

Evaluation on Land Conflict in Selected States of Nigeria: The Causes, Pattern and Way Forward

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Abstract

Land conflicts have imposed a lot of problems in most states in Nigeria and the world at large. Dispute over land has made brother to rise against brother in which, many lives and countless properties have been lost lately in Nigeria. In other cases, many have been displaced from their original settlements as a result of these conflicts, rendering individuals homeless. The immediate implication of these conflicts is tremendous decline in economic and every other activities of man which are greatly dependent on land in the immediate scenes and the world at large. This research seeks to find out, why the sudden land conflict that has become so latent, affecting communities in Nigeria. The research employed qualitative method, making use of secondary data due to the nature of information required and the time frame required to conduct the study, this is to say the researchers are of the postpositivist methodological philosophy of research. The data were sourced from journals, textbooks, online daily newspapers and other online publications. The data collection focused on published articles of

herdsmen-farmers conflicts and other communal and interpersonal land conflicts in Nigeria. It could be deduced that the rate of prevalence of land conflicts are high in Benue and Delta state of Nigeria depicting the fact that land is an essential resource for the survival and existence of man in which it has become a subject of dispute due to man's strong desire to possess it.

Introduction

Land is an essential natural resource both for the survival and prosperity of humanity, it is so a valuable resource that belongs to even the dead, those living and those yet unborn (Takuh, 2016). Also found in the origin of creation in the Christian and Islamic faith, it is believed that man was carved from the soil (land), dwells on it and at death returns unto it. The continues existence and progress of man depends on land, as such man holds land jealously as an asset and something worth dying for, which has made it an object of dispute with evidence of conflicts over land lately centered on rights of economic development and control over the scarce resource of land.

Conflict is a natural aspect of the human society and has become inevitable because of the relatively scarce but desirable resources and the desperation of the people to have access to and control over these resources (DOKI, 2014). Hence, the importance of land to man calls for man's desperation over land and as such the emergence of unavoidable clashes over land. Clashes over land dates as far back to our ancestors in those days when might was right and these conflicts have continued over time to exist in the world at large.

For decades now, residents of different states in Nigeria have remained entangled in one form of conflict or the other which often results in loss of lives, property and displacements. Recently the impacted states are Taraba, Delta, Plateau and Benue state which several conflicts have been recorded over land that includes the indigenes of these states and Fulani herdsmen crisis which had occurred few years back in Gashaka Local Government Area of Taraba state, Guma local government area, Agatu local government area of Benue state and many more of interpersonal disputes, which most of these disputes hinge on title to land, trespass to land, and property transaction among others (Sackey, 2010). These conflicts have greatly contributed to the state of under-development in these states which has affected the agricultural and real estate sector of the

economy (DOKI, 2014). To this effect, successive governments have over the years set up tribunals and commissions of enquiry to investigate these conflicts with the aim of resolving them. Aside government, several non-governmental organisations also have been involved in the management of land conflicts including International organizations, in spite of all these efforts, rising cases of conflict in the country raises questions about the causes and pattern of these conflicts and how to effectively avert them.

This research paper is on an errand to investigating the causes of these conflicts, the pattern these conflicts take and ways to avert future occurrences. The paper will examine land conflicts in Benue state and Delta state of Nigeria representing Northern and Southern Nigeria respectively due to the recent land conflicts witnessed within these states.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The ideal situation for any group of persons, community, region or country not excluding states in Nigeria is for every citizen to have equal access to land and carry out profitable activities on such land safely so as not to be disrupted and also not to disrupt other users and the generation yet unborn. However, this has not been so in many developing countries and specifically in Nigeria.

