

## **EFFECTS OF FARMERS AND HERDERS CONFLICT ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study examines the effects of farmers and herdsmen conflicts on national development. The conflicts have caused a lot of losses to nation, state, communities and families; where people are killed and property are destroyed such as private, public and foreign companies. Again, farms and houses are burnt down; and people are rendered homeless. The indigenes are displaced from their ancestral homes; causing them to become refugees. Some farmers end-up increasing the pressure on the unexpanding infrastructure in urban areas where they become unemployed. The main causes of the conflicts are destruction of cash crops, cattle theft and contamination of streams and ponds by cattle. These cash crops boost to the national economic development. The work recommends that government and leaders of herdsmen should ensure of controlling grazing on cultivated farmlands, also modern grazing technique like ranching should be encouraged and Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should render assistance to re-integrate the affected people to settle back in their communities.*

**Keywords:** Conflict, Development, Farmer, Herder, National.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Currently, the killings recorded by herdsmen and farmers conflicts have rampaged most communities, displacing the local farmers of their farmlands and loss of their main sources of livelihood. The herdsmen always attribute the crisis to religious issues which causes of the killing of their cows while the farmers observe the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural products. Since the herdsmen allow their cows to feed on their farm crops. The waves of this conflict have disrupted socio-economic, religious, educational sector, political instability Etc. mostly, as a threat to the national unity and development.

Gorden (2000) views the herders as the nomadic form of pastoralism. The herded live stock includes cattle, horses, donkeys, camels, sheep, goats, yaks, liama or mixture of species. In other words, the nomadic is the Fulani an ethnic group in Nigeria who engage mainly on shepherds or cattle herders. They are rural or pastoral and migrate from one area to another. They are dominantly Muslims who speak the Hausa language. According to National Population census (NPC, 2006) over 35 million of Fulani people are living in northern states of Nigeria. On the other hand, Janet (2006) argues that community farmers are people who engage in farm occupation and live in a particular area or region who have possession of a common culture, tradition, norms, customs, values etc. which she referred as local Christian farmers.

Their conflicts lead to loss of lives, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands, thereby posing serious threats to food security because farmers have phobia of attack that they

no longer go to farm and harvest their farm products. Again, the conflict has turned to the tools of rape of women, robbery and kidnapping with ultimate intent for ransom and it has developed to the proliferation of arms and ammunitions in the hands of private individuals and this cycle is difficult to break where insecurity is worsening, many youths went astray and incessant unpredictable political atmosphere, lack of progressive management of the economy moved to galloping inflation and concentration of wealth in the hand of the few who are in positions of power.

In other words, the herders and farmers conflict causes national normlessness creating intense violence and insecurity in the sense of hopelessness and depression among the masses through the existence of unemployment, corruption, gross indiscipline among leaders, kidnapping, trans border crime, poor wages, poor living conditions, cultural shock and poor quality of management which results in crisis in the health care delivery, transportation, housing and employment; mostly, the threats of socio-economic development in the communities been attacked which manifested loss of lives, destruction of valuable properties, rapping and health diseases and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threats to food security since local farmers live in fear of attack would no more go to farm and harvest their products, these factors slog on socio-economic set back in communities and Nigeria in general.

### **FARMERS AND HERDERS CONFLICTS IN THE NATION**

Nzeh et al (2015) observes that there has been peaceful relationship among farmers and herdsmen across the nation, except few cases of minor misunderstandings that did not claim life. Omuwunmi (2016) views that the current crisis developed based on farming, land grazing and water space. Therefore, the farmers accused the herdsmen of damaging their crops by failing to control their animals while the herdsmen equally claimed that the farming communities steal their cattle. This work would examine some events of farmers and herdsmen conflicts that people had witness in the nation and the crisis of farmers and herdsmen conflicts would be examined in each of the six geo-political regions of the nation.

The south-south region of the farmers and herdsmen conflicts. Thisday Newspaper (April 19 2014) expresses that resident of 25 local government areas in Delta state blocked movement on the Benin-Asaba Expressway, protesting the killing of 27 people by the nomadic herdsmen. Again, The Nation newspaper (June 20, 2016) reports that Port Harcourt city had crisis because of the killing of 13 farmers by herdsmen. Punch Newspaper (March 20, 2017) views that a lecturer and 16 villagers were killed in Abraka. Akorede (2018) observes that in south-south region is still witnessing killing related to farmers and herdsmen conflicts.

