

Effects of Crop Farmers / Pastoralists Conflicts on Sustainable Livelihood Assets and Strategies of Displaced Farmers in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

One of the effects of crop farmers/pastoralists conflicts is displacement of the farming population the world over, Nigeria not exceptional. This work investigates the effects of conflicts on livelihood strategies and assets of displaced farmers in Imo state. A total of 300 crop farmers was selected randomly from the affected communities. Questionnaire complimented with oral discussion were used to elicit information from the respondents. Data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviation presented in tables. Results showed that major livelihood strategies of the crop farmers were farming with 100 percent response, followed by wage labour (94.6%), sales of wild fruits (70%) and migration of work labour outside the community (73.3%). Conflicts affect livelihood strategies by restriction of movement which prevents farmers from moving and risks to personal safety (72.3%). Conflicts affect all the five livelihood assets beginning with the social assets by its disruption of community life (M=2.79), collapse of local authority (M=3.40), disruption of family goals/life (M=2.50) among others. On the human assets, conflicts leads to death of laborers /farmer workers (M=3.32), sexual harassment (M=2.56), separation of family members (M=2.45). The physical assets affected included disruption of health services and infrastructures, closure of schools, looting of possessions among others, while the financial and natural assets affected included destruction of crops and animals, market closure, destruction of water wells, contamination of water, and low abandoned and limited asset to farm

Keyword: Assets, Displaced farmers, Conflicts, Livelihoods, Pastoralists, Strategies

Introduction

Nigeria is today, facing a severe internal and security threat due to the activities and actions of the Fulani herdsmen. Most worrisome and disturbing in the present development is the pillaging, raping, killing and kidnapping by the so called Fulani herdsmen. Stories are heard and found in the national dailies on daily basis of how these shepherds strategically attack several communities and houses, with sophisticated assault guns [1].

In recent times, the killings recorded by Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers clash has rampaged most communities displacing them of their farmlands and loss of their major source of livelihood. This is becoming unbearable with the Fulani herdsmen always having their ways leaving the farmers at their mercy. Herdsmen attribute the roots of the crisis to religious differences resulting in the killing of their cows while the farmers see the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural produce since the herdsmen allow their cows to feed on the farmer crops. This recent wave of violence in Nigeria as observed by [2] has disrupted socioeconomic, religious and educational activities, political instability and threatened

the national unity in Nigeria. These extra judiciary killings have forced thousands of people to abandon their homes and farmlands for safety.

According to [3, 4], the conflicts in most part of Nigeria especially the Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash are largely uncalled for. Farmers can no longer farm peacefully because of Fulani herdsmen. These Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash have pitched Christians and Muslims against each other. Recent studies conducted by [2, 3] have shown that, serious conflict erupt between Fulani herdsmen and farmers leading to loss of lives, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce. The latest attacks by Fulani herdsmen is on the upsurge, with the most latest attacks in February 2018 happening in Benue State, Taraba State, Nassarawa State and few cases of attack in other states [1].

In recent times, there have been prevalent cases of herders-farmers clashes in Nigeria. [5] noted that in Densina, Adamawa State, 28 people were killed; while about 2,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in a clash between them. Similarly, [6] submits

that the violence has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu States and left them under the care of relatives or in makeshift Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives. However, among the Tiv and other farmers in the North-Central, South-South, South-East and North-Eastern regions, cases of conflicts with herdsmen are endless. The resultant effects are usually loss of lives and crops, destruction of properties, displacement of persons, decline in income/savings; as well as threat to food and national security.

In Nigeria, most herdsmen do not own land but graze their livestock in host communities [7]. While a few have adopted the more sedentary type of animal husbandry, the increasing crises between farmers and nomadic herdsmen presupposes that grazing is a major means of animal rearing in Nigeria. The sedentary type of animal husbandry also proves to be more expensive, difficult to manage and inefficient for the rapid growing market of an ever increasing Nigerian population. However, over the years, the presence of the nomads and their cattle has provoked violent clashes in several communities across the country. Apart from the language and cultural barriers which usually spots out the nomads as strangers, the audacity with which they shepherd their flocks to graze on available vegetation on their route has often attracted protests from the host communities. This scenario has given rise to an unhealthy rivalry between farmers and herdsmen leading to violence, loss of lives and property.