Land conflicts have imposed a lot of problems in most states in Nigeria and the world at large. Dispute over land has made brother to rise against brother in which, many lives and countless properties have been lost lately in Nigeria. In other cases, many have been displaced from their original settlements as a result of these conflicts, rendering individuals homeless. The immediate implication of these conflicts is tremendous decline in economic and every other activities of man which are greatly dependent on land in the immediate scenes and the world at large. This research seeks to find out, why the sudden land conflict that has become so latent, affecting communities in Nigeria.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aimed at identifying the causes and the pattern of land conflicts in some Nigeria states with a view to profound a way forward.

The objectives are;

- i. To identify the pattern and causes of land conflicts in Nigeria.
- ii. To examine its effect on state economy

METHODOLOGY

The research employed qualitative method, making use of secondary data due to the nature of information required and the time frame required to conduct the study, this is to say the researchers are of the postpositivist methodological philosophy of research. The data were sourced from journals, textbooks, online daily newspapers and other online publications. The data collection focused on published articles of herdsmen-farmers conflicts and other communal and interpersonal land conflicts in Nigeria.

Furthermore we employed the critical research design which would be by reviewing relevant literatures on land conflicts in Benue and Delta state so as to draw inference on the subject matter and make reasonable conclusions. This is because already there is a basic knowledge on the subject matter however the researchers needed to investigate further by comparing literatures so as to be more accurate and precise over the subject matter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

OWNERSHIP OF LAND IN NIGERIA

Ownership of land is described by Umar (2014) as the legal right of control and use of land and all interest attached to it by an individual or individuals which are enforceable against all other persons. He further explained ownership to mean the totality of rights and powers capable of being exercised over land such as rights to make physical use and the right to transfer land without interference. The structure of ownership of land in Nigeria is based on absolute and derivative interest. These interests in Nigeria can be derived under Nigeria customary law and statutory land law with the Land Use Act (1978) as its instrument.

i. CUSTOMARY LAND HOLDING

Under Nigeria customary law, the basic unit of land holding was based on communal system by which communities, villages and families owned land. Land was not meant to be owned by individuals, making individuals land ownership hitherto to the system. The heads of the communities, villages and families held and administered the land as trustees for the benefits of members hence excluding non-members except when permitted to use the land by those heads in which outright sale of land to them was prohibited (Umar, 2014).

Udoekanem et al (2014) opined that the customary land tenure in Nigeria was held in the following ways; communal lands, stool or

chieftaincy lands, family lands and individual or separate property. Umar (2014) pointed out the system of ownership to include; family land, individual land and land under Islamic law.

ii. **STATUTORY LAND HOLDING**

The Land Use Act of 1978 is the instrument for statutory land law in Nigeria today, hence it regulates the ownership, alienation, administration and management of land within the country. It is important to note that the Act was modeled out of the land Tenure law No 25 laws of Northern Nigeria, 1962 (Umar, 2014). In relation to ownership of land, Section 1 of the Act is against the incidence of customary land holding, it therefore means that the land use Act of 1978 has totally transferred ownership of land to the state held by the governor (Umar, 2014). Further explaining this, one will come to an understanding that the state ownership of land is technically the system of ownership of land within country however individuals are technically leaseholders.

State ownership of land in this case will comprise lands revoked by the Governor of the state by the provision given by the Act Such as section 28 of the Act which gives the Governor right to revoke for overriding public interest, and annexure of area during battles.

THEORIES OF LAND CONFLICTS

The social scholars have expounded theories to which conflicts as a whole are based, the authors of the social theories of conflicts came up with their theories from different background, and each background present something Unique to the understanding of conflicts. Each theory emphasizes a particular angle of analysis.

Researchers have written extensively on the nature, cause and impact of conflicts, hence an attempt have been made to explain some of these theories presented by conflict scholars to provide frame works for the understanding of conflicts, especially the causes of conflicts, the conditions under which conflicts occur and sometimes the condition for their resolution. These theories as identified by Ojogbane (2013) in his book are as follows: Structural conflict theory, Realist theory, Human relation theory, Traditional view of conflict, Biological theory, Interaction theory of conflict, Physiological theory, Psycho-cultural conflict theory, Economic theory and Human need theory.

