

Livelihood and Conflict Dimension among Crop Farmers and Fulani Herdsmen in Yakurr Region of Cross River State

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Abstract

This paper examines the negative approach of Nomads to crop farmers in the Yakurr region of Cross River State Nigeria, through the overgrazing of farmlands, contamination of streams and the harassment of female farmers which resulted to rape causing conflict in the study area. The work observes the inevitability of conflict and the inestimable values placed on economic resource which value have directly and indirectly defined the dimensions of most conflicts involving man since immemorial. Of all resources however, land has remained an over whelming source of conflict among user and individuals at varying level of thresholds. In Nigeria, conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen over the use of land and agricultural produce has become a threat to peace in most part of the country, particularly in the Guinea and Savannah regions of the country due to the intensity of production activities that are propelled by increasing demand for land for various purposes. The production potential of grassland and livelihood in the arid and semi arid region is constrained by low and variable rainfall. Therefore, there is a need for grazing cattle to access pasture resources across regions in order to ensure food security for the herds. In view of this, the paper recommends that, nomadic education and the mechanism tagged local development plans be adopted by extension agencies to minimize conflict in rural areas where grazing of cattle is inevitable.

Keywords: Herdsmen, Nomadic, Grassland, Farmers, Harassment, Conflict.

1. Introduction

Berger (2003) considers that, pastures, woody vegetation, water resources and land are taken as a common property resource. However, the inevitability of conflict in the claim for scarce resource which is noted by Coser (2000) is considered here as the bane for struggles over the inestimable value for land and its resource, with the claim for ownership and the claim for its position as a common resource. Nevertheless, the complex land use system that has changed markedly overtime has culminated in the present day tension and conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and host communities.

Major causes of the conflict as observed by Haro and Dayo (2005) is that most times the Fulani herdsmen wonder into the fields during growing season while their herds eat or trample on the crops due to the herdsmen's lack of attention or the cattle's stray movement, hence tension rise. In most cases reported to the Police, there are often skirmishes between youth in the affected areas and the Fulani herdsmen or their cattle while in the study area, as narrated by an eye witness, and police report in the area, youth actually decide to kill and eat up one of the Fulani's cattle as a mark of revenge against the destruction of their crops and farm lands. Also, (Schama, 1996) concluded that crops, livestock, water resources and other vegetal resources played key roles in the development, maintenance and projection of socio-economic strength of a society. These conflicts therefore stem from the need to preserve and protect individuals belonging. While the Fulani herdsmen strategize on the protection and reservation of their livestock the Yakurr people relish their farmlands, the interest derived in ownership which the Yakurr people see as 'owning what you have' has often resulted in this nature of conflicts referred to as conflict of livelihood.

Another dimension of this conflict is its environmental impact on the society. Environmental degradation is said to have contributed enormously to the deterioration in the ecosystem services. Similarly, Tonah (2006) opined that the

factors that account for the increasing farmer-herder 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 availability of veterinary medicine and expansion of farming activities into areas that hitherto serve as pasture land. Though Tonah's account of the herdsmen pastures may not be exhaustive, yet the need for a political and socio-economic trans-breathing among the herdsmen also makes a reason for their movement. Economically too, viable land has been a major cause of conflict between communities in Nigeria and especially between herders and crop farmers. Areola, (1992) Gbehe,(2009) pointed out that the pursuit of access to a variety of limited resources which includes grasslands, water spots for animals, rival claims to land, and government policies by individuals, differentiated by different categories in defined socio-physical environments, give rise to conflicts.

Cases of farmers'-herders' conflicts are widespread in recent times. For instance, in Densina local government of Adamawa state, 28 people were feared killed, about 2,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in the hostility between cattle rearers and farmers in host community in 2005. Nweze (2005) also stated that many farmers and herders have lost their lives and herds while others have experienced dwindling productivity in their herds. This was supported by Ajuwo (2004), as cited by Nweze (2005) in his observation that in Imo state for instance between 1996 and 2005, 19 people died and 42 were injured in farmers' herders' conflicts. In Yakurr area of Cross River State Nigeria, series of squabbles between Fulani herdsmen and youth of the area has been reported to the Police in the area. In the same way, a newspaper study of conflicts/crises in Nigeria between 1991 and 2005, by Fasona and Omojola (2005) found that farmer herdsmen conflicts accounted for 35% of the major clashes reported by selected Nigerian newspaper. Another study of 27 communities in central Nigerian by Nyang and Fiki (2005) showed that over 40% of the household surveyed had experienced agricultural land-related conflicts, with respondents recalling conflicts that were as far back as 1965 and as recent as 2005.

