Socialscientia Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities

Resource Conflict and Food Security: Implications for Peace-building in Nigeria

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Abstract

The use of resources, especially land and water has remained a major source of conflict among users of all kinds. Over the years, but more recently, conflict between farmers and herders in the use of the agricultural land and water points has become fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria. The conflict has not only heightened the level of insecurity, but have also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate food crisis in Nigeria, due to loss of lives, animals, destruction of crops and valuable property and forced displacement of sedentary farmers. This study therefore investigated resource conflict and food security in Nigeria. It was based on secondary methods and materials and relied human needs theory as a framework of analysis. The study found that there is a significant relationship between resource conflict, exemplified in the farmer-herder conflict and food security in Nigeria. The study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between farmer-herder conflict and food security in terms of availability of food, accessibility of food and sustainability of food supply in Nigeria. The study recommends the need for government's intervention to ensure the adoption of modern methods of agricultural practices and animal husbandry. It also recommends for strong political will from governments at all levels in resolving resource conflicts between farmers and herders. These, among others, will resolve the recurring conflict and ensure food security in Nigeria.

Keywords: Food Security, Nigeria, peace-building, resource conflict

Introduction

The history of transhumance, where pastoralists have crossed the Sahel, following seasonal patterns that allow their herds to graze, often on the farming land of sedentary communities, dates back to centuries (Day & Caus, 2019). Meanwhile, longstanding agreements between pastoralists and farmers have allowed for relatively peaceful transhumance, with strong local and traditional mediation capacities as the frontline of de-escalation when conflicts did arise. However, recent happenings (Kwaja and Smith, 2020), have seen these arrangements come under increasing pressure for a number of interrelated reasons: the expansion of agriculture to meet increasing food demands has fragmented traditional migratory routes; longer, hotter seasons resulting from climate change have pushed pastoralists further southwards into areas traditionally dominated by farmers; and significant demographic growth has placed greater pressure on scarce resources, land in particular (Haan et al, 2016). This has led to rapidly escalating tensions amongst herders and a range of farming communities in the Sudano-Sahel region, but especially, Nigeria, with hundreds of thousands killed and a more number displaced from their abodes.

Thus, in the past decade (2010 -2020), conflicts between pastoralists and farmers have grown in intensity resulting in the avoidable deaths of thousands of Nigerians, destruction of local communities, and sources of livelihoods. These conflicts have continued to increase in spread and intensity that they are currently threatening the survival of Nigeria as a nation, both in terms of national cohesion and food security. The conflicts in Nigeria, as with those in most parts of Sub- Saharan Africa, are over access to natural resources and, in some cases, other antecedent historical and political factors. As Nwokolo (2018, p. 12) captures it, "competition over the use of natural resources, which is first and foremost an economic issue, is then driven by political, cultural, religious, and ethnic causes or considerations. Thus, resource use conflicts such as land conflicts or farmer-herder struggles become very high-stake and intertwined in politics.

It is also noteworthy that, with the astronomical expansion of Nigeria's human population presupposes that the infrastructure that has been built up to support this rapid population expansion has increased the sphere of demographic activities such that there is now more demands for land and water resources for other human and industrial activities (Nwokolo, 2018). More so, Okoro (2018) affirms that farmers need more land to meet increasing food demands for the growing population especially as some of the land under cultivation have been lost to erosion, desert encroachment, reduced fertility from overuse, etc. Likewise, pastoralists are having increasing demand for access to pasture and water bodies. Essentially, farmers and pastoralists have been on a collision course in their competition over arable land.

The foregoing is in tandem with Brottem and McDonnell (2020) that conflicts involving pastoralist populations are intimately linked to macro-economic and environmental shifts in the Sudano-Sahel. Suffice it to add that landscapes across the Sudano-Sahel have dramatically changed over the past half century in ways that substantially impact the practice of nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralism. In some cases, this competition has resulted in disputes and conflicts between pastoral herders and farmers due to livestock migration into new territory as well as agricultural encroachment into areas that historically served as grazing areas or corridors for livestock migration. At the same time, growing urban populations have been driving substantial increases in demand for meat, outpacing the production capacity of some countries and fueling a need to expand livestock production generally. This phenomenon is sometimes portrayed as a manifestation of population-induced scarcity, which leads some to identify the source of the conflict as resource conflict (Potts, Henderson, & Campbell, 2013).