- **HUMAN NEED THEORY OF CONFLICTS**

In relation to land conflicts the human needs theory of conflicts best explains the nature, causes and impact of land conflicts. The position of human need theory is based on the fact that all humans have basic needs which man seeks to fulfill, and the denial and frustration of these needs by other groups or individual could affect them immediately or later, hence leading to conflict (Rosati et al, 1990). Land and landed resources could be seen as basic human needs. In this sense Ojogbane (2013) identified several human needs which he included the need for sense of control, which have over time been seen to be responsible for land conflicts. Needs scholars have identified wide range of human needs, some of which they consider being basic human needs such as food and shelter but they agree on the fact that frustration of these needs hampers the actualization of the potentials of groups and individuals leading to conflicts (Ojogbane, 2013). There is a consensus among the scholars that, to resolve a conflict situation or prevent it, the needs have to be met with appropriate satisfiers.

- **ONION THEORY OF CONFLICTS**

Similarly, the position of human needs theory of conflicts has been supported by the onion theory of conflict propounded by Fisher. This technique is based on an analysis of onion and its layers; the outer layer contains the position which is visible to everyone while the underlying are the interest, what they want to achieve from a particular situation and finally the core and most important layer is the needs which are required to be satisfied(Wehrmann, 2008). This theory explains how conflicts emanates from mans need which can be need for control of scarce natural resources such as land and gradually grows into interest and then to the rigid position of the parties.

- **FRUSTRATION–AGGRESSION THEORY**

John-Peter (2018) in his study adopts Frustration-Aggression Theory and Dialectical-materialism Theory in understanding the causes and escalations of the herdsmen-farmer conflicts in Nigeria. But for essence of this paper the frustration-aggression

theory is discussed as it relates more to the other theories discussed earlier.

Frustration–aggression theory also known as the „frustration–aggression–displacement theory“, is a theory of aggression proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears in 1939 and further developed by Neal Miller in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1961 as cited by John-Peter (2018) in his work. The theory says that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating, a person's efforts to attain a goal. When first formulated, the hypothesis stated that frustration always precedes aggression, and aggression is the sure consequence of frustration. However, two years later Miller and Sears re-formulated the hypothesis to suggest that while frustration creates a need to respond, some form of aggression is one possible outcome. Therefore, the re-formulated hypothesis stated that while frustration prompts a behavior that may or may not be aggressive, any aggressive behavior is the result of frustration, making frustration not sufficient, but a necessary condition for aggression (John-Peter, 2018). It attempts to give an explanation as to the cause of violence. Frustration is the “condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference”, while aggression is defined as “an act whose goal-response is injury to an organism (or an organism surrogate). The theory says that frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. This theory is also used to explain riots and revolutions, which both are believed to be caused by poorer and more deprived sections of society who may express their bottled up frustration and anger through violence.

The theory has been related to herders-farmers land conflicts which have been persistent in the country. Olu-Adeyemi (2017) opined that Herdsmen are frustrated due to desertification and farmers who have struggled to cultivate farmlands also get frustrated whenever cattle destroy their farmlands. The Fulani Herdsmen and farmers terror is a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources in which their aims are to neutralize, injure or to eliminate the

host communities in a bid to fend for their animals. The violent activities of the Fulani Herdsmen occur because of the accumulation of residual effects of frustration. The terrorist activities of the herdsmen are traceable to the desertification that has caused depletion in grazing opportunities or scarcity of feed for their animals which in the long-run affects their economic wellbeing. If a herdsman loses his flock to drought and water scarcity, he may be frustrated because of the loss of livelihood. From this reality, he may be aggressive and since, he cannot channel it to the natural causes, he may in the long-run channel it to any person or group that obstructs his migration to a safe area. On the side of farmers and host communities in Nigeria frustration also occur whenever animals of the herdsmen trample on their farmlands to eat up their crops. And because they are frustrated too, they become aggressive and channel their aggression to the herdsmen and their cows (John-Peter, 2018).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON LAND CONFLICTS IN BENUE STATE

In Benue state, agriculture is the main sustenance of the populace, this explains why Benue people attach a great deal of importance to land (Doki and Aondowase, 2014). The nonattendance of land as well as greed, has caused people to look everywhere for land to cultivate and carry out economic activities. In most cases speculators who perceive possible shortage of land in the nearest future begin to make trouble with those whom they feel are not indigenes.

