators have become actors, escalators and promoters of the conflict. Findings of this study indicated that “... traditional leaders used to favor farmers whenever disputes erupt between the two parties”. Often, the herders were made to bear the brunt through heavy fines and in some cases banished from the land.

This has led to “deep-rooted grievances, a feeling of victimization, injustice and intense hatred between the parties”. As some herders disclosed during a FGD, for similar offences (encroachment by herders and poisoning of animals by farmer), traditional leaders could impose a fine of up to 300,000 (over \$630) on herders while the farmers would be fined only 3,000 (about \$6). In Katsina State respondents reported that some traditional leaders were deeply involved in cattle rustling and rural banditry, which explains why the situation lingers and remains unresolved.



Transhumance

Movement of herds from one point to another within and outside the affected states is a major cause of farmer-herder conflict. During dry season, herders migrate to the southern part of Nigeria in search of pasture and water. This period usually coincides with harvest period in northern Nigeria and most times the flocks often stray, often 'unintentionally', into farms causing damages and triggering conflict.

The same experience is encountered during the beginning of wet season when the herders move up north, sometimes trampling newly planted farms. This movement is linked to the porous nature of Nigeria's border because most migratory herders move from the Sahel to southern Nigeria in search of pasture for their flock. According to one respondent in Katsina

State, “what has continued to trigger the crises is the porous nature of our borders which allows the migratory herders to pass with large herds to feed on farms.

They come with weapons and molest or even kill if one resists their invasion of one's farm.” The issue of transhumance is a very delicate one. This is because most of the nomads migrating into Nigerian borders were not aware that the old cattle routes have disappeared due to encroachment from extensive agriculture and urban growth. It should however be noted that the practice of transhumance and its attendant effects on security is not a new thing.

What makes the current practice different is the sophisticated weapons that the migrant herders wield and the scale of

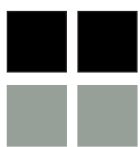
destruction. These, as explained earlier, are not unconnected with the “help” that such herders extend to their Nigerian brethren in their attacks against farming communities.

Encroachment into grazing reserves and cattle tracks are the major causes of the conflict. It was reported that several of the routes and tracks in Katsina and Kaduna states have been taken over either by farming activities or by new settlements.

Such actions make it very difficult for herders to access grazing fields and water points for their animals.

The demarcation of cattle routes in Kaduna and Katsina by the state governments has gone a long way in managing the conflict between farmers and herders. Although this is a positive step in the right direction, some farmers have gone ahead to flout the rules.

“instead of the army chasing out the bandits and kidnapers, some of them are now busy sexually harassing young girls in the villages”.



Security Agents

Security agents, deployed in various communities to help tackle the conflict, have contributed to the escalation of the conflict in most locations studied. Herders alleged that the security agents usually colluded with farmers to arrest their cattle and force them to pay a huge amount of money to reclaim them. In Katsina State, some of the respondents accused the army of confiscation of their herds, and some of them, according to one KII respondent, have turned to cattle dealers and brokers due to their position in recovering stolen cattle. Similarly,

in Jibia and Batsari, FGD participants lamented the growing rate of teenage prostitution brought about by the military

presence. According to this FGD, “instead of the army chasing out the bandits and kidnapers, some of them are now busy sexually harassing young girls in the villages”.

Another form of provocation disclosed by herders in Nasarawa State is the invasion of livestock guards from Benue State to arrest cattle. This has forced many herders to sell some cows in order to secure the release of the seized ones. During a FGD with herders in Benue State, they claimed that 30 cows out of the 100 cattle seized by the livestock guards could not be recovered



Major Actors

There are multiple factors and actors responsible for the instigation and sustenance of the conflict overtime. These actors have kept on changing in dimension and intensity depending on the prevailing circumstance. In most cases the overall objective of the actors is promoting, protection and projection of their personal interest. Some of the main actors include individuals, groups and institutions that change from one location to another. Again, the influence of each of these actors varies across locations even in areas that are proximate to each other. Based on the analysis of responses from the field, the key factors involved are summarized below

