

CROP FARMERS AND HERDERS CONFLICTS IN GIREI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA: CAUSES, REPERCUSSIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

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Abstract

The study analyzed crop farmers and herdsmen conflicts in Girei Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Nigeria. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select two out of ten wards in the Local Government Area and 96 (crop farmers = 64, herdsmen = 32) respondents respectively. A questionnaire was used to collect information from respondents. The results from the study revealed that 62.5% of the respondents were below the age of 50 years the two groups exhibited differing occupational characteristics; most farmers (62.5%) were small-scale operators (1-3 hectares), most herdsmen (81.2%) operated on a relatively higher scale (more than 60 heads of cattle). Destruction of crops and crop residues by cattle and burning of rangelands and blockage of stock routes by crop farmers were the major causes of conflict. Repercussions of conflicts included loss of income (100.0%), loss of yield (100.0%) and stored product (64.0%) among crop farmers. Herdsmen reported minimal losses of their income (40.6%), yield (46.9%) and stored product (53.1%). Conflict also exacerbates insecurity, loss of quality support, self esteem, social support and food crisis particularly in rural communities with repercussions nationwide. Respondents suggested that: traditional and local leaders should be well involved in finding lasting solutions to conflict and factors of conflicts must be properly managed by institutions involved in the conflict resolutions. It is recommended that herdsmen should be made to keep to the agreed grazing reserve and routes and farmers should avoid farming across cattle routes and grazing reserve. Structures must be created by the communities to generate networks and feedback to ensure that people relate amicably for common use of resources.

Key words: farmers-herdsmen conflict, conflict repercussions, conflict resolutions

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria falls within the tropical ecological zone and enjoys the tropical climate which varies from the humid south to the semi-arid /arid zones of the north with a total land area of about 94 million hectares of which over 70% is natural grassland and over 55% is available for grazing [10]. Consequently between 80-90% of the small ruminants and cattle are concentrated in the Sudan-Sahelian ecological zone of the semi arid/arid parts of the country and depend on range for most of their fed requirements. The herds are predominantly in the hands of the nomadic pastoralists who hold over 90% of the Nigeria's livestock [6]. Transhumance is the dominant system of production. Similarly, about 75% - 80% of the people in this area are crop farmers who engaged in small

(subsistence) farming and depend on farming for their survival. These two groups of farmers live together since time immemorial but they have different values, customs, physical and cultural characteristics [8]. The feeling of belongings that is among the members of the groups is focused around their economic interest, protection of values, cultures and power. The Fulani nomadic herdsmen are always considered to be the minority in host communities (since they are always on the move) have a unique culture and strong sense of solidarity [10]. They are often isolated from farming population, and in such cases conflict between two farming population is regarded as having an ethnic colour. Therefore, the conflicts that are occurring between crop farmers and herdsmen are not only seen as resources conflicts but sometimes represent as ethnics conflicts

involving the key groups. Hence an understanding of causes, repercussions and resolutions of conflict between pastoralists and crop farmers in host communities is an important prerequisite for the realization of the goal of agricultural development policies, to which research experts and extension agents are professionally committed. Therefore, the study was conducted to analyze the crop farmers and herdsman conflicts in Girei Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria, with the view of identifying the causes, repercussions and resolutions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Study Area

The research was conducted in Girei Local Government Area of Adamawa State, Nigeria. The area is located at the central part of the state and lies between latitude $9^{\circ} 11'$ to $9^{\circ} 39'$ North of the equator and longitude $12^{\circ} 11'$ to $12^{\circ} 49'$ East of the Greenwich Meridian with a land mass of about 2,186 km² [1] the population of 129,995 people [7]. The study area is distinctly divided into dry and wet season. The wet season normally commences from April and ends in October with an annual average rainfall of 762 mm. The hottest period occurs between February and March and the area has an average temperature of 44^o C [2].

The main occupation of the people in the area is crop farming and animal rearing. Indisputably nomadic Fulani represent a significant component of the economy in the study area. They constitute the major breeders of livestock, main source of meat, the most available and cheap source of animal proteins consumed by people in the local government area and the state. The vegetation, availability and abundance of water (river Benue) and also the culture of the inhabitants influence the distribution of livestock in the area. The area is one of the principal livestock producing Local Government Area in the state [5]. Indigenous breeds of animals are the mainstay of livestock industry in the area. This is because local breeds are well adapted to the harsh environmental conditions and are also suitable for nomadic system of

production being adopted by the Fulani herders [3]. The area is also well known for arable crop production and fishing.

The dominant tribe in the area is Fulani with a substantial number of Bwatiye in the villages along the Benue River Bank of Greng, Ntabo and Labondo [11].