This often leads to clash of interest over land.

In this regard, indigenes of Benue have witnessed a lot of violent antagonism which Doki and Aondowase (2014) cited Hembe (2002) to have recorded over thirty cases of land disputes that either directly or indirectly involved the Tiv land in Benue state. Some of these disputes he mentioned to be; Fulani and Tiv Farmers conflicts, Tiv and the Jukun at Abinsi, Gwer and Oju Local Government areas, Ikyurav-Tiev (Katsina-Ala L.G.A.) versus Kusuv (Buruku L.G.A.); Mbagen (Buruku L.G.A.) versus Utange (Kwande L.G.A.); Mbagen (Buruku L.G.A.) versus Etulo (Buruku L.G.A.); Mbakijime (Vandeikya L.G.A.) versus Mbatie (Vandeikya L.G.A.); Tsambe (Vandeikya L.G.A.) versus Mbera (Vandeikya L.G.A.); Uyoo- Nanav (Kwande L.G.A.) versus Nyiev (Kwande L.G.A.); Mbawa-Nyiev (Makurdi L.G.A.) versus University of

Agriculture, Makurdi; Tombo-Mbalagh (Buruku L.G.A.) versus Ugondo (Logo L.G.A.);

Kaambe (Guma L.G.A.) versus Mbakor (Tarka L.G.A.); Masev (Gwer L.G.A.) versus ShangevTiev (Konshisha L.G.A.); Mbashian (Buruku L.G.A.) versus Wuav (Buruku L.G.A.); Ishorov (Buruku L.G.A.) versus Ipav (Gboko L.G.A.); Mbaivende-Ukan (Ushongo L.G.A.) versus Ipav (Gboko L.G.A.). All these conflicts occurred as a result of land hunger and speculation which Doki and Aondowase further recommended for the use of theater in the resolution of such land conflicts.

Although Egute and Ode (2014) were of the view that conflicts over land in Benue state have been inevitable because of the great potentials of the land to the people like farming and building. They pointed out some of the conflicts which have occurred few years back to include:

- Inter-State Boundaries/Crises
Benue V. Ebonyi State, Benue V. Enugu State, Benue V. Taraba State, Benue V. Kogi State, Benue V. Cross River State, and Benue V. Nasarawa State.
- Inter Local Government Land Disputes
Tarka V. Guma Local Government, Kwande V. Usongo Local Government, Buruku V. KatsinaAla Local Government, Gboko V. Ushongo, Ushongo V. Konshisha, Ushongo V. Vandeikay, Konshisha V. Gwer Local Government, Konshisha V. Oju Local Government, Gwer V. Otukpo Local Government, Gwer V. Obi Local Government, Otukpo V. Obi Local Government, Gwer V. West Otukpo Local Government, Gwer – West Apa Local Government, Logo V. Ukum Local Government, Otukpo V. Ohimini Local Government, Okpokwu V. Ogbadibo Local Government, Makurdi V. Gwer Local Government, Gwer West V. Makurdi Local Government, and Gboko V. Gwer Local Government.
- Inter-Personal Land Disputes
It was their finding that these conflicts occurred due to the following reasons, persistent trespass to land, mismanagement of Land Rights by those in control, denial of land rights to returnees from sojourn, inability of members to prove ownership/titles, laxity on the part of government

by not dealing with crises promptly and ignoring of court judgments over land conflicts (Egute and Ode, 2004).