In some cases, a good number of community residents, mostly farmers are wiped out and those fortunate to escape have become refugees in other places. Between the year 2000 till date, there have been reported cases of conflicts and confrontation between the nomads and the indigenes of the areas they migrated to with their flocks. The media is also awash with reported cases of clashes between the nomads from the North and the inhabitants of Plateau, Benue, Nassarawa, Kogi, Kastina, Kaduna, Kwara, Edo, Delta, Enugu, Abia, Taraba, Ebonyi, Ondo, Oyo, Osun and many other states [8]. Whenever these clashes occur, the nomadic herdsmen attack and kill scores of villagers in the course of a contest for grazing fields and water, there are usually reprisal attacks. This scenario has, time without number, thrown up tribal, ethnic, regional, religious and political sentiments that threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria.

One of the primary effects of violent conflict is displacement, and it is often intertwined with the destruction of livelihoods. Displacement may be intentional on the part of armed actors to the conflict or may be a by-product of violence or livelihood destruction. Displacement is one component of the often-overlapping factors fueling broader migration trends. These may include economic migration, migration to access humanitarian assistance, climate-induced migration, and forced displacement [9]. Pastoralist conflicts leads to dangerous displacement of farmers which means disconnecting people from their previous livelihoods and forces them to adapt to new circumstances. It is therefore essential to understand effects of conflicts on livelihoods of displaced farmers during and after conflict. Livelihoods comprise “the capabilities, assets (including both natural and social) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base” (Chambers and Conway,

1992).

Livelihoods are typically understood in terms of the assets that a social group holds frequently, but not always; the activities or strategies that social group employs, and the multiple outcomes its members seek to achieve—be that adequate food, adequate shelter, good health and nutrition, education for the future, and, critically (especially in conflict situations), safety and security. Livelihoods must also be analyzed in terms of the policies or institutions that shape or impinge on access to natural resources, labor markets, education, social relations, and myriad other factors that shape livelihood opportunities.

However, in spite of the spate of violent clashes between nomadic herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, adequate social research attention has not been given to the implications of these clashes on the livelihood assets and strategies of the farmers displaced during the conflict situation. It is against this background that this study attempts to effects of crop farmers and pastoralists conflicts on livelihoods of the displaced farmers in Imo State, Nigeria.

Methodology

Imo State lies within latitudes 4°45'N and 7°15'N, and longitude 6°50'E and 7°25'E with an area of around 5,100 Sq. km. It is bordered by Abia State on the East, by the River Niger and Delta State on the west, by Anambra State to the north and Rivers State to the south. The state is rich in natural resources including crude oil, natural gas, lead and zinc. Economically exploitable flora like the Iroko, Mahogany, Obeche, Bamboo, lush green grasses (which attracts the herdsmen), rubber tree and oil palm predominate the State [10, 11]. Rainy season begins in April and lasts until October with annual rainfall varying from 1,500mm to 2,200mm (60 to 80 inches (IMSG, 2000). An average annual temperature above 20 °C (68.0 °F) creates an annual relative humidity of 75%, with humidity reaching 90% in the rainy season. The dry season experiences two months of Harmattan from late December to late February (IMSG, 2000). The hottest months are between January and March. The estimated population is 4.8 million and the population density varies from 230-1,400 people per square kilometer. Both primary and secondary data sources were used. The primary data were collected through questionnaire complimented with oral discussion. Descriptive statistical tools such as percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to achieve all the objectives of the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in the process of sample selection where cases of farmer-pastoralists conflicts have occurred and were reported. The following conflict ridden areas were selected - Awarra, Umuapu, Irete and Ihube communities were selected. This was followed by the proportionate selection of 105 crop farmers from a total of 1050 affected farmers from Awarra, 69 crop farmers from a total of 695 crop farmers from Umuapu and a selection of 63 affected crop farmers from a total of 630 affected farmers from Ihube and 63 farmers from 630 farmers from Irete. This gave a sample size of 300 crop farmers selected from the household lists of 3,005 crop farmers affected by the conflicts. The household heads included widows who fend for themselves and family.

