

CROP FARMERS-HERDSMEN CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: EXPLORING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATION ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture prior to the discovery of oil in the Niger-Delta was the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. Farming, which is the activity or business of growing crops and raising of livestock, is a key component of agricultural activities. Raising of livestock such as cow, cattle and sheep were previously predominant in the Northern part of Nigeria whereas the Southern part were noted for cultivation of crops and plants such as palm tree, cocoa, etc. Originally, the Fulani herdsmen who engaged in nomadic grazing of their cattle were relatively in harmonious coexistence with crop farmers who cultivated crops, in the areas of their settlements. The herdsmen were then known for holding sticks which they employed in controlling and directing their cattle. They ensured that their cattle followed the right path and grazed in land where there would be no economic destruction. Nevertheless, the situations, in recent time, have changed. The relationship between crop-growing farmers and cattle-raising herdsmen in different parts of the country is far from being harmonious. The escalating conflicts between the two parties pose a challenge to national development. Hence, the study explored the socio-economic implication of the crop growing farmers-herdsmen conflicts on national development with a view to suggesting some practical solutions. The study's data were generated from documentary and interviews granted to key stakeholders. The findings of the study revealed that the conflicts have gravely imparted negatively on social and economic lives in the affected areas and consequently have hindered national development. The roots of the intensifying conflict, among other things are attributed to struggle for resource (land) control by crop farmers and herdsmen; proliferation of arms and mismanagement of conflicts by key stakeholders. Therefore, the study suggested that government should be sincere and committed in enacting and enforcing laws that regulate activities of herdsmen particularly as regards to open grazing; the herdsmen should be de-militarized and re-orientated on modern grazing system while perpetrators of attacks should be diligently prosecuted. Besides, the community leaders and other community-based organizations should at all material time endeavor to enhance peaceful co-existence among different inhabitants in their areas via alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

KEYWORDS: Crop farmers-herdsmen conflict, farming, Socio-economic, national development, conflict mismanagement

1. INTRODUCTION

Farming which is the act of cultivating crops and raising of livestock is a key component of agriculture. Ahmed-Gamgum (2018) states that crop cultivation and livestock farming are both agricultural activities among local communities for the purpose of providing food and protein for mankind. Van K. (2007) noted that the sole aim of any agricultural policy is to ensure sufficient provision of food. Marek Zvelebil and Mark Pluciennik (2006) posit that the origin of agriculture is rooted with significance in the basic process of social and economic improvement of human life. This, however, is dependent on the degree of man's control, mastery of plants and animals, and the environment. Thus, the difference in the areas of agricultural interests occasioned by climatic factors, knowledge, availability of resources, tradition and culture, believe, etc. gave rise to these two major specializations (crop and livestock productions) in agriculture. Unfortunately, the decades of peaceful and harmonious co-existence cum agricultural business relationship between crop farmers, who cultivate crops and herdsmen who raise cattle via nomadic practice, has gone sour, leading to the two groups opposing each other and making claims and counter claims that have degenerated into intractable violent social conflict in the present-day Nigerian society. Thus, crop farmers-herdsmen conflict could be categorized under resource-based conflict which according to Udegbumam (2017), is a conflict due to struggle for resource control and ownership. Crop farmers-herdsmen conflict on resource control and ownership is occasioned by struggle for land possession, rights, acquisition, and passage, prevention of trespass, survival, access, privilege, legality, and ethics.

International Crises Group (2017) asserts that Fulani herdsmen terrorism originating and springing from north to other parts of Nigeria with estimated death toll of 2,500 lives lost in 2016 has not been adequately responded to by both federal and state governments. The failure of the central government to manage the conflict positively leads to its escalation which automatically question government's ability in mobilizing for effective conflict management. As noted by Obaje (2008) conflict management is a process aimed at reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through productive measures and by working with and through the parties involved in the conflict. Government instead of managing crop farmers-herdsmen conflict positively rather chooses to suppress it as evident in little or no achievement made towards resolving the conflict. Conflict mismanagement or suppression is dangerous and a time bomb waiting to explode. As posited by Obasi and Nnamani (2017) conflict suppression entails the use of leadership position to coerce or intimidate and downplay the issues or to enforce a solution that is not sustainable and with which the parties are not satisfied. Furthermore, they argued that conflict mismanagement or suppression is perpetrated by repressive government by keeping away from taking appropriate decisions timely, or trying to bully others, leading to protracted conflict. Evidently, the speedy escalation of crop farmers-herdsmen violent conflict from core northern region to middle belt and to southern Nigeria within a limited space of time is also an indictment on government capacity to discharge its primary responsibility of protection of lives and property of the citizenry and provision of welfare to the people as enshrined in Section 14 2(b) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria.