They further recommended the restoration of the old traditional method of customary arbitration, which they believed had existed before the establishment of area courts in Benue state in resolving communal and land disputes by the chiefs and elders.

GENERAL CAUSES OF FARMERS VERSUS HERDERS' CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Conflicts between cattle herders and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture and increased or decreased in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors. For example, increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, compelled the cattle herders to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range. Climate change has constituted a great threat by putting great pressures on the land and thus provoking conflicts between them. However, improvements in human health and population have enhanced a much greater pressure on land. Since the 1980s therefore, there has been a marked expansion of cultivation of the fadama (riverine and valley-bottom) areas. This means that both the farmers and cattle herders have engaged in fierce struggles for access to such valuable lands which, more often than not, result in increased conflicts and violence (Abbas, 2009).

The genesis of conflicts over access, use and management of land resources between nomadic cattle herders and sedentary farmers in Nigeria is as diverse as the nature of the conflicts themselves (Abubakar, 2012). In general terms, the expansion of population throughout northern Nigeria has led to the expansion of farming activities into areas utilized by cattle herders for the purpose of livestock production. A contributing factor is the fact that grazing resources including pasture and water are found in different places at different times of the year, hence the need for constant mobility among cattle herders for opportunistic resource use. This brings them into contact with the landed settled farmers, and cause competition and conflicts (Abubakar, 2012).

Tonah (2006) opined that the causes of farmers/herders conflicts include the southward movement of pastoral herds into the humid and sub-humid zones, promoted by the successful control of the menace posed by disease, the widespread and availability of veterinary medicine and the expansion of

farming activities into areas that hitherto served as pastureland. As a result, the herdsmen destroy crops of the farmers on their farmland

According to De Haan (2002) destruction of crops by cattle and other property (irrigation equipment and infrastructure) by the cattle herders themselves are the main direct causes of conflicts cited by the farmers, whereas burning of rangelands and fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the cattle herders. He went on to point another cause of farmers-herdsmen conflict as increasing rate of cattle theft which is often accompanied by violence.

Yahaya (2008) in line with the view of De Haan (2000) noted that the two groups accuse each other of the cause of the conflict. For instance, farmers accuse nomads of deliberately destroying farm products, and as such this is the immediate cause of the violent conflicts between the two groups. On the other hand, the nomads claimed that the cultivators was fully expanded their farms beyond areas demarcated for animal grazing, and that the dry season cropping has claimed most of the uplands and lowlands (Fadama) allocated to cattle herders for grazing. Cattle routes and water points have also been tampered with by the farmers. For their survival, therefore, the cattle herders resort to violence. He further claimed in his work that negligence on the part of both groups was also seen as a cause of the conflicts. For instance, the cattle herders often left a large number of cattle in the care of children who did not care about the consequences in the event of destruction of farm produce. The farmers also left their harvested crops on their farm unprotected, while others who had poor yield intentionally left their crops on the farm unharvested for cattle to graze, so that they could claim heavy compensation.

Adebayo and Olaniyi (2008) identified the most predominant causes of conflict between the crop farmers and pastoralist to be damaging of crops and blockage of water points and they preferred informal authority in resolving conflicts. It was found out that variables such as age, gender, marital status, religion, education and year of residence were significantly related to causes of conflict between the crop and pastoral farmers.

Another cause of the conflicts is lack of sensitization of people to apply the land use Act of 1978.

One of the policies (Nationalization policy) states that the land in Nigeria shall be available to all Nigerians in any state, local government, or district of their choices for residential, agricultural, grazing, commercial or industrial purposes,

irrespective of their states of origin, ethnic background, religious and political affiliation (Abubakar, 2012) . Government policies can also be seen as a cause of nomads/farmers conflicts. For example, Hoffman et al (2008) further explained that the conflicts do occur as the size of the existing reserve shrink due to encroachment and government approved expansion of farmlands. This leads to the conversion of water points and stock routes into farmlands.