Table 2: Major Conflict Actors

Farmers	Act in defense of their crops and farmlands.
Herders	Pasturing to secure feeds and protect their animals
Bandits	Cattle rustling, raiding of villages as well as kidnapping of persons for ransom
Ethnic Militia, mercenaries and vigilante groups	Serve as community vanguards, could trigger violence to steal from villages or rustle livestock and could also be hired to attack communities for revenge
Traditional rulers	Ceding of grazing tracks and cattle routes to farmers; heavy fines levied on header, or unfair treatment of farmers in the event of crop damages which lead to ill-feeding and poor intercommunity relations and cooperation
Transhumance migrants	Encroachment into farmlands and destruction of crops while moving across states. This often sets sedentary pastoralist against farming communities while the migrants are long gone.
Livestock and forest guards	Extortion of the herders and apprehension of cattle, creating intercommunity discord that could result to violent confrontations among communities
Security agents	Extortion, bias and injustice in carrying out their duties.
State Government	Enactment of the Open Grazing Prohibition Law led to herders' migration out of the state. In the course of the enforcement of the law, extortion and conscription of pastoralists' livestock, killings and counter killing involving pastoralist, farmers and the livestock guards was witnessed

The contribution of each actor group varies significantly from one location to another. Sometimes the factors interplay in a particular conflict situation. For instance, within the farming and pastoral communities, youth aged 16 to 30 years were involved in triggering the conflicts and engaged in physical combat during violence. This same youth belongs to different herding or farming communities. In some cases, they even constitute members of the vigilante or ethnic militias.

Both groups, mostly point accusing fingers to each other for starting the violence, there was clear evidence of the gradual emergence of youth armed groups among both communities, some for the purpose of self-defense and others for committing crimes. Sometimes, traditional rulers misguide their followers to carry arms for 'self-defense'. Moreover, it's very common to see pastoral transhumance either siding or supporting their fellow herders against farmers. During conflicts, weapons ranging from traditional ones like cutlasses, axes and swords to more sophisticated ones such as locally fabricated guns and modern guns like AK47 riffles were used.

Although the level of ownership of arms could not be established even within the surveyed communities, key informant interviewees indicated that these arms are found in the communities; especially in the conflict-affected parts of the states. In some areas, there are armed ethnic groups, which may potentially transform into ethnic militias if the current trend and magnitude of the conflicts is not controlled and effectively managed. Already, there are unverified reports of the emergence of some of these ethnic militias in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau states.

SECTION VI

IMPACT

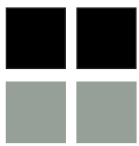




Gender Dimensions

Women, children, young and old people are all adversely affected. In some instances, both women and children have served as actors in the conflict, bearing and using arms as well as supplying intelligence to the opposing side. At the peak of the conflict in Katsina state, according to one respondent, Fulani women and children were banned from some villages for allegedly supplying security tips to the bandits. However, all the women respondents both during the KII and FGD sessions denied direct involvement in the farmer-herder conflict.

The conflict has both social and economic impacts, which are often more severe on women and children. Among its effects, this conflict causes loss of lives, internal displacements, destruction of homes and farmlands, food insecurity, lack of access to schools, markets and health facilities, early marriages, broken relationships, criminality, general insecurity and poverty.



Effects on Livelihoods

Of all the actors involved in the conflict, women suffer the most as their only source of income, apart from what they obtain from their husbands and children, is small-scale farming and husbandry. In pastoralist communities, women also sell dairy products such as milk and butter. The strained relations between the farmers and herders affected the sales of such products. Women farmers alleged that they have been denied farming due to incessant invasion, cattle rustling and the destruction of their crops. The women claimed that they were the most affected because of the perception that they were timid, peaceful and without a voice.

In Jibia LGA, a male pastoralist posited that their women could no longer go to the local markets to sell dairy products because of the loss of cattle and deliberate refusal by farmers to patronize them. Additionally, the women were sometimes denied access to village markets or often subjected to mockery and humiliation. Wives of the pastoralists in Batsari LGA were subjected to similar

treatment; the conflict has prevented them from moving freely in the community to sell or buy goods. On their part, women farmers, especially in Benue and Nasarawa states said they resorted to manual labor at the Dangote Farm and selling of firewood to fend for their families due to the prevailing insecurity.

In a nutshell, women are the major victims of these conflicts especially because they lack a voice. As one of the women stated: “often, when our farms are invaded and we report to the traditional rulers, our complaints are usually not taken seriously; sometimes we are just dismissed”. The conflict has led to a climate of fear and insecurity such that the women feel insecure in carrying out their everyday activities. They also perceive the conflict as a major threat to their livelihood and survival. In the words of women farmers, “the conflict between farmers and pastoralists in this community has made us to feel unsafe until we harvest and take home our farm produce”.



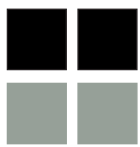
Psycho-Social Effect of the Conflict

The findings suggest that women and children are the most affected by this conflict. In Benue, Katsina and Kaduna States women became victims of rape and other forms of gender-based violence. Young girls also became victims of forced marriages by the armed bandits in Katsina State. The women themselves did not mention the word rape in our FGDs however, the pastoralist women disclosed that they were often molested.