The speedy escalation of crop farmers-herdsmen conflict and the unimaginable destructive impacts could be adjudged to be motivated by the "do nothing" approach conflict handling style adopted by the federal government in tackling the issue. "Do nothing" approach according to Thomas Dye (1975) is a policy making decision style where the authorities (governments) remain silent, not taking any concrete decision or action as a result of biasness and certain interests that may be personal or detrimental over an issue of public concern. Report from Amnesty International (2018) accused Nigerian government of insensitivity and negligence on Fulani herdsmen killings. Thus the report states: *"our research shows that these attacks were well planned and coordinated with the use of weapons like machine guns and AK-47 rifles. Yet, little has been done by the authorities in terms of prevention, arrest and prosecutions, even when information about the suspected perpetrators was available."* Hence this study intends to explore the socio-economic implication of crop farmers-herdsmen conflicts on national development with a view to proffering pragmatic solutions.

2. CONCEPTUALIZATION

Socio-economic situation prevalent in any nation is a reflection of the forces of interactions and interdependency of the economic factors and social realities within a given political milieu. It has to do with how economy shapes the society, and how the society responds to the economic trends per time. Socio-economic function responds to political economy trends prevalent in a nation. The fruits of the interactions between socio-economic relations are determined by the quality of political inputs-outputs mechanism in a social system as they revolve around to shape the polity. Claude (1981) noted that it is necessary to understand economic structure of society for it opens the floodgate to knowing all other parts of society. Therefore, social conflict in any system such as crop farmers-herdsmen crisis is a respond to the socio-economic, cultural and political dynamics and trends in the society. How it is handled, will certainly have a bearing on the economic growth or

decline in the scheme of national development per time. Conflict as a concept among scholars in the Social Sciences is an inevitable social reality in human existence. Thus, where ever people are, conflicts abound. However, the underlining factor in conflict among Marxists school of thought is that conflict is good mainly if it ends up leading to improvement and positive social change. Bakul (2006) cited in Asadu (2018) posits thus:

Conflict is a phenomenon that is an integral part of human settings. Wherever two or more people, groups and institutions interrelate, conflict is bound to arise at different time and circumstances. Most often, conflict is perceived as being utterly negative; nevertheless, this has not always been so. Depending on how conflict is resolved by the parties involved, it can be positive (constructive) or negative (destructive). When conflicts between individuals or institutions is destructive, it hinders progress in the social setting; compels individuals to resort to antagonistic attitude; lead to disintegration of organization as well as scuttling of development projects. Conflict according to Miller (2005) means to “clash or engage in a fight,” a confrontation between two or more actors. Quincy (1971), explained conflict as a situation where a known group of human beings both at individual and/or collective levels willingly counter one or more other known human institution as a result of incongruous objectives among the actors/parties. From the foregoing, crop farmers-herdsmen conflict is the struggle for access, control, passage, grazing rights/routes, cultivation, safety, and ownership of land among crop-growing farmers and herdsmen. This struggle has escalated into violent clashes which resulted in killings, destructions of farm produce and crops, rape, arson, cattle rustling, banditry, etc.

On the other hand, national development is development that covers every human aspect of a nation (human capital development), and touches all areas of the society (rural and urban development), thereby generating transformational changes that make life good for a people. It is advancement driven change that improves the living condition and standard of a people. Onah (2017) postulates that “for a true national development to be achieved, it must affect a critical mass of the national population and the critical mass of the geographical dispositions irrespective of the locations, whether in the rural or urban settlements”. He further argued that for a true national development to occur, thus; “the nation must adopt an all-inclusive pattern and maintain a balanced perspective to ensure that the critical mass of the population contributes to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which will lead to an increase in per capital income of the people and the nation at large, thereby improving the standard of living, purchasing power and welfare of the majority of the national population. This is the economic blueprint for an all-inclusive and integrated national development which brings national prosperity and national welfare”.