The south west region, the farmers and herdsmen conflicts; Oyedotun (2015) opines that the herdsmen numbering over 20 were equally reported to have abducted a former secretary to the government of the federation and chief of Afenifere, Chief Samuel Oluyemisi Falae on his 77<sup>th</sup> birthday after invading his farm in Ilado village, Akure North Area of Ondo state. Again, the former governor of Ekiti state, Governor Fayose (2016) declared war against the herdsmen based on killing of 5 persons in the state. Punch Newspaper (June 15, 2016) reports that the farmers in Lagoon, Iyana Offa, Atagba, Lapata and the surrounding communities in Lagelu Local government area of Oyo State were attacked by herdsmen and stole valuables. And Saki, Ago- Are, Ojo-Owode communities had the same encounter of farmers and herdsmen. Akwara (2018) views that in all farmers and herdsmen conflict, demand of millions for ransom, lives and properties were reported to have been paid or lost and communities or villagers displaced.

The south-east encounter of farmers and herdsmen conflicts. Vanguard Newspaper (April 27, 2016) reports that in Enugu state, over 2000 people were displaced, 40 injured and many houses and churches were destroyed in Obolo Afor community; again, at Nimbo community over 46 people were killed in an attack allegedly carried out by 200 herdsmen. The security agents were reported to have responded to protect the community. Thisday Newspaper (November 14, 2016) report the Abia state attack by a group of herdsmen in Abam community of Arochuku Local government area where farmers were harvesting their farm products they were attacked, many people killed and others sustained various serious injuries. Oyedotun (2018) observes that killings based on farmers and herdsmen conflicts have not been totally stopped.

On the other hand, the North East farmers and herdsmen conflicts; Nformi et al (2014) view that between the period 9<sup>th</sup> April and 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014. In Taraba state, there had been a lot of attack that caused several deaths and destruction of properties. Again, Adamawa state experienced blood shed due to farmers

and herdsmen crisis on grazing right. The conflicts took a religious pattern between Christians and Muslims where, people were killed and houses also burnt. Again, News Guild (June Sunday 4, 2016) reports that a Divisional Police Officer (DPO), in charge of Vunokilang Police Station at Girei Local Government Area in Adamawa State was killed with 35 people based on an attack by suspected herdsmen. Premium Times (March Friday 23, 2017) reports that the suspected herdsmen raided 4 communities: Demsare, Dikajan, Taboungo and Wunamokoh for vengeance mission farmers in their villages and many houses and several properties were burnt. Goke et al (2018) view that many residents were still moving out from Adamawa and Taraba states, due to incessant attacks or clashes between the farmers and herdsmen.

Furthermore, the crisis in the North Central between the farmers and herdsmen conflicts. Thisday Newspaper (April Sunday 6 2012) reports that in Plateau state, Riyom local government area at Maseh community; Senator Gyang Danton and the majority leader of the Plateau State House of Assembly Mr Gyang Funom died in a stampede while attending the mass burial of over 50 people killed on attack by herdsmen. Genyi (2014) observes in Plateau State, Riyom Local Government, the herdsmen attacked killing over 20 people and more than 100 houses were burnt. Again, the herdsmen attacked Rim District Local Government area in 4 communities: Gwawenlmg, Gwarim, Gwon and Tarok shooting sporadically and setting houses on fire. They people who witnessed the incident said the attackers were herdsmen and some were police uniform. Punch Newspaper (March 6, 2016) reports in Benue state, Agatu Local Government Area comprising of communities: Adagbo, Aila, Akwu, Egba, Obagji, Odugbeho, Ogbaulu, Okokolo and Ugboju experienced herdsmen attack caused the death of over 400 people and houses, schools, churches, health centres etc were burnt, caused by the crisis of farmers and herdsmen conflicts. Again, Vanguard Newspaper (June 6 2016) reports in Benue State, Logo local government area; the armed herdsmen stormed the communities, singing war songs, shooting sporadically killed 5 people, burning houses, huts, food barns in these communities over conflicts on grazing land.

Moreso, Vanguard Newspaper (November 17, 2016) reports the Niger state experience of farmers and herdsmen conflicts, Shiroro Local Government area at Kukaki community where 6 people were killed many sustained serious injuries and the suspect were cattle rustlers. Clara (2018) observes that in Benue state between January and July, 2018 over 500 lives had been lost to issues of farmers and herdsmen conflicts. Therefore, Tribune Newspaper (November 26, 2018) reports that the Benue State Governor Samuel Ortom took a decision on defecting from All Progressive Congress (APC) to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) that he cannot continue to be a member of the political party that there is evidence failure to protect his people. Akorede et al (2018) opines that up-till date, the north-central violence of farmers and herdsmen conflicts are still in existence. People are kidnapped, killed, properties and farmland destroyed and people remain homeless.