Objective 1 was achieved using percentages presented in frequency tables. Again, mean was also computed for objective 2 which looked at effects of conflict on displaced farmers livelihood assets using a total of 32 item statements on a 3 point Likert type rating

scale of strongly agree, agree and disagree assigned values of 3,2,1. The values were added and divided by 3 to obtain a discriminating mean value of 2.0. Any value with mean equal to or greater than 2.0 was considered strongly agree.

Results and Discussion

Effect of conflicts on livelihood strategies of displaced farmers in the study area

Table 1 revealed the major livelihood strategies of respondents as farming (crop production) 100% response, which means that all the respondents are predominantly farmers who engage mainly in the production of different types of crops for survival. This reveals why the displaced farmer go back to land for farming immediately they return from their place of refuge. Wage labour (94.6%) is another means of survival employed by the farmers. This they do by working for other farmers- especially wealthy farmers in the same community and others who have large tracts/plots of land for farming. They are hired and paid daily for services rendered. Collection/sale of wild fruits/foods (70%), migration for work/labour (73.3%), fishing (38%), rearing of farm animals (31.3%), accessing markets (65.6%) and charcoal making (44.4%), are all livelihood activities of the respondents. Farmers go into the bush in search of wild fruits, mushroom, animals and medicinal plants/herbs for income among others. Others cut/fell trees for charcoal making, raise small poultry/ruminant animals to support their income source, access and discover various nearby market where they could sell their produce and make more money. This they do by asking for market days of neighboring communities and the products most demanded and in high supply. All of these add income to the farmers purse and help offset farm and non-farm expenses.

Table 1: Livelihood Strategies of Displaced Farmers

Livelihood strategies	*Frequency	Percentage
Farming (crop production)	300	100
Wage labour in community	248	94.6
Collection/sale of wild foods	210	70.0
Migration of work/labour	220	73.3
Fishing	114	38.0
Rearing farm animals	94	31.3
Ability to access markets	197	65.6
Charcoal making	134	44.7
Effects of conflict on livelihood strategies		
Restriction of movement	293	97.7
Free movement/freedom	-	-
Risks to personal safety	218	72.7

*Multiple responses.

Again the table revealed also the effects of conflicts on livelihood strategies. It could be seen that conflicts often restricts movement (97.7%) of the farmers and pose risk to peoples safety (72.7%) as indicated by the high multiple responses. This means that they are unable to carry out many of their former livelihood strategies. Activities such as farming, fishing, livestock rearing, labour migration, collection of wild foods, ability to access to markets and others are all restricted or blocked and movement possess a risk to people's lives and safety. Other farmers have diversified their livelihoods within their areas of stay in order to survive. Others have also reduced travelling alone and now go in groups to farms and markets. The above reveals that achieving sustainable livelihoods will be difficult in an environment where people's means of survival is constrained because of insecurity, fear, and even restrictions on movement.

Effects of Conflicts on Physical and Natural Assets of Displaced Farmers Livelihood

Table 2 showed that all assets may be generally looked, destroyed or even lost during conflicts. The physical assets affected included disruption of health services and infrastructure with a mean (M) response of 2.90, destruction/closure of schools (M=2.11), disruption of transport systems (M=2.37), total destruction of rural infrastructure (M=2.52), looting of possession/properties (M=2.90), destruction of home/farmstead (M=2.23), break down of public security (M=2.79), break down of communication facilities (M=2.40) and destruction looting of farm equipment/machines (M=2.10).

During oral interview with the displayed farmers, it was observed that hospitals, health centers and dispensaries, clinics and maternity homes were destroyed deserted. Again, patient medicine dealers shops were not left out of destruction/looting. The respondents also admitted that schools –primary, secondary and adult education centers were all destroyed leading to total closure.

No vehicle was allowed to ply the roads and motorists withdraw their services for fear of attack and eventual death. Roads were blocked and burn fires littered all over the roads and cars were even destroyed. Peoples homes, properties, farm equipment, communication facilities/sites attacked, thereby breaking down public safety.

The natural assets affected were the destruction of water wells/pumps (M=2.67), contamination of water sources (M=2.64), destruction of economic trees/fruits (M=2.65) such as pear, oranges guava, paw-paw trees etc. theft/pilfering of produce (M=2.30) usually done at night and afternoon when they become unsuspecting, land abandonment (M=2.60) due to few land/farm are left behind and farmers flee for their dear lives. Over grazing of accessible areas (M=2.43) by the pastoralists due to limited areas with lush green grasses/pastures, and loss of access of farm land (M=2.10) due to activities of pastoralists which is mainly attack on helpless innocent young girls and women.