In the same vein, Rodney (1972) articulates that development in human society has faceted process, that at the level of individual, it entails improved skill and ability, enhanced liberty, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. He further posits that development at the level of social groups (that is, national development) entails a growing capacity to control both internal and external relationships. National development in a comparative sense is a concept with indicators showing how progressive, or stunted/stagnated, or unprogressive a nation is when compared with other nations across the globe or within a specific region/continent.

As regard to farming, it is the activity or business of growing and raising livestock. In other words, farming involves growing crops and keeping animal by people for food and raw material. Thus a farmer is an individual whose primary occupation involves raising livestock and/or cultivating crops. This suggests that herdsmen are farmers who are owners or keepers of herds of domestic animal. A herd’s man looks after a herd of animal such as cattle, sheep, cow, goat, etc. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, crop farmers should be understood to mean those who engage in crop cultivation and planting whereas herdsmen, who in broad sense are also farmers, should be understood to mean those Fulani cum Hausa farmers that raise cattle through nomadic practice.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for this work is qualitative and descriptive in nature. The sources of data collection were both primary and secondary. Through documentary and primary sources, relevant data on crop growing farmers-herdsmen conflicts were generated and subjected to contextual-descriptive analysis. To ensure the reliability and validity of the secondary data employed, the study relied on documentary data generated from federal and state agencies, reputable local and international nongovernmental organizations, conference papers on crop farmers-herdsmen crisis, journals, national newspapers, internet materials and books written by experts on conflict management and consequences. The secondary data were supplemented with primary information derived through structured oral interview administered face to face to selected representatives from government agencies, crop growing farmers, traditional rulers and nomadic cattle breeders. A total of 20 representatives comprising five from each group were purposively selected and interviewed in Benue state.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper anchors its theoretical foundation on frustration-aggression theory. This theory was propounded by Dollard *et al* in 1939. The theory asserts that aggression occurs as a result of frustration. The authors stated that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and existence of frustration as well leads to some form of aggression. In that light, the reason for violence is usually frustration. Dollard *et al* in Mba (2014) posit that frustration causes aggression and when the reason for the frustration cannot be challenged or remedied, there is aggression. Amusan *et al* (2017) contributing explained that the exhibition of aggressive behavior always follows from a frustration-evoking impulse. Nigerians especially those living in Southern part have been on the receiving end of Fulani herdsmen mayhem and aggression. International Crisis Group (2017), postulates that in 2016 alone, death toll emanating from Fulani herdsmen terrorist attack was estimated at 2,500. They noted that federal and state governments did not and are not responding adequately to the crisis. The inability of the authorities to stem the tide of violence and aggression by the herdsmen leads to frustration of farmers. The frustration is vented out in form of violence towards the herdsmen who usually respond with even deadlier measure. This imbroglio results in dire socio-economic implications on our national development.

5. DYNAMIC TRENDS IN CROP FARMERS-HERDSMEN RELATIONSHIP IN NIGERIA

Conflict being inevitable social reality is integral part of every human society. Thus, wherever two or more people interact, especially within the spectrum of socio-economic relationship, conflict tends to occur. Dahrendorf (1976) central thesis observed that change and conflicts are ubiquitous and not mutually exclusive, that is, change and conflict create and affect each other in society. Karl Marx (1847) and Claude Ake (1981) traced conflict to economic relations which according to them is the fundamental unit for understanding and analyzing every contemporary society since the economy sets the base for the superstructure and other social relations. Humans being gregarious in nature are bound to generate and respond to conflicts deliberately or otherwise in their bid to survive and thrive. Therefore, the major factor that underscores the eruption of any conflict is often based on interest variation and protection. Hence conflict ensues where interest varies and lingers to mutate into irreconcilable differences before turning into a full blown violent conflict, that when mismanaged leads to intractable violent social conflict that destroys lives and property, especially at identifiable group level.

There have been historical pockets of interest variations and protections between the crop growing farmers and nomadic cattle growers as to the grazing rights of herdsmen, right of easement or way (passage), trespass, and cattle rustling by host communities. The dynamic trends in the interaction between crop growing farmers and cattle rearers could be classified into five (5) eras. The eras from 1960 independence are as follows: (1) the era of pure cattle rearing and crop farming for food and economic business objectives (2) the era of battle for expansion (3) the era of jealous, hatred and envy (4) the era of politicization of crop farmers-herdsmen conflict (5) the era of the struggle for cattle colony and RUGA settlement policy.