Marginalization in Access to Aid

Women have struggled to access loans from government and NGOs who offered aid and support to families of victims. Most of the women respondents during the FGD sessions claimed that they were not given any support from the government and NGOs despite many attempts at accessing one. In Katsina and Kaduna, women narrated their ordeal saying that many promises were made which in the end could not be fulfilled. Herders in Guma complained that they lost 300 family members and over 3,000 cows; a loss which they would never forget. In the words of many respondents, loss of means of livelihood and property could force some farmers or herders to adopt any form of survival strategies including involvement in criminal activity.



Government Approach

State governments across the country and particularly in states where farmer-herder conflict is perennial have been taking measures and engaging in interventions to contain the situation. Due to such interventions, there has been a decline in the conflict in some areas while some areas are still volatile.

Findings of this study indicated that the decline in the conflict in some places was attributable to several factors, including the interventions made by respective state governments. In the case of Katsina, the farmer-herder relation peace committee established by the state has helped to reduce conflict to the barest minimum.

This view was captured in the statement

of one of the government officials who indicated that they had been able to reduce the conflict by 80%.

The formation of the farmer-herder peace committee in Katsina state has also helped to reduce the conflict. The committee has, on behalf of the state government, signed treaties with Maradi in Niger Republic with the aim of controlling the movement of migratory herders and the management of transit routes that trigger the seasonal conflict.

As a follow-up to the work of the committee, the governors of states in the North-West met with the governor of Maradi region, Niger Republic on 8 September 2019, to discuss ways of curbing cross-border banditry and other

related criminal activities, resulting in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cross-border cooperation.

The promulgation of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law in Benue Taraba, Edo and Ekiti states has generated mixed reactions. While the farmers lauded the policy as being effective, especially the fact that it has driven away nearly all the herders from the state, the herders viewed the policy as draconian and deliberately formulated to marginalize and discriminate against them by preventing them from grazing in the states. Every conflict management approach that does not provide a win-win approach is bound to fail with greater consequences in due course.

Farmers in Benue have also applauded the government for sending security agents to ensure security in the state. The farmers particularly noted that Operations Ayem Agbatuma and Whirl Stroke have significantly contributed to bringing about peace and stability in the state.

However, herders in Benue State have accused the security agents of colluding with farmers to harass and extort them. Because the agents are empowered to trail herders, they can enter neighboring Nasarawa State to apprehend their cattle and impose heavy taxes on them.

In Nasarawa State, it was reported how farmers and herders agreed that farming activities should not be carried within one kilometer of herder settlements. However, one of the herders recounted how a farmer flouted the rules and planted crops behind his (the herder's) house; making it impossible for him to even move his animals out for grazing. The

establishment of a military barracks in Nasarawa State was lauded by the farmers as an effective approach for managing the conflict because of the prompt action provided by the soldiers in the event of hostilities between the farmers and herders.

This could be the reason why the military operations (Ayem Akpatuma and Whirl Stroke) in Benue and parts of Nasarawa states were easily carried out. The herders on the other hand viewed the presence of the military as harmful to their cause because they are constantly harassed by the military. For the government to win the trust and confidence of the herders (and the farmers too), the military and other security agents should carry out their duties fairly and objectively.

Another key gap in the efforts of the government is the lack of sustainability of some programs. For instance, a traditional leader in Katsina State was not comfortable with the abolition of nomadic education – a program initiated by the federal military government of General Ibrahim Babangida – in various parts of his kingdom and the state in general.

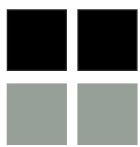
The FGD respondents in the state also attributed the failure of some government programs to a lack of sustainability. In line with the belief that availability of pasture during dry season could prevent conflicts between the herders and farmers, the Katsina State government promoted several programs and projects aimed at the production of livestock feeds. But these have not been sustained. The respondents believed the government lacks the political will to initiate, implement and sustain programs that would have addressed the conflict.



Traditional and Religious Leaders

Traditional and religious leaders are important in community-level conflict resolution processes especially between farmers and herders. The best way to involve traditional leaders would be to give them statutory recognition and specific leadership functions. They are closer to the people at the grassroots and command their respect. Unfortunately, the crucial role that traditional rulers played in the resolution of conflict at the local level has been eroded in the sense that the modern system of governance has usurped their power and influence.