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Two out the ten wards of the Local Government Area were purposely selected being the wards along the Bank of River Benue that has all year round water and vegetation also with some *fadama* areas. It is also the area where conflicts occur between livestock pastoralists and crop farmers in the Local Government Area. The list of the 429 registered crop farmers was obtained from the Adamawa Agricultural Development Programme (AADP). A total of 64 respondents were randomly selected from the list, while 32 herders were also selected for the study. This was done by randomly selecting four herders each from eight transit camps in wards selected. In all, 96 respondents were selected (64 crop farmers and 32 pastoralists) for the study. Relevant data were collected using questionnaire and scheduled interview were a respondent cannot read or write.

Analytical Tools

Descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages were used for the data analysis.

Results and Discussions

Result on Table 1 shows that 62.5% of the respondents are below the age of 50 years which indicated that both the groups (crop farmers and herders) are at their prime age and energetic. About 88% of the crop farmers and 93.7% of herders had more than 10 years experience in their occupation. Most farmers were small-scale operators while most herders operated on a relatively higher scale. This perhaps explains the gap in their income level as in Table 1. Interestingly too, about 24.8% of the herdsmen were agro-pastoralists combining cattle-herding with arable crop production. This group of respondents is qualified to be classified both as farmers and herders, but are Fulani nomads by ethnicity. On the other hand, crop farmers, who are essentially non-Fulani, did not engage in

cattle herding as alternative occupation. Table 1 further revealed that 78.1% of the herders practiced extensive system of livestock management, moving over long distances in

search of pasture and water. This may lead to indiscriminate grazing and over grazing of pasture and conflict with other resource users.

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Farmers (n = 64)		Herders (n = 32)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age				
30-39	22	34.4	9	28.1
40 – 49	18	28.1	11	34.4
50 – 59	8	12.5	8	25.0
>59	16	25.0	4	12.5
Farm size				
< 1	22	34.4	NA	NA
1 – 3	18	28.1	4	12.5
4 – 6	15	23.4	NA	NA
> 6	9	14.1	NA	NA
Herd size				
20 – 40	NA	NA	2	6.3
41 – 60	NA	NA	4	12.5
61 – 80	NA	NA	6	18.7
81 – 100	NA	NA	9	28.1
> 100	NA	NA	11	34.4
Experience				
5 - 10	8	12.5	2	6.3
11 – 15	14	21.9	9	28.1
16 – 20	19	29.7	4	15.6
> 20	23	35.9	16	50.0
Production system				
Crop (Rain feed)	59	92.2	NA	NA
Livestock (Extensive)	NA	NA	25	78.1
Livestock (Semi-intensive)	NA	NA	3	9.4
Agro-pastoralist	5	7.8	4	9.5

Source: Field survey, 2016

Causes of Conflicts

Result on Table 2 revealed that according to herders (100%), distortion of the livestock routes by crop farmers and inadequate grazing reserve were the major cause of conflict. Other major causes of conflict according to the herders are: encroachment of cattle routes (96.9%) as a result of human activities arising increased in population; burning of range land (93.8%) and killing of family members by the farmers (81.3%). According to crop farmers, the causes of crop farmers livestock herders are: grazing of crops and crops residue (100%); destruction of water sources (67.2%) and inadequate grazing reserve (64.1%). This is in line with the opinion expressed by [10] who asserted that in most states, stock route have been blocked by farmers' crops, individual building and government

development projects is the major source of conflict between pastoralists and crop farmers.

Inadequate watering Points for both human and animal consumption have also been found to be one of the sources of conflict in the area as reported 53.1 % and 43.8% of the crop farmers and herders respectively.

Repercussions of the Conflicts

Most respondents suffered various repercussions as a result of conflict. The repercussions on both sides ranged from physical, economic, to socio-psychological. Table 3 presents the results of the repercussions of conflict among the respondents. The findings show that both crop farmers (96.9%) and herdsmen (93.4%) reported loss in quality of relationship as a result of conflict.

Table 2. Causes of Conflicts

Variable	*Crop farmers(n=64)		*Herders (n= 32)	
Cattle theft and killing	NA	NA	22	68.8
Grazing of crops and crops residue	64	100	19	59.4
Destruction of water sources	45	67.2	18	56.3
Burning of rangeland	NA	NA	30	93.8
Inadequate Water Points	34	53.1	14	43.8
Inadequate grazing reserve	41	64.1	32	100.0
Encroachment of grazing reserves	NA	NA	31	96.9
Encroachment of stock route	NA	NA	32	100.0
Inadequate pasture	9	14.1	17	53.1
Killing Family members	2	3.1	26	81.3