- ✓ **The era of pure cattle rearing and crop farming for food and economic business objectives:** This was the earliest period in the history of crop farming and cattle rearing in Nigeria where both crop growing farmers and herdsmen related to one another as members of one family (agriculturists/farmers); thereby leading to peaceful co-existence between the two parties. At this stage, each party was the brother's keeper. Mutual co-existence was the order of the day among crop farmers and herders in conducting their agri-business of crop growing and cattle rearing. This was the era of partnership that was mutually beneficial to both groups, such as where farmers after harvesting crops invited herdsmen to come into the farm so that their cattle would eat up the unwanted crops/weds and whatever remained in the farm; thereby feeding the cattle which in turn defecated dung which served as manure to the farmland. Life then was basically reciprocal. There was no organized conflict, premeditated violence, or killings with impunity between the two groups.
- ✓ **The era of battle for expansion:** Following inventions and discoveries in scientific and technological methods of crop and livestock productions, both crop growing farmers and herders jostled for maximization of produce for large sales and profits. The scrambling led to extension of tentacles to accumulate large parcels of land for cultivation by the crop growing farmers, and the herders breeding genetically modified cattle that can grow and multiple with ease; thereby increasing the demand for grazing fields. This stage laid the foundation for crop farmers-herdsmen conflict. The sedentary nature of crop production made its farmers to profit immensely by the opportunities in this era even though some crop farmers went far away to acquire large parcels of land for crop production as encouraged by '*The Land Use Acts of 1978*'. Contrarily, the nomadic nature of the herdsmen too became disadvantage to them as they

could not acquire land to lay claim on since they moved from place to place, and in and out of seasons. Though conflict has not obviously manifested at this stage it was the era of commercialization of crop farming and herding in larger quantities and qualities, which served as trigger to the conflict.

- ✓ **The era of jealous, hatred and envy:** The ability of crop growing farmers to acquire large parcels of land which they now lay claim either by purchase, inheritance, indigeneship; based on communal or stateship in order to maximize opportunities in the increased produce and sales volume provided by the 2nd era, led to this era of jealous, hatred, and envy by the herders who accused crop farmers of encroaching on the grazing routes. The herdsmen in order to maximize the opportunities provided by improved breeding method and large sales volume demanded for increased grazing fields and pastures to feed the cattle. This stage was the beginning of crop growing farmers-herdsmen conflict as each party engaged the other in fierce competition in the bid to have large and unrestrained access to land. This situation created clashes (violent conflicts) as crop farmers and herders jostle for limited land resource to do their crop production and cattle grazing business. Notably, the nature of clashes at this stage was individualist, chaotic, unplanned, unorganized, and on the spot through the use of simple work tools as both crop farmers and herders used cutlass, big stick, hoe, arrow, dagger, rod, etc. to fight each other in the work field (farmland/bush), not in the houses or villages as obtained today.
- Another dimension to this era in Nigeria is President Muhammadu Buhari's Government policy statement to diversify the mono-economy from oil dependent to other sources mainly agriculture. The government led programme and campaign for diversification of the economy from oil based to agriculture has led to increased agricultural activities as many people went into crop farming and livestock rearing. Therefore, the new entrants loaded pressure for agricultural uses of land resulting in competition and inability to satisfy all and accommodate the new comers in crop farming and herding. The competition for land resource caused Fulani herders to take up arms against crop growing farmers in complicated and unconventional manners. Some scholars also argued that climatic changes that led to the drying up of Lake Chad and other adverse effects in the north are forcing herders southwards, where water and grasses are in abundance to feed their cattle.
- ✓ **The era of politicization of crop farmers-herdsmen conflict:** crop farmers and herdsmen co-existence in Nigeria has been relatively cordial and peaceful though with manageable pockets of conflicts until in the recent time, that is, precisely in 2015 after the general election which saw the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari of All Progressive Congress (APC) party as the winner of the presidential election. Muhammadu Buhari is a Fulani man from Katsina State and also a cattle rearer and grand patrol of the Miyitte Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), an umbrella of cattle rearers that are predominantly Fulani people. At this point, the issue of crop farmers-herdsmen conflict became a political tool employed by the ruling party, APC and the opposition party, PDP. The opposition party accused the ruling party of protecting the killer-herdsmen who attack crop farmers and villagers with sophisticated weapon leaving scores of deaths and wanton destructions of property. The opposition party alleged that because the president is a Fulani man and a cattle rearer he had done little or nothing to identify the killer-herdsmen and sanction them appropriately. According to Ortom (2019) the attacks by herdsmen in different part of the country have persisted because the presidency has refused to deal with perpetrators. Samuel Ortom, who is the Benue State governor and a member of PDP, also attributed the sustained attack to porous national border which provide access to militias from other countries to infiltrate the nation's nooks and crannies. The ruling party on the other hand maintained that it stood against any form of attack on any citizen of the country. The party insisted that it was doing everything possible to halt the conflict and brought the perpetrators to book. The ruling party as well alleged that the opposition party is the sponsor of the conflict as a means to discredit the government and sabotage the security with a view to returning to power at all costs. The conflict, accusation and counter accusation heightened in the build up to 2019 general election when security challenges became a subject for campaign. Unfortunately, despite government efforts to tame the conflict, it took wider dimension particularly in the North Central; Benue State, Plateau State, and Kogi State, etc. At this point, the conflict became seriously violent with both crop farmers and herdsmen accusing each other of being responsible for the violent conflict. In fact, the era marked the commencement of a very huge organized and unbridled destructions of lives and property by the Fulani herdsmen in unjustifiably acclaimed counter attacks for cattle rustling. On the other hand, crop farmers in the bid to defend themselves from onslaught by the herders engage them in violent conflict where herders are making claim to have unrestricted access to land for cattle grazing without considering the crop farmers rights.
- This stage of the conflict blew into war as politicians and other elites allegedly incites, sponsor, and equip herders with rattle. Consequently, the Fulani-herdsmen waged war against crop farmers in their communities, houses, farms,