Also, in a study carried out by (Olabode and Ajibade, 2010; Fiki and Lee, 2004) in the guinea Savannah area of Kwara State, the study reported that out of about 150 households interviewed, 22 reported losses of livestock while eight household from both sides reported loss of human lives. Other studies as observed by (Negedu, 2005; Micheal, 2010) have also indicated that stores, barns, residences and households items were destroyed in many of the violent clashes. Further studies by Ofuku and Isife (2009) also revealed that at the south- south region of Nigeria, especially in Delta and Edo states, more than 40 million worth of crops are usually lost annually due to invasion of cattle. This has not only created an impediment on the survival of the host communities, but has for instance led to crop-farmers abandoning farming for lesser occupations like Okada riding and other artisan vocation.

In order to bring about co-existence between crop farmers and Fulani herdsmen, several measures has always been put in place. As observed by Olaosebikan, (2009), most times Fulani herdsmen are asked to pay compensation or in case of excessive damages the state or local government comes in aid of the crop farmers who are mostly affected. Others measures put in place as identified by the authority includes: restriction of grassland for cattle, construction of homes/settlement for herdsmen and peace-talk initiatives through stake-holders meeting. However, all these policies are often short lived, hence the conflict abates, and it is therefore pertinent to note that, this type of conflict can hinder the attainment of the 10percent growth rate in the agricultural production proposed by the federal government in Vision 2012.

The unplanned settlement of Ibarapa region of Oyo State Nigeria, with its foreseen and unforeseen implications of improved health services also provided the basis for a painful study that, environmental resources are finite as human economy (population and resource utilization) has exceeded them. In the case of Yakurr, the finite nature of land and good vegetation as environmental resources has often attracted absolute care and preservation which calls for struggle and agitation against trespasses. The treasure for the nurtured crops and cost of preservation of the farmland are the major reasons for the aggression of the farmers over the cattles and herdsmen devastation of their crops, this in the same vain is the cause of conflict between Fulani herdsmen and Ibarapa farmers. As observed in the Nigerian tribune of August 2012, apart from the destruction of farmland by herds of cattle in the area, many of the local farmers also suffered severe beating; flogging and molestation from the herdsmen referred to and called bororos. Even while the state and the local government have stepped up ways of bringing co-existence among the herdsmen and crop farmers, the unresolved issues on grazing land and water spots central to the economic survival of both the herdsmen and farming communities remain unresolved as the conflict abates. Similarly, the Nigeria land tenure system which has serious implications for land acquisition by the peasant and the lower class, who are mostly farmers, has serious implication for conflict re-emergence. From the foregoing, it is pertinent to adopt sustainable structure to mitigation into the conflict farmer-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria. The respective perspective, peculiarities and production variables of each group are crucial to the understanding of management practices of farmers-herders conflicts.

2. The Specific Objectives

The objectives of this study however are to:

- ❖ Examine the personal and occupational characteristics of arable farmers and Fulani herdsmen.
- ❖ Ascertain the cause of conflict.
- ❖ Ascertain the socio-economic effects of the conflicts on the host farmers in the study area.
- ❖ Assess the level of acceptability of nomads by host communities and
- ❖ Identify extension agent's intervention strategy in the resolution of such conflicts.

3. Study Area

The Yakurr (also Yakö and Yakaḳa) comprises five urban settlements in Cross River State, Nigeria. They were formally known as Umor, Ekoli, Ilemi, Nkoibolokom and Yakurr be Ibe. Due to linguistic problems encountered by the early European visitors, the settlements have come to be known by their mispronounced versions – Ugep, Ekor, Idomi, Nko and Mkpani (Okoi-Uyoyu, 2002). Mkpani is a short word for *yakpanikpani* (which in Lokaḳa means "tricks"), a name, which according to Enang (1980) was given to them by the Ugep people after being tricked in a conflict.

The Yakurr people lie between latitudes 50 40' and 60 10' north of the equator and longitudes 80 21' and 60 10' east of the Greenwich Meridian and 120 km (75 m) northwest of Calabar, the capital of Cross River State. They are found in the present-day Yakurr Local Government Area and constitute the largest ethnic group in the state. They share their northern and eastern boundaries with the Assiga, Nyima and Agoi Clans of the Yakurr Local Government Area, the southern boundary with the Biase Local Government Area and their western boundary with the Abi Local Government Area.