Table 2: Perceived Effects on Physical and Natural Assets

Effects on Physical Assets	Mean	SD
Disruption of health services infrastructure	2.90	0.351
Destruction/Closure of schools	2.11	0.356
Disruption of transport systems	2.37	0.667
Total destruction of rural infrastructure	2.52	0.508
Looting of possessions/properties	2.40	0.303
Destruction of homes/farmstead	2.23	0.520
Breakdown of public security	2.79	0.450
Breakdown of communication facilities	2.40	0.641
Destruction/ looting of farm equipment/machine	2.10	0.470
Natural Assets		
Destruction of water walls	2.67	0.538
Contamination of water sources	2.64	0.558
Destruction of fruit/economic tress	2.65	0.568
Theft/pilfering of farm produce	2.30	0.506
Land abandonment	2.60	0.590

Perceived Effects on Social, Human and Financial Assets

The social assets affected based on table 3 included disruption of community life (2.79) as the ideas the community are known for were eroded and individuals pursue the ‘me first’ attitude as against the “we spirit, collapse of local authority/administration (M=2.40) which occurs when the elders are not recognized and respected by younger ones and the hierarchy of command is not now respected and valued. Other effects were adverse change of farm family goals (M=2.13) which includes achieving food security, income and good health, total pressure placed on local resources (M=2.55) to solve all problems, displacement of social support networks (M=2.18), and breaking of families and communities (M=2.03) which may make families live in different areas instead of living as one. During oral discussion some respondents said were separated from their families.

The human assets affected were in the areas of death of laborers/farm workers (M=2.32), sexual violence/harassment of women (M=2.56), separation of family members form one another (M=2.45), demographic/population movement (M=2.00) as seen in human population increase and dynamics, leads to human disability(M=2.24), disruption of access to children’s education (M=2.54), diminishing of job creation opportunities (M=2.23) among others. Oral discussion revealed that some family heads died during the conflicts and several children, young man also lost their lives and job opportunities diminished or reduced.

On the financial assets affected by conflicts, the following were seen, death of livestock animals and crops (M=2.57), market closure / dysfunctionals (M=2.65). These happens due to either lack of care /concern owing to farm abandonment /inaccessibility of farm and animals due to fear and failure to transact business of any type in the market. Breakdown of veterinary services (M=2.47) meaning that attention to health of animal and services involving health of livestock ceased to exist. Lack of access to credit/wages (M=2.26), limited investment (M=2.241) and restrictions /reduction in remittances (M=2.13) were effects of conflict on the financial assets.

Table 3: Effects of Conflicts on Social, Human and Financial Assets of Respondents

Social Capital	Mean	SD
Disruption of community life	2.79	0.47
Collapse of local authority/administration	2.40	0.671
Leads to non-functional institutions	2.23	0.707
Adverse change of farm family goals	2.50	0.597
Reduce/scatter future expectations of groups	2.15	0.563
Places total pressure on local resources	2.18	0.594
Break – up of families and communities	2.03	0.697
Human Assets		
Death of labourers/ farm-workers	2.32	0.453
Sexual violence/harassment of woman	2.56	0.630
Separation of family members	2.45	0.752
Demographic changes/population movement	2.07	0.551
Diminishing of job Creation opportunities	2.23	0.496
Destruction of education facilities	2.60	0.498
Disruption of access to education of children	2.54	0.555
Leads to human disability	2.24	0.533
Financial Asset		
Death of livestock and crops	2.37	0.806
Market closure/dysfunction	2.65	0.579
Breakdown of veterinary services	2.47	0.700
Lack of access to credit/wages	2.26	0.539
Restrictions on remittances	2.13	0.336
Limited investment in farm	2.41	0.571

Conclusion

The displaced farmers' livelihood strategies were farming majorly crop production, wage labour, collection and sale of wild fruits, rearing small animals and fishing. Conflicts affect every activity of mankind including the above livelihood activities by restriction of movement and risks to personal safety. Conflicts therefore leads to disruption of health facilities, closure of schools, looting of possessions, destruction of water wells, contamination of water, land abandonment, disruption of community life, disruption of communication facilities, death of health workers, market among others.

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