streets, thereby killing and destroying lives and property with impunity. Having politicized the conflict, unscrupulous politicians and selfish individuals use the opportunities in the conflict to score cheap political points, divide the people, discredit opponents, and destroy lives and property. Ahmed Gamgum (2018) captures this era succinctly thus:

- ... it has come to be noticed that at the time when there were wild animals' cattle breeders carried only sticks to defend themselves and their animals. Now that there are no wild animals the cattle breeder carries and uses sophisticated guns not to attack animals but his innocent fellow human being even in the face of alternative peaceful dispute resolution methods...
- ✓ **The era of the struggle for cattle colony and RUGA settlement policy:** In a bid to find solution to the conflict between crop growing farmers and herdsmen, the Federal Government inordinately proposed the establishment of cattle colony or RUGA settlement in different states of the federation. This move by the government was received with suspicion in some part of the country particularly in Christian dominated area of Southern Nigeria and some part of North Central and Middle Belt region. Some prominent leaders from these areas opposed the ideas on the ground that they did not have land to provide for cattle colony or RUGA while other leaders raised fear that provision of cattle colony to the Fulani herdsmen is a subtle agenda to Islamize and 'Fulanize' the country. The Christians view the herdsmen killings as Muslim jihadism in disguise. The Christians in the Southern Nigeria were apprehensive of such measures and as such their religious leaders in conjunction with socio-cultural organizations advised government to jettison the idea of cattle colony or RUGA settlement policy and embrace modern ranching system. The divergence in views as regards the appropriate solution to the conflict has not helped matter since their relation remains not cordial. Some states however established law to check the activities of open grazing. The Benue State Government enacted Benue State Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranching Establishment Law, 2017. This law which was opposed by the Fulani cattle rearers in the state under the aegis of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria heightened tension and soured relationship among government, Fulani-herdsmen and Benue crop growing farmers in the state.

6. CROP FARMERS-HERDSMEN CONFLICT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: OVERVIEW OF SOME INDICATORS

Conflict when not properly managed may degenerate into violent and intractable conflict. Crop farmers-herdsmen conflict which gradually manifested has degenerated into intractable violent social conflict which if not well managed may deteriorate into full blown ethnic civil war in Nigeria. The result of such conflict trends is destructions of lives and property. The people who become casualties and victims of such conflict are often cut off from contributing to national development; thereby decreasing the GDP of the nation. Infrastructure and social services are shattered leading to waste of resources and destructions of favorable environment that is pro national development.