The population of Yakurr in 1935 was 22,000 between 1950 and 64 the population stood at 38,000 Hansford et al. (1976); and Crabb (1969). However, while the result of the 1991 National Census was rejected by the State and Local Government due to discrepancies, the current 2006 Census result remain pending.

4. Methodology

Data for the study were collected using an interview schedule administered to 80 farmers randomly selected from the seven major communities of Yakurr and 20 Fulani herdsmen purposefully selected from the chosen communities. This gave a sample size of 100 respondents. The farmers were selected from the register of Fadama III (Cross River State) agricultural development programme. The selection was based on the following criteria.

- i. That they were aware of the existence and activities of nomadic cattle rearers in the study area.
- ii. That they have been farming in the community for at least five years.

Evaluation was also made through interviews of the respondents on their farmland. An audio-tape recorder was used in the interview, which lasted for at least inates per-respondent interview i.e. 10 for crop farmers and herdmen that understand English were interview. Data collected were analysed using statistical tools such as mean, percentage and frequency counts, while content analysis was employed to analyse data obtained from key informants.

5. Result

5.1 Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 shows that 58.8% of the farmers were male while female farmers constitute 41.2%, among the nomads 90% were males while 10% represented female herds that help in milk lactation. The age range also shows that 45 years and above constituted 38% of all the farmers interviewed. Among the nomads, those in the age bracket of 25-30 years represented 50% of the nomads interviewed while the combined bracket of 31-40 years constituted the remaining 50%. With respect to education, the farmers who had no formal education and those who had primary education together made 70% of the farmers sample population among the nomads, 60% had Islamic education while the most of them (40%) had no formal education. The farmers who had 5-28 years of farming experience represented 88% of the sample population.

5.2 Level of acceptance of nomads by host communities

Table 2 indicates that the farmers (mean=1.85) opined that the nomadic cattle farmers were poorly accepted in their communities. The nomads (mean=1.75) also had the same opinion about their acceptability in the host farming communities.

6. Causes of Conflicts between Farmer and Nomads

The major cause of the conflict as shown on (table 3) in the study area as indicated by the farmers is the destruction of crops (mean=3.5). However, the herders' opinion of this as a cause of conflict was low (mean1.45). Another major cause as rated by farmers was contamination and blockage of stream by cattle (mean3.4) the herdsman also regarded it as a major cause (mean 3.2). Another cause of conflict as opined by the farmers (mean 3.2) was the disregard for traditional authority. Other causes of conflict as observed by the farmers is over- grazing (mean=2.8) while the herders (mean =1.8) did not see it as a main source of conflict. The farmer (mean2.9) and the herdsman (mean =2.8) both regarded female harassment by the nomadic herders as another cause of conflict, especially when cases of rapes were established. Bush burning which causes destruction to crops on the field was considered as a major source of conflict between farmers and herders. Indiscriminate defecation by cattle on roads also causes conflicts, though farmers and herders saw it also minor cause. Cattle theft or rustling was another major cause of conflicts in the farming communities. Stray cattle which destroy crops on the field also caused conflicts between farmers and nomadic herdsman. Most times farmers in anger slaughter such stray animals which instigate a reappraised attack by the so-called bororos.

6.1 Socio-economic effects and causes of conflicts on the host farming communities

Table 4 implies reduction in output and income of farmers, disease outbreak, erosion, loss of lives, arms running, loss of lives, arms running, loss of houses and properties, and loss of farm product in storage, as the resultant effect of the causes of conflicts and conflicts between the host farming communities and the nomadic herdsman, as their measure were >/ 2.50.

Table 1: Personal characteristic of the respondents

Personal characteristics	Farmers No %	Nomads No %
Male	47 58.8	18 90
Female	33 41.2	2 10
Total	100%	20 100
Age		
25-30 yrs	10 12.5	10 50
30-35 yrs	17 21.3	7 35
35-40 yrs	10 12.5	3 15
40-45 yrs	13 16.3	0 0
45yrs and above	30 38	0 0
Total	80 100	20 100
Level of education		
Islamic/Arabic	0 0	12 60
No formal education	22 27.5	8 40
Primary education	34 42.5	0 0
Secondary education	19 23.6	0 0
Tertiary education	5 6.3	0 0
Total	0 100	20 00
Working experience		
1-5 years	2 2.5	5 25
5-10 years	10 12.5	3 15
10- 15 years	24 30.0	4 20
15 – 20 years	21 26.3	6 30
20 – 25 years	20 25	2 10
– 30 years	3 3.8	0 0
	80 100	20 100