PATTERN OF FARMERS VERSES HERDERS' CONFLICT IN BENUE STATE

The Fulani and Benue indigene crises which has been long-standing and is the upper crust recent communal land conflict within the state was traced by Women Environmental Programme (WAP, 2012) and the following was her findings and recommendation; The cattle Fulani, before 1980 had lived cordially, mutually coexisting with Benue Indigenes especially Tiv farmers in districts of Tongov Sengev and Tyoughatee. The force of conflict is the Quantum nature of land. Land has a fixed value it is given by God, not to increase. the population of the people of Nigeria and indeed the local governments is increasing thus more people, more farmers will depend on land which has a fixed value since the supply to demand relationship will not be balanced and as such conflict will arise.

In accordance with the foregoing, there was an extended influx of Fulani herdsmen into Benue, by implication there is always a large percentage of livestock in the Benue valley every year. As was reported, the type of grass, the soil type that encourages and supports vegetation cover creates an enabling environment suitable for the herdsmen to desire to pasture in the valley. The herdsmen settled on Benue land as they pastured the land, later the Fulani's claimed of paying compensation to the traditional rulers which they believed gave them the right to graze over the land. Hence because the Benue indigenes equally depend largely on farming which land is the basic material needed for both groups, both of them began to struggle for survivor since they depend on the same material with the claim from the people of Benue that the cattle of the herdsmen are destroying their farm products and also with the claim of the herdsmen that these farm land belongs to them as they paid some traditional rulers within the said community to pasture such land, this led to the emergence of the land conflict which did not only lead to killing of people but also led to setting into flames houses and structures, displacement of the indigenes from

their places of origin, these conflicts increased poverty and reduced standard of living of residents.

More so, some Benue farmers have equally claimed trespass to land and further destruction of their legitimate farm product by cattle which lead to a call for vengeance by rustling herder's cattle leading to the conflicts. Lately the conflict is as a result of the anti-open grazing law adopted by the government of Benue State which received open condemnation from the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), which threatened to frustrate any move to enforce the law. According to Governor Ortom, the attack of 1st January 2018 at Guma and Logo local governments of the state where 73 Farmers were killed was as the manifestation of the MACBAN's threat. The governor maintained that he saw the attack coming as he wrote to the IGP concerning the MACBAN threat to attack the state, but the IGP nor other security agents responded. He concluded that the refusal of the security agencies to act and their lackadaisical attitude on the matter led to the mayhem of January 1 and also vowed to continue with the antiopen grazing law (John-Peter, 2018).

It is however worthy of note that these conflict today has escalated form just land disputes and has continued to linger in the hearts of both parties regenerating into more complex issues today which has tremendously affected the economy of Benue State.

THE EFFECTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE FULANI HERDSMEN AND BENUE FARMERS CONFLICT

There is no doubt that the present clashes between herdsmen and farmers in the predominantly farming areas of the middle belt region has resulted in the destruction of lives and farmlands have become a major threat to the efforts to boost food production.

From Benue to Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau in the North Central region and Zamfara State in the North West, clashes between famers and herdsmen have left in its trail heavy losses of lives and property. These losses of lives have adversely affected farming activities and other related businesses and socio-economic activities. This has resulted in a drastic reduction in farm outputs, a development that has heightened the fear of hunger. Already most farmers in the affected states have abandoned farms and schools for the for fear of being attacked by the herdsmen. For the predominantly farming communities of Benue and border communities of Nasarawa and Taraba states, farming is no

longer a business as usual. Several farmers have been displaced and dispossessed of their farms by armed men believed to be herdsmen. These activities lead to closure of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. When the Schools are closed the school timetable of events is adjusted, Thereby prolonging the students' duration of study.