Sadly, conflict creates atmosphere of horror, chaos, and loss of relative peace which is sine qua non for development to thrive, both at individual and national levels. Onu (2017) asserted that there is an established connection between peace and prosperity that the most peaceful societies are the most developed while societies with a background of violence are often underdeveloped societies. Factors of national development such as education, health, industrialization, and human capital are often disrupted and destroyed as a result of conflicts and this hinders national development. Specifically, the socio-economic development implications of crop farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria are analyzed below, using the following indicators.

6.1 Socio-economic Implications of Farmers-herdsmen Conflict on National Development

Under this study we explored the socio-economic development implications of the conflict between crop growing farmers and herdsmen under the following categories of indicators:

Loss of manpower: Gbaradi (2018) cited in Ajibo et al (2018) has a record of timeline that shows that 3,780 people have been killed by herdsmen attacks across different parts of Nigeria, excluding the injured and abducted ones. However, farmers in counter attacks have killed scores of herdsmen. Thus, loss of lives is on the increase daily as a result of the conflict. The lives lost constitute the workforce of the nation at macro-economic level which constitutes a critical element as the driving force in the economy of the nation. The working population made of the critical mass of skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, trained, knowledgeable professionals, educated workers, etc. play vital role in national development as they contribute to the GDP through their economic productivities. Thousands of the active labour force have been killed through

crop farmers-herdsmen violent conflict, millions abandoned their ancestry homes, farmsteads, and relocated to the Internally Displaced People's (IDPs) camps thus affecting the economic growth and national development negatively. Okoh (2019) reports on This Day Newspaper that on January 1, 2018, marauding herdsmen attacked and killed 73 persons in Guma and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue State. The herders went further to kill two Catholic priests in May, 2018, in Mbalon, Gwer Local Government Area of the state. In the same Benue State, it was reported by the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) that 483,699 persons are in various IDPs camps across the state due to the conflict (Uja, 2019). This is a glimpse of what is happening in other states affected by the conflict.

Human capital is the most decisive factor in national development, but regrettably this is the first casualty in any clash thereby retarding national growth and development. Eze (2005) posits that at the macro level of the society, the most valued resources of any nation is skillful and trained human resource popularly called human capital. Abah (2007) affirms this when he declared that productive utilization of physical resources depends on human capital. Unfortunately, the human capital (skilled and unskilled labour force of the nation) are being murdered gruesomely that Global Terrorism Index (GTI) in 2015 reported that Fulani herdsmen from 2010 to 2013 killed 80 people, but in 2014 alone the number surged to 1,229 thereby threatening the peace and stability of the country.

6.2 Food insecurity

Farmers-herdsmen conflict has unleashed hunger, disease of malnutrition like kwashiorkor, debilitating health conditions, etc. on the national population since crop growing farmers have abandoned their farmlands out of fear of being killed or raped by the marauding herdsmen. The conflicts have led to food scarcity, loss of revenue, loss of money used in importation of food that would have been produced by farmers locally, and hike in prices of food commodities. All these result in poor health of the nation, hardship, low standard of living, etc. which drag the nation backward in its journey to development. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2018) report has it that a whopping sum of 11 million Nigerians are under threat of hunger due to food insecurity as of August, 2017 with anticipated increase of the number in near future. This is dangerous and portends a grievous challenge to socio-economic and national development. Vanguard Newspaper (3rd April, 2019) shows that Global Report on Food Crisis 2019 found that a total number of 113 million people suffered food insecurity in the world's most severe food crises in 2018. The report categorically listed Nigeria among the 8 countries that made up the two-third of the 113 million population of the world with acute hunger, and also indicated that the causes of the food insecurity are conflict and climate-related disasters.

The ability of a nation to adequately feed itself in the right proportion (food security, food sufficiency, food availability, food nutritiousness, and food affordability) is a factor of social progress that engenders development in a nation since no country can develop by depending on others to feed her. Only citizens who are well fed and nourished can think reasonably and come up with ideas and implementation strategies to transform a country from one level of development to the other. Regrettably, the adverse effect of the conflict has unleashed hunger on the populace especially the dependent children to the extent that the government of president Buhari (2015-2019) engaged in School Feeding Programme across geopolitical zones to cushion the effects of food scarcity, hunger, and malnutrition on the under-aged school children. Meanwhile the sole purpose of all activities to ensure food security according to Roetter and Van (2007) is to have a healthy and well-nourished population that can develop its country. Thus, a healthy national population accelerates national development.