Source: Field Survey, 2016 * Multiple responses exist

Other non-material resources that were lost included self esteem (67.2% of farmers and 90.6% of herdsman). [10] expressed the bitterness and ill feeling that resulted from the conflict have serious negative implication on integration, understanding and cooperation which are vital for the progress and development of the State in general. Loss of material resources were, however, more widespread among farmers. Income loss had the highest relative incidence (100.0%) among crop farmers, loss of yield (79%), household resources (95.3%) and stored products (100.0%). On the part of herdsman losses of material

and non material were minimal. About 47%, 40.6% and 53.1% of herdsman claimed to have suffered losses in respect of their, income, yield and stored products respectively. This corroborates the findings of [4] and [10] who stated in their studies that family instability, loss of lives, loss of properties and intense frustration are negative consequences of conflicts. The finding reveals that both crop farmers and herdsman suffered several negative consequences of conflicts. These effects were, however, found to be more pronounced among the farmers than herdsman, probably because they the dominant people in the area.

Table 3. Repercussions of conflict according to respondents

Variable	*Crop farmers(n=64)		*Herders (n= 32)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Loss of yield	64	100	13	40.6
Loss Income	64	100	15	46.9
Loss Family members	13	20.3	4	12.5
Injuries	32	50.0	3	9.4
Loss of Cattle	NA	NA	19	59.4
Loss of Quality of relationship	62	96.9	30	93.4
Destruction of house and resources	61	95.3	31	96.9
Loss of self esteem	45	67.2	29	90.6
Loss of stored products	64	100	17	53.1
Loss of social support	41	64.1	32	100

Source: Field Survey, 2016 * Multiple responses exist

Conflict Resolutions

Conflicts were formerly settled through traditional and local leaders who were well involved in finding lasting solutions to conflict. All (100%) percent of the respondents revealed that, traditional rulers used settle disputes in olden days (Table 4). The village or district will investigate the cause of dispute and settle the parties involved. This is done by telling the parties to

be accommodative to each other, payment of damage where crops or livestock are involved or sanction. Result on Table 4 also revealed that 78.1% of the crop farmers and 90.1% of the herdsman opined that factors of conflicts must be properly managed by institutions to be involved in the conflict resolutions. The conflict resolution committee according to the respondents should comprise representatives from the relevant Departments of local

government, state security services, the police, farmers and *Miyetti Allah* Cattle Breeders Association with similar committees also to be formed at the districts and wards levels. All (100%) of the herders and 20.3% of the crop farmers revealed that another method of resolving conflict is through reactivation of gazetted grazing reserve, while 50.0% and 100.0% of the crop farmers and herders respectively agreed that herdsmen must keep to agreed cattle routes and crop farmers to avoid encroaching the routes.

Only 21.8% of the crop farmers and 18.9% of the herders reported that conflicts can be resolved in courts or police station. This show that, the social, economic and political tensions created as a result of numerous escalations of violent conflicts between herders and crop farmers have put a question mark on the suitability or relevance of the state alone to manage and resolve such conflicts. Therefore, there is need of involving traditional leaders.

Table 4. Resolutions According to the Respondents

Variable	*Crop farmers(n=64)		*Herders (n= 32)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency (%)	
-Grazing reserve to be reactivated	13	20.3	32	100.0
-Conflicting parties to be sensitized on peace by community leaders	41	60.1	15	46.9
-Factors of conflicts must be properly managed by institutions involved in the conflict resolutions	50	78.1	29	90.1
-Herdsmen must keep to agreed routes and farmers to avoid encroaching the routes	32	50.0	32	100.
-Law on the grazing reserve should be amended and improved upon	21	32.8	31	96.9
-Government and non-governmental agency should provide available seeds for establishment of forage in grazing reserves	43	67.2	30	93.8
-Traditional and local leaders should be well involved in finding lasting solutions to conflict.	64	100.0	32	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016 * Multiple responses exist

CONCLUSIONS

Struggle for common resources has degenerated into violent conflicts in Girei Local government area of Adamawa State between Fulani herders and crop farmers. These conflicts have become more intense, widespread and destructive. There is food insecurity due to destruction of farms and stored food. Some survivors have permanently lost all they laboured for in their lives. Since most of the Fulani herdsmen do not own or possess land, they therefore depend on free range. However, additional farms acquired and encroachments of traditional cattle routes and grazing reserves as a result of increased in population have drastically reduced the grazing space for the

livestock to access pasture areas and water points. As a result one can argue that the aggregate of such instance have negative impact on the agricultural activity which is the main economic activity of area, and by an extension the rest of the state.

The following recommendations are suggested for proper conflict resolutions between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers: (i)Re-demarcation of grazing reserves for herders.

(ii)There is need for sensitization of crop farmer-herders in the areas of awareness on the need of co-existence.

(iii)Government should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation of decisions.

(iv)Traditional and local leaders should be well involved in finding solutions to

herdsmen-farmer conflict. The committees proposed above must have representatives of the local leadership.

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