Yet, there is a transnational dimension to this resource conflict. As Kwaja and Smith (2020) submit, Conflicts involving farmers and herders pose a critical risk to regional stability as these resource-related conflicts intersect with political, social, and economic interests. The conflicts are complex: they are decentralized, transcend multiple national borders, and exacerbate existing (and in some cases create) socio-political tensions such as criminality, vigilantism, and religious and ethnic divisions. The manifestation of the conflicts is unique to the place where it occurs, but there are underlying and exacerbating factors that are common to different parts of the regions. A piecemeal "whack-a-mole" approach to addressing these conflicts without full consideration of their transnational dimensions will hinder the reduction of violence.

Statement of the Problem

Historical tensions between farmers and herders have intensified in recent years, with dwindling natural resources and land availability greatly contributing to the escalating conflict in the country (Bagu & Smith, 2017). Competition for scarce resources driven conflicts between farmers and herders have become common occurrences in many parts of Nigeria. The competition between these two agricultural land user-groups has often times turned into serious overt and covert hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. In most encounters between farmers and herders, citizens are regularly killed, displaced and the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer. The frequency and scale of these conflicts have become alarming, affecting food production and availability. Aside the loss of lives and destruction of property, incessant resource conflicts have forced farmers to abandon their fertile farmlands, rendering several farming communities deserted and have consequently reduced crop farmers to tenants in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. This constitutes a threat to food security in Nigeria. As Bagudu (2017) posits, the effects of these events is the looming hunger, famine and general food insecurity in Nigeria.

Although, the consequences of herders and farmers' conflict in Nigeria, especially the Middle Belt region, seem to have been so obvious to many, both within and outside the Nigeria, there has been scarce attention and analysis of the cost of this resource conflict, as it relates to food security in Nigeria. Yet, this conflict threatens the prospects for food security in Nigeria and therefore calls for an empirical study. What then is the impact of the protracted farmer-herder conflict on food security in Nigeria? While these extant works are resourceful, they have largely neglected implications of transhumance on resource scarcity in Nigeria, especially as it relates to food security in terms of availability of food, the sustainability of food supply and accessibility. It is against this background that this study attempts to fill this gap in the existing body of literature.

Conceptual Review

Resource Scarcity Resources are regarded as the availability of necessary supplies required to maintain life, or a specific quality of life, and is one of the fundamental ideas that an economy is built on. Resources are usually scarce and scarcity is the primary problem that comes about with economic management due to the fact that human wants are unlimited in quantity, but the various resources we have available on our planet to fill human needs are limited and therefore must be managed, rationed and careful choices must be made in distribution of resources (Heyne, Boeftke & Prychitko (2014, p. 105). Again, the condition of scarcity in the real world necessitates competition for scarce resources, and competition occurs when people strive to meet the criteria that are being used to determine who gets what.

Furthermore, resource scarcity and conflicts are mainly outgrowth of lack of equity, justice, and fairness on the allocation of the available scarcity resources. The conflict over natural resource such as land is universal nowadays. The implication is that everywhere people are competing for the natural resources to enhance their livelihoods. Thus, resource conflict, a major output of poor resource governance, is a formidable threat to both natural resources and human security. It is also detrimental to rural livelihoods, food security, and social co-existence. This appears to be the

challenge in the Nigeria and especially among and between farmers and herders, where such uprisings are recently evident. Implicit in this line of conception is that the scarcity of resources is a major driver of conflict, especially in the situation of famers and herders which is clear reflection of competition for survival.