6.3 Increased rural poverty and unemployment

Peace and prosperity coexist. Where there is no peace, people hardly prosper. Onu (2017) asserts that there is a validated connection between peace and prosperity. He argued further that most peaceful societies are more prosperous unlike societies that are known with violence. The integrated scourge of rural poverty in Nigeria has been on the increase since the advent of crop farmers-herders conflict. This is because rural dwellers are predominantly farmers, whose lives, means of earning/livelihood, or farm produce are destroyed by the violent conflict, thus impoverishing the rural people. The conflict has increased the rate of unemployment in the country since people whose sources of income are in one way or the other connected to crop production, cattle rearing, beef meat, etc. are either forced out of business or suffer severe low patronage.

The conflict has dislocated the economic and national development plans thus making development lopsided by being concentrated only in the urban areas. This has contributed to increase in the rural poverty and widening the gap between rural and urban areas. This has resulted to failure in response to integrated rural development plan which according to Frantz (1968) is how to eradicate the "integrated rural poverty" which is achieved by pursuing integrated strategy that develop all sectors of the rural economy and carefully link them to the urban economy. This paves way for urban and rural hook ups that

promote forward and backward linkages between formal and informal sectors, farm and non-farm activities. Ezeani (1995) argues that 75% of Nigerian population dwelling in the rural areas relies on agriculture for their source of revenue, and as such, for a factual economic and national development to be achieved, it must add to the comfort of those living in the rural areas. But unfortunately, the source of livelihood (agriculture) and well-being of the rural inhabitants is threatened by herders menace. Undesirably, crop farmers-herdsmen conflict widens rural-urban dichotomy; rural poverty, rural-urban migration, rural neglect, rural misery, etc. to the detriment of the country at large.

Loss of property: People whose farms, houses, farm produce, etc. were destroyed or burnt by the conflict, and the economic values of the property when quantified leaves a huge minus to the national economic development strength. According to Ortom (2019) the people of Benue State has lost property worth about 400 billion naira due to herdsmen attack. This has led to forceful rural-urban migration, where able bodied youths who were in villages objectively for commercial farming have fled to urban areas thereby congesting the already overpopulated cities with pressures on the insignificant infrastructure and social services on ground. In the same vein, skulls of cattle have been lost to rustling and stealing which is a minus to the economic growth strength of the herders and the nation at large.

Scarcity of raw materials for industries: crop production provides raw materials for industrial uses, and likewise cattle rearing. The availability of most raw materials depend on farmers who produce them in the farm especially the cash crops like cotton, rubber, palm oil, cocoa, groundnut, etc. These raw materials used in production of finished economic goods are scarce because the conflict pushed farmers out of the farm. This makes prices of the end products of the raw materials to be very expensive thereby disrupting the natural flow or supply of the goods. The effect is reduction in Nigerian foreign exchange earnings because outside oil, we are producers of agricultural primary products in the international division of labour. Ohagwu (2010) asserts that 80% of the Nigerian population lives in the rural areas, and the wealth of the Nigeria is sourced from rural areas where raw materials are in abundance and exploited for national economic development. Thus, crop farmers-herdsmen conflict has adversely affected the critical mass of the population and the economy of the rural areas which contributes to the national economy. In this regard, Obodoechi (2009) observed that oil which constitutes the largest percentage of Nigerian foreign exchange earning is exploited mainly from rural areas; therefore, implicitly our national economy is dependent on rural economy which supplies all raw materials and at times labour needed for sustenance of urban industries. From time immemorial, the evolution of Nigeria economic development hinges squarely on two separate dominant sources which are agricultural dependent economy and petroleum dependent economy. According to *the Sunday Statesman* (Feb; 2, 1987) cited in Michael Olisa and Johnny Obiukwu (1992): *“The wealth which built modern Nigeria whether in the era of the dominance of agricultural commodities, or of petroleum, was derived from the rural areas”*. This vital role play by rural sector economy has been grossly jeopardized and truncated by crop farmers-herdsmen conflict and in so doing has dislocated the already established seamless and smooth systemic operational relationship between rural and urban sectors economies.