Finally, the violence in the north-west of farmers and herdsmen conflicts. Vanguard Newspaper (March 9, 2014) reports that in Kaduna State, Kaural Local Government Area in Angwan Sakwai Community. The herdsmen with over 57 gunmen attacked the community and killed over 67 people, houses burnt and properties destroyed. Again, Vanguard Newspaper (August 3, 2016) reports that some armed herdsmen killed more than 5 people in Jama Local Government Area because of the disagreement or competition over grazing right. Punch Newspaper (Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016) reports that 2 police officers were ambushed and killed by suspected herdsmen at Kagoro Gidan Waya road in Kawa Local Government Area. And, another attack at a check point, 3 police officers sustained injuries while 2 escaped unhurt. Again, Punch Newspaper (October 16, 2016) reports that at Godogodo Community in Jama'ah Local Government Area, Southern Kaduna gunmen suspected to be herdsmen killed 20 people and several people sustained serious injuries. Therefore, the Governor of the state imposed 24 hours curfew on the Local Government Area. Goke (2018) reveals that in the North-west geographical region is still witnessing attacks or clashes between farmers and herdsmen, kidnapping, destruction of properties and farmland cases.

#### **CAUSES OF FARMERS AND HERDSMEN CONFLICTS**

Dagona et al (2015) posit that causes of farmers and herdsmen conflicts remains on competition over land

use that manifest several factors as follows:

Gleick (2010) reveals that climate change has been tipped as the major factor which causes migration and population displacement; through the shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption. These unfavorable weather compelled the herdsmen to leave their original habitation to another area for greener pastures. Again, Okoli et al (2014) observe that the shrinking of ecological space and resorts creates an atmosphere of eco-scarcity, which raises the stakes and puts a premium on the available resources; which creates competition and desperate struggle for subsistence. In other words, the eco scarcity not only causes conflict, also creates the condition of the survival of the fittest.

Secondly, Okereke et al (2012) view that unauthorized encroachment into farmlands create serious conflict between the farmers and herdsmen which causes destruction of crops and fallow lands where lands were left to replenish the nutrients after long years of use. Mostly, herdsmen cattle sometimes stray into farmers farmland and destroy crops both nurseries and matured crops. Therefore, farmers been provoked kill herdsmen cattle.

Thirdly, Clark (2018) reveals that indigene who are farmers claim land ownership but the herdsmen reject the views of the, farmers who see them as trespassers on grazing lands. Moreso, farmers consider the herdsmen as strangers who are occupying their indigenous lands. This indigenous ideology manifest conflicts over the years on competition for land ownership between farmers and herdsmen. Therefore, the situation creates lack of trust where herdsmen suspects that farmers sometimes steal their cattle and the herdsmen arm themselves with weapons to protect their territory, themselves and cattle from threaten farmers.

Furthermore, Kim etal (2014) observe that competition on scarce resource create avenue for the farmers and herdsmen conflicts and both the farmers and herdsmen still practice ancient methods, also desert and drought appear more frequently. These factors create disagreement overthe use of farmlands and grazing areas between them. This has been causing misunderstanding over the years and government has not come out to settle or create a way out.

Finally, Clake (2018), reveals that religious ideology causes more harm than good; between the farmers and herdsmen based on Christians and Muslims background; which creates ethnic group and mentality of shared history and fate and contribute to shared vision of the nature of the conflict. Therefore, the Christian local farmers perceive the Muslim herdsmen as an islamization force. Boulding (2000) views that Muslims herdsmen complain that they had been maltreated whenever they come encounter with Christian local farmers. Inotherwords, the Christian local farmers belief that Muslim herdsmen had been carried out series of destruction on their properties and the herdsmen cannot change their ideology of nomadic way of life and accommodate other ethnic religion group.

#### **EFFECTS OF FARMERS AND HERDSMEN CONFLICTS ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Adisa etal (2015) reveals that farmers and herdsmen conflicts have serious effect on food production, where farmers abandon their farm works for fear of being maimed or killed. Therefore, some farmers relocate to urban cities looking for alternative means of livelihood. On the other hand, the farmers end-up increasing the pressure on the unexpanding infrastructure on urban, they also remain unemployed and become susceptible tools for perpetuating violence and criminalities for the politicians. Again, the farmers and herdsmen conflicts create scarcity of goods and services which leads to inflation and devaluation of our currency where much money are placed on few goods and services. The money at hand cannot buy much quantity of goods and services. Consequently, whenever there is conflicts between the farmers and the herdsmen, houses are burnt down in communities, people are rendered homeless, creating refugees and people are displaced from their ancestral homes known as Internal Displaced People (IDP). Moreso Ibenwa (2012) views that their conflicts discourage foreign investment, where lives and property such as public, private and foreign companies or industries are destroyed. Foreigners who witnessed or heard this crisis end up withdrawing their foreign investment or companies, causing unemployment and economic failure in the nation.