Table 2: Level of acceptance of nomads by host communities

Respondents	Score	Mean	Decision
Farmers	148	1.85	Low level of acceptance
Nomads	35	1.75	Low level of acceptance

Table 3: causes of conflicts between nomads and farmers

S/N	Causes	Farmer	Nomads
		Mean score/remarks	Mean score/remarks
1.	Destruction of crops	3.5/major cause	1.5/ minor cause
2.	Contamination of stream by cattle	3.4/major cause	3.2/ major cause
3.	Disregard for traditional authority	3.2/major cause	1.5/ major cause
4.	Over-grazing of fallow land	2.8/major cause	1.8/ minor cause
5.	Sexual harassment of women by nomads	2.9/major cause	2.8/ minor cause
6.	Harassment of nomads by host youths	3.1/ major cause	3.4/ major causes
7.	Indiscriminate defecation on roads	2.1/ major cause	2.9/ minor cause
8.	Theft of cattle	2.7/major cause	2.9/major cause
9.	Stray cattle	2.9/major cause	3.3/major cause
10.	Indiscriminate bush burning.	2.9/major cause	3.3/major cause

Source: Field survey, 2012 cut off score >2.50 (major cause :< 2.5= not (minor cause).

Table 4: Socio- economic effects of conflicts between host farming communities and nomadic herdsmen (N= 80)

Effect	Total score	Mean score	Remarks
Reduction in output	285	3.56	Major effect
Displacement of farmers	295	3.36	Major effect

7. Discussion

7.1 Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Women were more in farming than men in the study area. Men were also more in nomadic activities than women; the few women seen among the nomads are just wives of the nomadic herdsmen. This is so because nomadic men seem to be more adapted to harsh conditions than the women. Most of the farmers were in the age range of 40-45years because of the attitude of younger men of 25-30 years were more in nomadic life because nomadic life needs a lot of movement that requires a lot of stamina. The older ones, after many years of nomadic life have become worn-out and are quitting the job. None of the farmers had Islamic education because it is not common in their part of the country. The younger ones who have formal education have drifted to urban areas in search of white collar jobs. Islamic education is not regarded by the communities in the state, but (western) education, hence the nomadic job they undertake. The farmers had many years experienced conflicts with herders more so as farming is their primary occupation.

7.2 Level of acceptance of nomads

The level of acceptance is quite low and this marred their mission their permission to sojourn there, especially when the strangers could not stay in the uninhabited areas of the community, like the nomads. This is done strictly for security and revenue reasons. Most nomadic herders fail to abide by these requirements. When situation 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. This supports Hegberg (1998), who averred that in the pre-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 of conflict. The stream is the source of domestic water supply

for most rural farming communities. The host community members believe that contamination of the stream leads to the outbreak of cholera, typhoid fever and liver fluke. The nomadic herdsmen also allow their cattle to graze on fallow land continuously and over-grazing emanates there from. This causes erosion on the plot of land thereby making it infertile and difficult to cultivate by the farmers.

Rape, a major cause of conflict in Africa is a taboo and it attracts capital punishment. The single nomads fall into temptation in the bid to satisfy their thirst for females. In many communities, levies are collected, even from local crop and livestock/poultry farmers. In most cases, the nomadic herdsmen refuse to pay such levies to the traditional authorities in the host communities which are seen as a disregard and insult to the traditional authorities. Youth who constitute the local security are often sent to collect the levies when the herdsmen fail to pay. This assignments are often met with strict resistance from the nomads, which the youth fighting to exercise the authority given to them.

During dry seasons, fire was often set on the forage and grasses with the believe that fresh pastures will emerge as the vegetation get burnt forage dry up and the 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 respondents, causes 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 drop their dung indiscriminately on the road. This angers the host community and when the nomads' attention is brought to it they show no remorse. This again is considered a disregard for the host community traditional authority. Cases of cattle theft (rustling) were also known to have caused farmer-herder conflict. In every community, there are miscreants. Some of these have been caught stealing bulls and cows from the nomadic herders. This leads to the killing of the thieves. These killings often enraged the host communities. This agrees with view of Tonah (2006), that frequent loss of cattle to rustlers worsened the already tense farmer-herder relationship in the Volta basin. There were also cases when cattle strayed away and destroyed farmers' 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 cases are related to clash of interest, resources destruction and abuse. Though in most cases the conflicts were resolved by the payment of compensation to the offended farmer, yet there are always series of complaints of dissatisfaction due to the nature and manner of resolution and payment of the compensation.