Psychopathological and social disorder: According to Ortom (2019), over 180,000 Benue people were registered in eight officially designated Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp while over 500,000 displaced individuals have been living with relatives in uncompleted buildings and open spaces across several local governments in the state. Psychologically, the emotional trauma of killings, loss of loved ones, survivors with amputations, and harrowing experiences from narrow escape from death, loss of means of livelihood, abduction, rape, and malnutrition stemming from crop farmers-herdsmen conflict cannot be over-estimated. The victims of crop farmers-herdsmen conflict usually suffer traumatic shock leading to emotional disorder that make most of them irrecoverable to normal path of living as they see live from the angle of hopelessness, helplessness, nothingness, and worthlessness. The horror brought by the conflict affects the psychic of the children who are also victims of starvation, thus the shock affects their childhood development and in most cases could lead to abnormalities and personality dysfunctionalities at adulthood. Ojeme (2019) reporting on UNICEF finding has it that more than 1 in 10 children worldwide are affected by armed conflict, and that American Academy of Pediatricians proclaimed that armed conflict poses a public challenge because, 246 million children were estimated to be living in conflict affected zones as at November 2018. No doubt, Nigeria as usual has its large share of this figure.

Destructions of the social fabrics: The moral values, sanctity of human life, sense of humanity, etc. upon which society thrives have been shattered by the conflict which disrupted the foundation upon which our society stands. The base and the superstructure of the society have been altered with impunity in the crop farmers-herdsmen conflict style. Crop farmers-herdsmen conflict has been politicized and succeeded in dividing Nigeria along religious and ethnic lines that promote bigotry. The conflict has induced hatred among the ethnic nationalities as crop farmers are against the herders, Christians against Moslems, the North against the South, etc. thereby creating strong ember of disunity, insecurity, disintegration, loss

of national cohesion and consciousness that threaten our collective social progress, aspiration, and corporate existence against the preambles and Chapter One of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria.

Economic loss: Nigeria is known as producer of primary agricultural commodities which are exported abroad as a source of foreign exchange earning thereby contributing to the GDP, economic growth, and national development. However, this status and means of earning has declined geometrically due to the conflict. This has stripped of the nation its economic power and investment ability needed to drive socio-economic and national development. In more concrete terms, Afolabi (2018) observed that the economic effect of herdsman menace is multi-pronged; it threatens cattle industry, and the GDP of 1.58 per cent it contributed to the economy in the Q3 of 2017, as against crop production that contributed 22.19 per cent. All losses through the conflict has element of economic undertone detrimental to national development. Fabiyi et al (2016) report that livestock production is responsible for one-third per cent of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the whole GDP in the country. Meanwhile more than 90% of the livestock in Nigeria belongs to the Fulani. Sadly, a reasonable chunk of the GDP from livestock and the entire agriculture in Nigeria have plummeted and their potentials emasculated as a result of the conflict. Warami (2017) reports that Nigerian former president; Abdulsalami Abubakar posits that Nigeria is losing \$13.7bn annually to crop herders-farmers conflict, a situation so bad to the economic opportunity and stability of the nation. In a similarly report, Ogundipe (2016) has it that farmers-herdsmen conflicts cost Nigeria \$14bn potential revenues annually according to the finding of Mercy Corps, a global humanitarian organization.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The study suggests that federal and state governments should be sincere and committed in enacting and enforcing laws that regulate activities of herdsman particularly as regards to open grazing.
- The security agents should closely monitor the activities of crop farmers and herdsman and perpetrators of attacks on farmers or herdsman should be diligently prosecuted by government to serve as deterrent to others.
- The herdsman should be de-militarized and re-orientated on modern grazing system such as modern ranching system.
- The community leaders and other community-based organizations should at all material time endeavor to enhance peaceful co-existence among different inhabitants in their areas via alternative dispute resolution mechanism.
- The government should guard its boarder effectively to prevent foreigners and militants who enter the country through the porous borders to cause attacks on farmers.

8. CONCLUSION

Crop farmers-herdsmen relationship in Nigeria has been relatively cordial particularly in those days when both groups co-operate as mutually dependent units of the agricultural system. Unfortunately, the situation has changed and the two groups are in war path over the control of land and other resources. The inability of the government and other stake holders to effectively manage the conflicts between the two groups; the politicization of the situation; religious sentiments; porous border; arms proliferation and wide spread militancy have worsen the conflict-situation. The escalating violent conflict has adversely affected the national economic development and thus should be quickly addressed with commitment and sincerity by government and other stakeholders through pragmatic measures as suggested in this study.

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