Increased unemployment gap: Because companies, firms and Industries are destroyed during such crises, it takes owners of these businesses time to rebuild their destroyed business Centres. Their employees spend this long period without Work to do. They add to the number of unemployed youths that are roaming our streets.

PATTERN OF HERDERS FARMERS LAND DISPUTE IN DELTA STATE

Albert (2010) traced the pattern of herders farmers conflicts in Delta state and reported in his work on "causes, effects and resolution of farmers-nomadic cattle herders conflict in delta state, Nigeria" as follows:

Disregard for authority which is a major cause of conflict is not taken lightly by rural communities. It is customary for strangers to pay visit to the traditional authority of their host community at the first time of entry to announce their mission and seek their permission to sojourn there especially when the strangers are not the ones that could stay in the habited areas of the community like the nomads. This is done strictly for security and revenue reasons.

This, the nomadic herders always fail to do and pay, respectively. When situations like this occur, the traditional security outfit is detailed to invite them to see the traditional authority and when they fail it is taken as an insult. Destruction of crops is likewise a major cause of conflict. This is congruent with Tonah (2006) who stated that the most frequent cause of such conflict is the destruction of crops by cattle. These cattle enter the farm to feed on the foliage of crop even in the presence of the herdsmen who pretend not to notice such destruction.

During the harvest period, cattle frequently destroy or eat ripened crops as they are led from the field to their camps. Contamination of the stream is regarded as a source conflict. The stream is a source of water supply the rural farming communities and they depend on it for every domestic use. Contamination of the stream has lead to the outbreak of cholera, typhoid fever and liver fluke, as the host communities members believe.

The nomadic herdsmen also allow them to graze on fallow land continuously and zero grazing emanate there from. This has caused a lot of erosion on plot of land thereby making it infertile and difficult to cultivate by farmers.

In many communities, levies are collected, even from crop and livestock/poultry farmers. In most cases, the nomadic herdsmen refuse to pay such to traditional authorities in the host communities this is taken as disregard and insult by the traditional authorities who always want to exert their authority.

The youth who constitute the local security outfit are sent to collect such levies when they, the herdsmen fail to pay. They always meet resistance from the nomadic herdsmen, which leads to fight with them when the youths try to exercise the power given to them. This often led to conflicts.

During the dry season, grasses and forages dries up and these nomads believe that if the dried vegetation is burnt, fresh pasture would regenerate. In the process of burning, the fire spreads into adjoining farms. This according to the researchers findings causes some conflict between the affected farmers and the herders as crops on the field are destroyed by the spreading fire.

The major roads used by rural communities, though are earth roads are well cared for. As these nomadic herdsmen take their cattle through these roads, the cattle, as their usual habit drop their dung, indiscriminately on the roads. This angers the host community and when the nomads' attention is brought to it they carelessly. This again is disregard for the host community traditional authority.

There were cases when cattle strayed away and destroyed farmer's crops and were slaughtered by the offended parties. This has caused a lot of problems between the host farming communities and the nomadic herdsmen who did not always think of the value of the damaged crops, but their cattle. It is glaring that the various causes are related to clash of interest, resources destruction and abuse. After thunder comes rain. The conflicts were resolved by the payment of compensation to the offended party in each case, but the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the compensation paid and the manner of resolving such conflicts.

THE EFFECTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE FULANI HERDSMEN AND DELTA FARMERS CONFLICT

As reported by Albert (2010) the effects of the conflicts in Delta state has the following effect on the society and economy at large:

Reduction in output and income of crop farmers as a result of destruction of crops by cattle and indiscriminate bush burning: A lot of farmers lost part or the whole of their crops. This spelt reduced yield which translated into low income on the part of the farmers who take farming as major occupation. This tends to negatively affect their savings, credit repayment ability, food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply. This is very discouraging to the farmers and rural/agricultural development.