Conflict There have been a plethora of attempts at conceptualising the term, conflict. According to Akpuru-Aja (2009, p.12), "conflict involves two or more parties that have or perceive incompatibility in their interests and values or in strategy of achieving the ends desired. He further maintained that "conflict is a frustration based attitude of protest against lack of opportunities for development and against lack recognition and identity. Again, the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. The use of force and armed violence in pursuit of incompatible interests and goals produce armed conflict. Thus, conflict is ontologically immersed in human insatiable and often incompatible wants. Conflict can be defined as the manifestation of hostile attitude in the face of conflicting interests between individuals, groups or states. This conflicting interest can be over resources, identity, power, status or values. While conflict is an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence, violent conflict, which is a resort to the use of force and violence in the pursuit of incompatible goals and interests by different groups, is not inevitable and as such, is an anomaly.

More so, conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have or think they have incompatible goals. According to Miller (2005), conflicts are a fact of life, inevitable and often creative. It occurs when people pursue goals that clash or seem so. According to Epelle and Uranta (2014, p.529), "conflicts assume violent character when physical force is exerted for purposes of violating, damaging or abusing". Consequently, violent conflict occurs when parties seek to attain their goals by violent means and try to dominate or destroy the opposing parties' ability to pursue their own interests. In this work, violent conflict can be defined as manifestation of hostile attitude in the face of conflicting interests between individuals, groups or states.

Conflict connotes clash or disagreement between two or more groups who have incompatible and sometimes competing differences. It is a situation in where two or more parties pursue similar goals but believe that such goals are achievable by just one of them and as such employ every resource within their disposal to hinder the other party from the attainment of such goal. In other words, conflicts could be seen as any personal divergence of interest between individuals, or groups, which occasionally become confrontational and culminate in physical violence (Keghku, Alom & Fanafa, 2019).

Conflict is therefore the product of the existence of incompatible goals, interests and pursuits in which the actors involved may employ the use of violence or not. It usually occurs when the interest of a group is articulated, aggregated and put forward in opposition to the goal or targets of another group. Violent conflict occurs when parties seek to attain their goals by violent means and try to dominate or destroy the opposing parties' ability to pursue their own interests. In this work, violent conflict can be defined as manifestation of hostile attitude in the face of conflicting interests between individuals, groups or states.

Food Security There is a plethora of attempts at defining food security. According to Idachaba (2004), food security simply refers to the ability of individuals and households (especially the rural and urban poor) to meet staple food needs all year

round. Again, food security is seen as a state of affairs where all people at all times have access to safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life (Gurkarm, 2005). In addition, the World Food Summit (2003) asserts that food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This definition, according to Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO, 2008), has four dimensions, which implies that there must be: (a) Physical Availability of Food: Food availability addresses the "supply side" of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade. (b) Economic and physical Access to Food: An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices in achieving food security objectives. (c) Food Utilization: Utilization is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, and diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food. Combined with good biological utilization of food consumed, this determines the nutritional status of individuals. (d) Stability of the other three dimensions over time: Even if your food intake is adequate today, you are still considered to be food insecure if you have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of your nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on your food security status.

Thus, for food security objectives to be realized, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously. It is also clear from the foregoing that, food crisis can occur when at a point in time it is no longer possible for people to have access to food or even have the capacity to purchase it.