7.3 Socio- economic effect of conflicts

Reduction in income and output of crop farmers occur as a result of indiscriminate bush burning and destruction of crops by cattle which lead to either partial or total loss of crops by the farmers. The effect on crop yield therefore has negative impact on the affected farmer's income with its summary impact on the overall agricultural income. This tends to negatively affect farmer's savings, credit repayment ability, as well the food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply, thus, farming and rural/agricultural development is discouraged.

Displacement of farmers: findings of the socio-economic effects of the conflict on farmers and nomadic revealed that, internal displacement of herdsmen and farmers in host communities occur as a result of the conflict, especially women, who decided to stop going to the distant farm for fear of attack by nomads. The displaced farmers have therefore become a liability to other farmers who has become a source of providence for them and their families which has created a vicious cycle of poverty in the affected.

Another socio-economic effect of the conflict to the society is the susceptibility of the soil to erosion (land degradation) which occurs as a result of zero grazing worsens by the rain and accelerated by the topographic nature of some of the areas. Erosion causes a lot of loss of soil nutrients and difficulty of cultivation.

Above all, apart from the killings by nomads and reprisal attacks of the host communities, some female farmers to widows during the conflicts, while other victims of the conflict are maimed or injured and herds of cattle belonging to the nomads' ruderlessly killed. All these have drastically reduced agriculture labour force in the area. In the process these are reported cases of proliferation of small arms and ammunitions since the host farming communities and the headsmen saw each other as archenemies. This is inimical to the spirit of integration of Nigerian tribes or ethnic groups and peaceful co-existence. This finding agrees with the earlier report of the study conducted by nweze (2005) when he reported that twenty seven 27 people lost their lives due to conflicts between nomadic herdsmen and farmers in kogi state of Nigeria within the period of 1996 and 2002.

8. Conclusion and Implications for Extension Intervention

From the study, it was discovered that there are recurrent clashes of interests between the host farming communities and the nomadic cattle herders. This problem can be minimized through extension intervention. It is therefore, suggested, by the farmers and herders through description and explanation, that the mechanism tagged "local development plans" (ldps), be applied by extension agency (EA) to minimize conflict. The ldps are expected to include among others, land use plans as well as clear agreements on access to natural resources involving all stakeholders (nweze, 2002). The ldp is a community-driven development (cdd) approach to increased productivity and the main instrument for addressing all conflict issues in fadama 2 (nweze, 2005). According to sey (2002), the cdd based ldp approach has become necessary following the realization that after years of practicing development in the conventional top-down, supply-driven mode, it has failed to achieve much success in terms of economic growth. This strategy (ldp) is expected to empower every resources user, expand his/her scope of freedom, give control and decision-making role to resource users and give voice to the ones normally excluded from planning. The approach is seen to possess the needed sustainability quantity and is founded on social capital, leading to accountability, financially and environmentally.

Under the guidance of an extension officer, the local community farmers association (LCFA) should be formed and an ldp prepared. In this case, an ldp would comprise a framework for the use of land resources, in the midst of possibly conflicting objectives and provide a solution to reducing tension over access to land resources. For effectiveness to be achieved, the extension officers that will act as facilitators are expected to be skillful in:-

- Identification of the various stakeholders.
- Using languages that are used by both the local farmers and the nomadic cattle herders
- Development trust between the farmers and the nomadic cattle herders, through development of social-cultural skills and sensitivity to the prevailing norms of the host farming communities
- Interview and assessment techniques like participatory rural appraisal (PRA), participatory learning action (PLA)
- Modern and indigenous conflict management.

The LCFA and the extension institution are to ensure that all the identified stakeholders are brought together under a common forum and included in the decision making and allowed to participate actively in the planning process. The adoption of a participatory planning process that involves all stakeholders (herdsmen and crop growers) in the dispute resolution mechanism will help to promote consensus instead of conflict. Another approach to extension intervention in conflict resolution and management is nomadic education. It is envisaged that by reducing conflicts, significantly, between pastoralists and crop farmers through participatory approaches such as ldp that involves all stakeholders, there will be stimulation of economic growth that is poverty-reducing. All stakeholders can only operate optimally while carrying out their economic activities in a peaceful environment. This will result in the expansion of cropped area and motivate higher cropping intensity and problem-free environment. This breeds economic sustainability of land resources use and empowers the farming communities to take responsibility for their own development plan.

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