The efforts of the traditional leaders are constrained by the new system, which stripped them of their capacity to enforce laws or prosecute offenders. Sometimes, the non-transparent approaches to intervention in conflicts by some traditional rulers have also eroded the people's reverence for the traditional institution. For this reason, bandits in Katsina have taken over the responsibilities of government. They impose taxes and levies on members of the communities including farmers and herders. In fact, some villagers report disputes to them for arbitration and get instant justice rather than to the police or courts because everyone defers to the bandits. This tacit acceptance of the authority of the bandits by their victims is a great hindrance to any effort aimed at bringing an end to banditry.



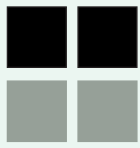
Conclusion

Conflict between farmers and herders has assumed a new dimension in northern Nigeria. It has turned to cattle rustling and theft, kidnapping as well as banditry and other forms of criminal acts with varying consequences. The causes of the conflict are multifaceted and complex including the rampaging activities of migratory herders, who invade and encroach into farmlands, conversion of cattle grazing routes and tracks into farms, population expansion and urban growth.

Other drivers include nepotism, proliferation of small arms, porous borders, access to narcotic drugs, conflict spillover effects, ethnic and religious bigotry and poorly articulated policies such as the anti-open grazing law.

The flawed and often weak coordination, collaboration and complementarity of intervention measures by government, the security agencies, NGOs as well as traditional and religious leaders have significantly undermined existing intervention measures.

Given the fact that the conflict has permeated several states in Nigeria and the transnational dimension of the conflict is linked to seasonal migration of herders and climate change, measures to find an enduring solution to the farmers and herders conflict across the states and neighboring countries must be complementary so as to be sustainable.



Recommendations for Addressing Farmers and Herders Conflicts

This study has identified the various actors in farmer-herder conflict in northern Nigeria in addition to the dynamics of the conflict, particularly its gender dimension. Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. The dynamics of the conflict require the cooperation of the federal, state and local governments. This is because while the deployment of military might is exclusively the preserve of the federal government, issues relating to the involvement of religious and traditional leaders fall directly under the responsibility of state and local governments. Greater responsibility for resolving the conflict should rest with the local governments as they are closer to the people and most of the attacks are directed against the rural communities. Local governments should be better funded and effectively supervised to carry out this function.

2. The direct involvement of women in the conflict vis-à-vis their disadvantaged position as the major victims of the conflict makes it even more difficult to manage. To this end, efforts should be directed at empowering women, not only with loans but with basic entrepreneurial skills to advance their opportunities for economic development. Female victims of the conflict should be carefully identified and supported to rebuild their lives. Younger victims should be encouraged to enroll in formal education classes and achieve literacy.

3. Related to the above is the need for women to be involved in peace negotiation processes which at the moment, are male-dominated. They should be given clear leadership roles in such assignments in view of the influence that they wield over men and children. Traditional and religious leaders should be vested with the responsibility of identifying such women while local governments should provide reasonable stipends as motivation.

4. Since the perception of alienation by the herders is one of the causes of the conflict, the federal government should revive the Nomadic Education program and make nomadic schools available in the affected communities. While funding should come from the federal government, implementation and supervision should be entrusted to local governments and NGOs/international organizations.

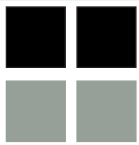
5. The federal government should de-emphasize the use of military might in the fight against banditry and other social ills associated with the herdsmen. Emphasis should be on transparent and sincere negotiations. Such negotiations should however exclude pecuniary inducements as any monies released to them may be used by herders to buy more arms.

6. Governments at all levels should intensify efforts at rural development and increasing agricultural productivity as a job-creation

drive in the rural areas. Facilities such as schools, hospitals, veterinary clinics and boreholes should also be provided for both farmers and herders to enable them to have access to these basic services. As a rule of thumb, there should be justice and equity in the allocation of resources and the provision of such services to both parties.

7 Agricultural extension services and provision of incentives such as inputs, veterinary vaccines and credit facilities needed for improving the productivity of crops and livestock should be given utmost priority.

8 NGOs and international organizations should strengthen peace education and advocacy to help farmers and herders engage in constructive peacebuilding activities. They should also create platforms for regular interaction between farmers and herders that will restore confidence and cooperative use of resources as a means to achieving even and sustainable socio-economic development and improvement in the living conditions of the rural communities.



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Phone No

+234929 02304

Address

16, A7 Street Mount Pleasant Estate (CITEC), Jabi Airport Road, Abuja.

Email

cddabv@cddwestafrica.org

Website

www.cddwestafrica.org