Peacebuilding The concept of "peacebuilding" has been defined by Galtung (1975, pp. 297-298) as "an endeavor aiming to create sustainable peace by addressing the "root causes" of violent conflict and eliciting indigenous capacities for peaceful management and resolution of conflict". For Lederach (1997, pp. 84-85), "peacebuilding "is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships". Thus, cultivating an "infrastructure for peacebuilding" means being oriented toward the building of relationships that in their totality form new patterns, processes, and structures. Peacebuilding is therefore understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. It is a wide range of activities that contribute towards the transformation of society into a just and harmonious order and the development of an infrastructure capable of maintaining and sustaining peace. Peacebuilding activities address the root causes or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution and stabilize society politically and economically.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts and applies the Human Needs Theory as a most suitable theoretical framework. The Theory was developed in the 1970s and 1980s as a generic or holistic theory of human behaviour. It is based on the hypothesis that humans have basic needs that have to be met in order to maintain stable societies. Human Needs can be defined as a state of felt deprivation and necessity which have to satisfied (Burton, 1990). Human needs theory lays stress on the satisfaction of needs essential for human beings, required for his survival, which when compromised act as a major source of conflict. As Burton (1979) avers, we believe that the human participants in conflict situations are compulsively struggling in their respective institutional environments at all social levels to satisfy primordial and universal needs – such as security, identity, recognition, and development. More so, individuals strive increasingly to gain the control of their environment that is necessary to ensure the satisfaction of these needs. This struggle cannot be curbed; it is primordial (Burton, 1979). This struggle for primordial needs is theoretically related to the Frustration-Aggression theory which is based on the stimulus-response hypothesis (Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer and Sears, 1939). The frustration of not satisfying these needs leads to aggression and subsequently, conflict. What distinguishes Human Needs theory from the Frustration-Aggression theory is that the former is concerned only with absolute requirements (needs) while the latter is also concerned with wants and desires. Thus, unless identity needs are met in multi-ethnic societies, unless in every social system there is distributive justice, a sense of control, and prospects for the pursuit of all other human societal developmental needs, instability and conflict are inevitable (Burton, 1990). There are bold assumptions in this theory.

Furthermore, Maslow (1970) identified physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs; and classified them hierarchically into five stages in a definite order of priority. According to him, the more basic needs or wants which have the greatest potency must have to be gratified in an individual before he would strive to meet the higher needs. Similarly, Burton (1979) lists response, stimulation, security, recognition, distributive justice, meaning, need to appear rational and develop rationality, need for sense of control and the need for role defence. He refers to some needs as basic and these include food, shelter, sex, reproduction, etc. (Burton, 1979). More so, some basic needs like security, distinctive justice, social recognition of identity and effective participation in the process that shape such identities. Again, basic human needs comprise physical, physiological, social and spiritual needs. According to him, to provide access to food and deny or hinder access to another freedom of worship will amount to denial and could make people to resort to violence in an effort to protect these needs.

The strengths of this theory are that it has wide applicability. While some see it merely as a tool to be applied in prevention or post-conflict peacebuilding, practitioners like Rosenberg (2003) use Human Needs Theory in mediation in violent conflicts. Another major strength of the theory is that it focuses on the source of conflict, looking at how best the parties can have their needs met, and those of others. Human Needs Theory also emphasizes common humanity (Maslow, 1970). In a world context where differences are accentuated, Human Needs Theory attempts to unify human beings from different regions and cultures, creating a common understanding of who we are and how others need and feel the same way we do. However, Human Needs

Theory has some weaknesses that lead to its drawbacks. Firstly, there are several discrepancies between the various theorists, even between Burton (1979) and Rosenberg (2003), who agree that all needs are universal, non-hierarchical and complementary. Secondly, should we prioritise certain needs over others? Is Maslow right in asserting that needs for food and shelter should be met before considering needs for self-esteem and self-fulfillment? Or is protection, rest and play equally important to secure human well-being? Thirdly, there seems to be an exaggerated belief in the importance of dialogue (Abiodun, 2012).

The relevance of this theory is that it recognizes and legitimizes bandits' needs in Nigeria. It posits that the needs of all individual citizens and groups must be met. This helps to move the conflict from zero-sum to win-win. The abstraction of 'human needs' helps to eliminate the sense of mutually exclusive goals. These needs are not satisfied at the expense of the other community, but are realized along with the other community's needs. These needs are not mutually exclusive or gained at the expense of another; they are universal. It must be emphasized that the Human Needs Theory is significant and important as it shows us how conflicts can be managed and resolved through the satisfaction of basic human needs. Again, the theory stresses on the source or the origin of the dispute and looks towards resolution by satisfying the needs of the parties involved. Another reason why the Human Needs Theory is treated as an asset is because it works towards uniting human beings, makes us understand how the other party feels when their needs are deprived and provides us with a platform to aid in peacebuilding.