Displacement of farmers: There were reports of displaced farmers and herdsmen alike. In the host communities, Nomadic herdsmen relocate as a result of conflict. Host farmers especially women farmers who remain behind stop going to the distant farms for fear attack by the nomads in the bush. Such displaced farmers have become a source of liability to other farmers they have to beg for food for themselves and their families. This has trickled down to the vicious cycle of poverty in such communities.

Erosion (land degradation) as a result of zero grazing: The soil was made naked and susceptible to win erosion and eventually as the rains come erosion continues. This is accelerated by the topographic nature of some of the areas, being hilly there have arisen the problems of loss of nutrients and difficulty of cultivation.

Loss of lives: A lot of killings by the nomads took place as a result of the conflicts and this led to the reprisal killings of nomads by the host communities, the herds of cattle belonging to the nomads were also killed. Also some of the victims (young and old) were badly injured and others were maimed. This has reduced some women farmers to the status of widows. All these have drastically reduced agricultural labour force in the area. In the process there were reported cases of proliferation of small arms and ammunitions. This was due to the fact that host farming communities and herdsmen saw other as archenemies. This is inimical to the spirit of integration of Nigerian tribes or ethnic groups and peaceful co-existence.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- i. Conflict between farmers and cattle herders in Nigeria has been documented from the pre-colonial era onwards.
- ii. Conflicts are being increasingly interpreted as religious and/or political even though the underlying drivers may be conflicts over access to resources.

- iii. It has been observed that the occurrence of land conflicts is frequent and such conflicts borders mostly on title to land and trespass to land among other causes such as encroachment and rent.
- iv. Grazing rights dispute is the major cause of the herders and farmers land dispute in Nigeria. The disputes evolve as a result of grazing space where Fulani herdsman claimed belong to them and was not allowed to access it. Also, in situations where farm lands belonging to farmers are been destroyed by herds.
- v. Most of the land disputes including clashes between the herdsman and farmers have resulted to humanitarian catastrophe precipitating human loss and displacement of persons which in the long run slow the economic activities of such area. These conflicts have become a threat to national security at large.
- vi. Strategies of conflict resolution, however framed, have little impact unless the political will to both follow up and enforce agreements is present. This would require a major change in political culture in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

It could be deduced that the rate of prevalence of land conflicts are high in Benue and Delta state of Nigeria depicting the fact that land is an essential resource for the survival and existence of man in which it has become a subject of dispute due to man's strong desire to possess it. Many have died, many displaced and properties in form of crops, animals, houses, vehicles and many others destroyed. Farmers, though, have occasionally been involved in carrying attacks or reprisal attacks against the Fulani herdsman, have been seen to be mostly at the receiving end of the conflicts.

These conflicts however can be managed if the Government of Nigeria should enunciate policies that would address the climate change and could lead to a better and more equitable management of natural resources such as water and land. There must be Land reform that can make it possible for the multitude of small scale agricultural producers and cattle herders to be able to acquire such land for cultivation and grazing respectively to avert social conflict and disputes.

Title to land is a major cause of land conflicts within states in Nigeria and as such all transfers made in respect of customary or family lands should be registered and the government should ensure ease of creation of title documents

to such lands. More so in order to reduce the rate of trespass to land, there should be clear demarcations made between boundaries of lands belonging to each individual or group of people.

In addition, the findings of the researchers reveals that the Fulani herdsmen and Farmers conflicts borders on land which the cause of this dispute lies on title to land and trespass to land hence the researchers recommend for the adoption of Alternative dispute resolution mechanism (ADR) in attempting to resolve this persisting conflict. It is our recommendation that government should make popular this method of dispute resolution by enacting a policy that land disputes should be negotiated by the parties first and if not resolved a third party ADR mechanism should be adopted in which an award will be given and if the parties still do not come to settlement then litigation can be adopted due to the fact that it has sanctioning powers. Before any land conflict should be litigated the parties most present the award passed by the third party using any of the ADR mechanism as part of the documents of filing land cases.

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