Lastly, the government usually declares a state of emergency of curfew whenever there is any serious conflict between the farmers and herdsmen. The hours of curfew or a dawn to dusk curfew create an infringement on the statutory freedom of movement of the citizenry; where educational, economic, religious, social activities are shut-down, causing restriction on humanity which affects the developmental structure of the involved communities.

#### **SUMMARY**

The destruction of crops on farms by cattle constitutes the major causes of the farmers and herdsmen conflicts through land grabbing and struggle over grazing land. Again, the conflict is the product of the shrinking of ecological space and resorts which creates an atmosphere of eco- scarcity which raises the stakes and premium on the available resources and manifest fierce competition and desperate struggle for grazing space and subsidence. Therefore, conflicts are inevitable which become mechanism of survival and create the existence of consonance at the same territory, landscape or resource which is perceived much differently by different people because what been interpreted as conflict over scarce resources sometimes result to be conflict on perspective over the understanding of resources over the resource management. In other words, the farmers would reserve lands for shifting cultivation purpose in order to have bumper planting reason harvest, but the herdsmen observe the reserve lands as grazing area with a lot of grown greenish grasses land.

Moreso, the farmers and herdsmen conflicts have direct impact on the live and livelihoods of those involved and causes the displacement of economic productive population of the affected communities.

Furthermore, the conflicts lead to reduction on output and income of crops by cattle and most farmers have been forced to flee from their farms for fear of being killed by well armed herdsmen and they have lost whole crops in their farms where farming is their major occupation. Mostly the continuity of the farmers and herdsmen conflicts increases the destruction of properties, theft of cattle, sheep, goats, destruction of crops, displacement of affected communities from their ancestral homes where the armed herdsmen forced thousands to flee for safety or killed and the destroying livelihoods which are affecting national cohesion. On the other hand, these farm products such as cash crops which boost the national domestic products but when these crops are destroyed, causes fall on national economic growth or low foreign exchange rate in the country.

## **CONCLUSION**

The farmer and herdsmen conflicts is based in the contestation for land, pasture and water. The trespassing on the farmers by the herdsmen are two methods; the cramping of the soil which causes cultivation through traditional means of tilling extremely difficult and the destruction of the crops and farm produce. Moreso, the farmers have no access to irrigation pipe borne water or borehole but depend on rivers, streams and pond for their uses. But, the herdsmen contaminate the farmers only sources of water which makes the water very dangerous for human consumption. Therefore, the farmers attempt to resist this repulsion act by the herdsmen is extremely provocative; hence resulting to the deadly conflicts.

Consequently, the farmers and herdsmen conflicts are destructive if not controlled would cause national disintegration. It requires quick intervention from the nation leadership to call for the farmers and herdsmen educational workshop and symposium on promotion of cultural, economic, religious, agricultural and political understanding for uniting the various farmers and herdsmen even tribes rather than observing themselves as enemies in the country. Mostly, these conflicts have caused many people to lose their lives and property, even many communities have been displaced from their ancestral community homes. These displaced communities have become refugees (Internal Displaced People) in their country homes. Therefore, the peace, security and unity of the nation is seriously threaten and affects a meaningful development in the country.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The government presence should be increase in the affected communities where the farmers and herdsmen conflicts occurred to reduce the feelings of rejection in the society. Again, the government should increase the quality and quantity supply of Aids to the affected communities to prevent the existence of social problems like criminal act, prostitution, deviant behaviours etc.

Mostly, Government should organize training for farmers on the use of improved varieties of seeds that can reproduce more even on smaller farmlands close to their communities to reduce guerilla attacks on farmers at the bush farms. Furthermore, there should be need for Government and Non-Governmental Agencies(NGOs) to direct funding into research work in the area or field of the farmers and herdsmen relationship for more peaceful coexistence with tolerance, to reduce or prevent their conflicts. Also, Government, Community and Groups Leaders, especially group leaders of all herdsmen should ensure controlled grazing to prevent grazing on cultivated farm lands where crops have been planted. Moreover, modern grazing techniques such as ranching should be embraced by herdsmen to reduce roaming by the herdsmen and their cattle, and there is need for herdsmen to liaise with community rulers to advise them, The areas there should restrict their grazing to avoid provoking the community farmers.

Moreso, the Government and security agencies should work together to ensure the safe return and resettlement of displaced people in their ancestral homes and support them to settle down and move forward through assistance with some grants. The government should order the herdsmen to surrender the guns and ammunition in their possession to the security agency. Therefore, the government should banned carrying of weapons by individual in order to reduce the nefarious activities like kidnapping, Cattle Rustler, highway robbery, indiscriminate killings which current in existence in the society. Finally, the government should be seriously proactive rather than reactive in their action; where, the government should be quick in response to early signs and warnings of this current issues of the farmers and herdsmen conflicts, then security forces should be distributed to the all regions, urban, communities and rural areas to monitor those nefarious activities.

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