Consequently, the key to human needs theory is the identification of the needs that are unmet which would lead to the conflict. The Human Needs model states that in order for resolution both the parties must sit together and acknowledge each other and their views, opinions regarding the issue. This mode of acknowledging and stepping into the other party's shoe is called as 'Empathy.' Empathy is essential in the process of conflict resolution and analysis. The major issue between the two nations is the lack of trust due to the number of wars and tactics that have been employed by the nations over the decades, and thus in order for the conflict to be resolved, trust building exercises are a must between the nations, and sitting together and empathizing with each other is surely a start. Other examples of trust building exercises can include bringing troops back from tense areas and cooling the tense environment between the armed forces of the two nations.

Human Needs Strategies aims at the integrative approach and tries to make the situation win-win for both the parties, thus any solution which encompasses the issues relating to both the nation shall be considered and eventually the conflict would cool down and be resolved. If all the needs of the parties are satisfied, then it is probable to find a win-win solution.

An Overview of the Farmer-Herder Resource Conflict in Nigeria
The Nigerian State has increasingly witnessed a bourgeoning, rampant, and complex scale of violent conflicts, threatening its peace, order, and corporate existence. Of particular interest, the Middle Belt region of Nigeria has been locked in a protracted and worsening cycle of violent conflict over the last decade (2010-2020), between herders and the sedentary agrarian communities in the Middle Belt and the Southern States like Enugu, Edo, and Oyo (Bagu & Smith, 2017, International Crisis Group, ICG,

2017 and Amnesty International, 2018). Although the occurrence of violent confrontations between sedentary crop farmers and nomadic herders has been in existence for several years in Nigeria, recent trends and dynamics indicate an upsurge of this conflict in frequency and intensity (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

Again, recent findings (Awotokun, Nwozor and Olarenwaju, 2020 and ICG, 2020) affirm that the conflict, among others, has humanitarian, social, economic, and security impacts on the Middle Belt and the country at large. Besides, the farmer-herder conflict has created a domino effect of security problems and inflicted serious costs on the Nigerian economy in terms of loss of resources and human lives as well as jeopardized the prospects of meeting the global goals of poverty eradication and zero hunger (Awotokun, Nwozor and Olarenwaju, 2020). Again, the violent conflict between the two groups has killed more than 10,000 people in the last decade, with 40% of the fatalities occurring in the last two years alone (Ilo, Jonathan-Ichaver & Ademalekun, 2019). This fact resonates with the report of Amnesty International (2018), which submits that the total number of deaths between 2016 and 2018 alone was 3,641. While it is difficult to know the exact number of victims of the attacks, especially when the attacks are massive, it has been submitted that, between January 2017 and May 7th, 2020, 654 attacks took place, with more than 2,539 people killed, 393 wounded, 253 kidnapped, 16 raped, more than 7,582 homes and 24 places of worship destroyed (Bazan, 2020).

Meanwhile, government responses to the conflict have been largely reactive and dependent on the use of military or physical force to end the conflict. In other words, government relied on the military and police operations, by prescribing harsher punishments for armed attacks. Yet, these actions did not curb the escalating violence (ICG, 2020). Suffice it to reiterate that, despite various military interventions (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018) to the different manifestations of this conflict, key gaps and opportunities remain to better prevent and manage the recurring violent conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria.

Furthermore, state governments have responded variously to the conflict. While Adamawa and Plateau states have established peace commissions or committees to promote farmer-herder dialogue and resolve conflicts, others like Ekiti, Benue and Taraba states have enacted legislations prohibiting or regulating open grazing in their states (Egbuta, 2018). Again, in Edo state, the government plans to create fenced grazing areas with watering facilities, requiring herders to feed their cattle there and pay for the service. In May 2016, the governor of Abia state, Okezie Ikpeazu, revived a local vigilante outfit popularly known as the Bakassi Boys and deployed them to rural areas to respond to the conflict between farmers and herders. Two months later, the Cross River state government announced plans to set up a 3,000-member "Homeland Security Service" to carry out activities such as providing intelligence on herders' movements and activities (ICG, 2017).

Although these measures may have reduced clashes in some areas, they have made the situation worse in some other places. In Benue, for instance, the state government passed the Open-Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law in 2017. In implementation, this law faced multiple challenges as herders, under the aegis of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) felt they were being targeted and that there were not provisions in place to make the law successful. In this case, the implementation of the law coincided with drastic increases in violence in the

state. Similarly, the expulsion of herder groups in other places only deepened their resentment.

Given the seeming inability of the various interventions by the federal and state governments in effectively resolving and/or successfully managing the resource-based conflict, it has become necessary to explore the role of peacebuilding in the management of the protracted conflict. It must be reiterated that there are a complex combination of factors that drive conflicts between farming and herding communities. These factors intersect and overlap in different ways throughout the country, manifesting in highly localized situations of violence. As such, they are necessary players to involve in peacebuilding. It is noteworthy that peacebuilding requires continuous contact consultation, deliberative dialogue, inclusion of all views, and development of processes with a focus on understanding accurately the sources of violence and addressing them through a range of non-violent strategies.

Impact of Resource Conflict on Food Security in Nigeria

There has been renewed interest in food security related issues in many developing nations, including Nigeria. This renewed interest is occasioned by the dramatic rise in food prices across the globe occasioned by increased global food demand, diminishing global food reserves, erratic weather patterns, increased cost of petroleum products, illegal land use, resource conflict, among others (Uche & Uche, 2014). As Uker and Orkar (2019) aver, conflicts have introduced an entirely new approach to food insecurity drive. It is noteworthy that conflict has consistently distorted the local food chain and the purchasing power of the farmers thus influencing the level of their food security. It is thus expedient to emphasize that food security can only exist when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Martin-Shields & Stojetz, 2018).

Conflicts within the context of violence, disasters and household food provision has limited this concept at both the family and national levels thus making many households in various communities around the world including Nigeria to struggle for food supply. There is no gainsaying the obvious that Nigeria has faced some intractable resource conflict tussles between farmers and herders over the years, which have adverse effects on food security in Nigeria. According to FAO and World Food Programme (WFP, 2019), the beneficial relationship that has existed between farmers and pastoralist over the years has become more confrontational and uncooperative, thus leading to a serious demerit to food security. More so, the confrontation between farmers and herders in Nigeria has led to serious displacement of people and has also resulted to loss of livelihood, lives and properties. Most of its impact has been felt in the rural areas where the smallholder farmers in charge of the bulk of the food production in the country reside.

It has been aptly submitted by Uker and Orkar (2019) that violent conflict places food security in jeopardy. They maintained that this has been the experience of Benue State, Nigeria, which is known to be the Nigeria's food basket that has constantly been challenged by herdsmen-farmers clashes. The conflict rendered many crop farmers displaced and now depending on humanitarian aids in displaced camps. It is important to add that most of these farmers do not even have coping strategies to overcome this menace thus making them more vulnerable to conflict shocks. The

reduction in human capital as well as physical and social capital, has strong implications for food security (Martin-Shields and Stojetz 2018). This has been demonstrated on the rural population in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camps in Benue state because their capacity to produce food has been significantly reduced which also translates to less food supply to satisfy the urban population, thus aggravating households' food insufficiency, poor markets, poor and deficient diets and poor health care. Considering that the rural population has always have less of these available to them, the impact of conflict has resulted to a worse scenario. Again, since their displacement, there has been a challenge of food insufficiency and nutritional insecurity which has been seriously affecting their welfare. The overall protein intake in the majority of the households in the camps was low; this explains the place of nutritional insecurity in the camps. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2017), has argued that, irrespective of labour diversification, agriculture still remain the main source of employment to people living in the rural areas. It is thus rational to state that farmers are the ones mostly affected by resource conflicts since they basically depend on farming activities for their livelihood and survival. This collaborate with the assertions by Martin-Shields and Stojetz (2018) that, one of the impacts of conflict on farming households is lower daily energy supply. More so, Internally Displaced Persons and host families in many conflict areas are faced with an alarming challenge of food needs and food availability (FAO and WFP 2019).

Similarly, given the fact that farming is the mainstay of the local economy in the rural areas affected by banditry, the disruption in farming due to bandit attacks affect agricultural productivity with serious implications for food security. Majority of the farming communities were forced to abandon their farms especially areas in proximity to the forest areas, as bandits exploited these locations to attack communities. The West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP, 2020), avers that few farmers who stayed behind were subjected to taxation by the bandits before accessing their farms. Thus, while farming activities in were restricted to few areas thus resulting in a decline in food production and food security, the dwindling income of local farmers and other vulnerable groups especially women, also affect their capacity to support children's education and household income. In the same vein, banditry has escalated, where farmers are slaughtered, cattle rustled, crops stolen or wasted, thus, compounding the woes of Nigerian peasants who make greater percentage of food consumed in Nigeria (Musa, 2021). More so, the attacks on farmers and their farms by bandits further degenerates nutritional availability for Nigerians.

More so, the flow of illicit firearms in communities of North-West region and Nigeria in general, is also a cause for security concern. Apart from fatalities recorded, bandits' attacks on communities increased social risks, discouraged investment and triggered economic crises for individuals and communities. The conflict is causing a spill-over effect on other neighboring communities and local government areas of Niger State in the North-Central region, hindering inter-communal and inter-state trade. Again, the insecurity has a significant impact on other economic activities in the region, as a number of major local markets due to incessant attacks (WANEP, 2020). The strategic nature of the trading locations made them attractive to major merchants from across other regions of the country for foodstuff including maize, millet, guinea corn and beans. However, the proximity of these markets to the forest reserves made

them vulnerable to attacks. This had an adverse effect on trading activities, as revenue generation and market sales/supplies in the markets declined.

Implications of the Resource Conflict for Peacebuilding in Nigeria

Given the seeming inability of the various interventions by the federal and state governments in effectively resolving and or successfully managing the violent conflicts, it has become necessary to explore peacebuilding processes in effectively managing conflict. Suffice it to add that peacebuilding proposes a strategy of engagement (Laderech, 2018). Similarly, Albert (2019) asserts that peacebuilding suggests continuous contact, consultation, deliberative dialogue, inclusive of all views and development of processes with a focus on understanding accurately, the sources of violence, and addressing them through a range of non-violent change strategies. Thus, peacebuilding attempts to transform `conflicts by creating societies that can address conflict without violence.

It is noteworthy that peacebuilding approaches have shifted from a pure focus on security and peacekeeping, to establishing the socio-economic conditions for peace. This has been spurred by evidence on the linkages between poverty and conflict (Collier, et al. 2003) and increased interest in conflict-related issues by development agencies. The 2004 Utstein Report is a good example of the broadening of the concept of peacebuilding (Smith, 2004). This influential report outlines a framework of peacebuilding activities, where providing physical security is as important as establishing good governance and the socio-economic foundations of long-term peace. It acknowledges that development, a return to democratic governance and the guarantee of a secure environment represent the most promising approach to post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding.

Therefore, peacebuilding is now understood more broadly. It often covers all activities related to preventing outbreaks of violence, transforming armed conflicts, finding peaceful ways to manage conflict, and creating the socioeconomic and political pre-conditions for sustainable development and peace. Such a broad concept of peacebuilding, however, suffers from including nearly all socio-economic development, poverty reduction or democratization efforts, making it difficult to determine when peacebuilding activities end and regular development activities begin. In this vein, implicit causal linkages are constructed between general development activities and peacebuilding objectives, but there is little evidence to substantiate these links. Service delivery, for example, is seen as conducive to peacebuilding by helping to establish conditions conducive to peace.

One of the ways and the most common that the State in Nigeria has always employed in the management of violent conflict has been the use of force. The effectiveness of the use of force as conflict management technique leaves much to be desired. In other words, the use of force in the management of violent conflict has failed and has been counter-productive in many conflict situations like the Niger Delta imbroglio. Consequently, as WANEP (2020) advocates, integrative response approaches that require a combination of conflict management mechanisms such as consultation of actors and communities affected, dialogue, community policing, amnesty, reconciliation and security reforms is key to the mitigation of banditry in Nigeria. For instance, peace initiatives through amnesty programs and Demobilization

and Reintegration (DDR) efforts are laudable efforts (Momale, Nawaj & Dupeyras, 2019).

More so, the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including, security agencies, traditional, religious leaders, Hausa and Fulani communities, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), Farmer Associations and local vigilante groups can give more credibility, with seeming commitment of top political leadership towards inclusive processes (WANEP, 2020). The participation of relevant stakeholders, especially peacebuilding experts and civil society organizations would further erase all perceived political issues in the reform process and make the process transparent. This also creates an enabling environment to sustain peace agreements. Thus, peace and reconciliatory interventions can result in the reduction of attacks and open armed confrontations, while encouraging the recovery of weapons, return of seized property, release of abducted persons and members of bandit groups.

Moreover, the successes of reform process have been attributed to inclusivity, credibility, transparency, public participation, appropriate and clear rules of procedures and an implementation plan. In expanding the peace initiatives, the roles of critical non-state actors to peace and development, community policing, including intelligence gathering and conflict resolution are relevant. Nonetheless, consolidating the peace process would involve sustainable platforms for dialogue, improved community policing and multi-stakeholder consultations. This will lead to strengthening the conflict prevention, management and peacebuilding at the community, State and national levels.

Conclusion and Recommendations

All human livelihoods and activities are directly or indirectly dependent on land and water at varying thresholds. Yet, land and water resources are limited and as such, the competition over these scarce resources in the Sudano-Sahel region, especially in Nigeria, has increased the prevalence of violent conflict between farmers and herders, because they are among those whose source of livelihood are mostly threatened. Competition for access to the diminishing land and freshwater resources is often pitched between farmers and herders. Thus, the farmer-herder conflict is basically as a result of access to, use of, and control of ecological resources such as land and water resources for the purpose of crop farming and cattle grazing in order to make a living. This phenomenon of conflict among herders and farmers is "resource conflict," which threatens the prospects for food security not only in the country at large. Again, the herders who were known for going about their daily transhumance business using sticks to scare away wild animals now go about with sophisticated weapons of warfare such as AK-47s and assault rifles among others. This has resulted to high casualties in recent years. Thus, there is need for something to be urgently done to address these conflicts, for food security to be guaranteed. The effect of the farmers and herders conflicts has resulted to a major challenge of food insecurity. The crop farmers, who are mostly rural dwellers are further impoverished, suffer loss of lives, displacement of persons and unavailability of food or access to food.

The following recommendations are hereby made to enhance the relationship between farmers and herders in Nigeria and the Sudano-Sahel region, as well as improve the mechanisms for managing the conflicts and enhancing food security: (a) Governments at all level in Nigeria should encourage modern agricultural practices to

boost food production through providing easily accessible credit facilities to farmers and cattle breeders. This will encourage them to invest in modern methods of food production, encourage the herders to more sedentary and all will go to boost food and dairy production. (b) The various tiers of government should work in unison to agree and ensure modern and good practices of crop production and animal husbandry. This should include agricultural mechanization and the establishment of model ranches for animal breeders and animal rearers. (c) Federal government should engage peace and conflict resolution experts and civil society organisations in dealing with issues concerning herdsmen-farmer crises. This will enable effective dialogue, negotiations and of course a win-win resolution, while encouraging early warning mechanism. (d) The federal government should move beyond the deployment of security agencies and exercise alternative community based responses to farmers-herders conflicts. Though the military can play a key role in stabilization, conflict issues that are better served by the police or community-based mechanisms. The federal government should therefore collaborate with the state and local governments to build up alternative responses that utilize dialogue and mediation as de-escalation techniques with the conflicting parties. (e) Governments at all levels must make deliberate efforts to address the challenges of human security by addressing livelihood issues. The government must stimulate job creation and guide inclusive growth, so as to reduce the high levels of poverty, unemployment, and social misery in both urban and rural areas.

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