

Review of Farmer-Herder Conflict Effect on Rural Livelihood and Housing in Nigeria: The Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

The paper seeks to examine the implications of farmer-herder conflicts on rural dwellers livelihood in Nigeria. The study used secondary data obtained from review of relevant literature via journals, unpublished thesis and newspaper. Evidence from the study revealed that farmers' livelihood is directly related to number of assets owned. It is also evident that most farmers in Nigeria are not well educated. Hence, the high reliance on natural capital such as farming land, crops, number of animals or birds. Consequently, most farmers are highly vulnerable if for any reason they lack access to their farm which serves as only source from which they derive their livelihood. In addition, personal observation by the author and information from published literature revealed that a lot of houses were burnt or destroyed during the crisis in Igagan. The implication is that homelessness that is not the characteristic of the study area will now be endemic. The paper concluded that the crisis could lead to the need for more IDC due to continuous displacement, high rural urban migration, unemployment, increase crime rate, destruction of lives and property. Therefore, the paper opined that Oyo state government should beef up security and to also provide a lasting solution to the crisis.

Keywords: herders-farmers, conflict; rural livelihood; housing

INTRODUCTION

Livelihood "comprises the capabilities, assets, both material and social resources, and activities required for means of living. A livelihood is sustainable if it can cope with, and recover from, stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets and provide net benefits to other livelihoods locally and more widely, both now and in the future, without undermining the natural resource base" (Carswell, 1997).

Violent conflicts, especially between farmers and herders have been a common feature of economic livelihood in West Africa for a long time (Bleach, 2004 cited in Agyemang, 2021). This conflict has the capability of affecting the livelihood standard in the affected communities in West Africa and Nigeria in particular. This is likely to be due to high inflation, poor governance, insecurity such as the one experienced through the activities of Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), Boko-Haram, killer herdsman among others. The predominant source of insecurity in Nigeria presently is either via ISWAP/Boko-Haram or killer herdsman (Adebo and Olotu, 2018 and Solomon, 2021).

There have been several cases of farmer-herder conflicts in the rural areas in Nigeria, especially, in the north and now becoming noticeable in the southern part of Nigeria (Adebo and Olotu, 2018). Hence, the rural areas are worst hit by the activities of these terrorists organization. These conflicts are counter-productive to rural activities which are mostly agrarian in nature and do not support livelihood improvement in the rural areas. Therefore, there is tendency that most farmers that characterized the majority of rural dwellers would be subjected to live in abject poverty (Awotokun, Nwozor and Olanrewaju, 2020). Different governments have at one time or the other embarked on various rural development policies to address rural poverty. Rural

development strategies are measures adopted by governments to address poverty and improve the living standards of rural dwellers. The common rural development strategies adopted are community development scheme, agricultural extension and integrated rural development scheme (Odebode, 2017). No livelihood improvement strategies such as integrated scheme designed to improve the livelihood of rural dwellers will thrive in an environment plagued with insecurity. This is because livelihood improvement strategies are designed to enhance the effectiveness of existing livelihood activities, which is only possible in a secured environment.

Integrated scheme is one of the rural development strategies with records of notable successes on various projects/activities in different countries. This assertion is evident in the works of Odebode (2019), Odebode, Olatoye, Adisa and Olaniyan (2020), Solomon (2014), Majale (2004) among others. The integrated scheme is implemented by forming participant group in the intervention community. The selected community 'based line information' will be obtained first to enable the initiator of the integrated scheme ascertain the community's area of needs. This will guide the areas to which the selected community needs to be empowered.

It is on the basis of these killer herders' activities that are predominant in Nigeria rural areas that this paper seeks to examine the implications of farmer-herder conflicts on rural dwellers livelihood in the country and the way forward. The other parts of the paper are structured as follows; following the background is the literature review. Section 3 contains the study area and the research method, while the influence of farmer-herder crisis on rural livelihood and housing and conclusions are in sections 4 and 5 respectively.

OVERVIEW OF FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

This section discussed the views of different researchers on herders and farmers conflicts and its consequences in Nigeria. Adebo and Olotu (2018) investigated the consequences of pastoralists and crop farmers' conflicts on rural livelihood in Oyo state. The study adopted three-stage random sampling to select 90 farmers from six communities contiguous with pastoralists' settlements in the study area. The results revealed that home and farm destruction, low food quality and quantity, and farm job abandonment among others were predominant during the conflicts between the herders and the farmers. Due to the negative consequences of the conflict on many facets of rural livelihoods, the researchers opined the need for the government and non-governmental organization to assist farmers to cushion the effects of the conflicts and also suggested that there should be amicable permanent solution on the crisis with government acting as mediator. The paper did not comment on the effect of the conflict between the herders and the farmers on housing but only on livelihood generally.

Odebode (2019) in the study of impacts of integrated scheme on livelihoods and rural housing condition in Nigeria opined that respondents with more livelihood assets and larger households' sizes usually have better housing condition. The paper suggested that integrated scheme could be adopted as a self-financing strategy for qualitative and quantitative housing in the rural areas. The paper did not assess the impact of herdsman-farmers' conflict on rural housing and infrastructure but, only focused on the impact of integrated scheme on livelihood and rural housing condition in Nigeria. With the level of destruction on farms, houses and other assets in the study area, coupled with the inability of most farmers to access their farms in the affected areas, it becomes expedient to assess the effects of the conflicts on livelihood and housing in the study area.

Solomon (2021) in the study of impact of farmers and herdsman conflict on food security in Taraba state, adopted survey research method and sampled 285 respondents using multi stage sampling technique. The data obtained were analyzed using p-table and percentage, and Pearson Correlation. The study findings revealed that there is widespread destruction of food stuff, lives and properties, fear and insecurity in the rural communities due to persistent farmers herders' conflicts. Furthermore, the conflicts have resulted in low productivity, food instability, low food utilization, food inaccessibility and inadequate availability of

food in Taraba state. The author suggested zero interest financial assistance to farmers to boost productivity and also canvassed for stronger ties between herders and farming communities to strengthen the security. The paper did not examine the effects of farmers and herdsman conflicts on the rural dwellers' housing.

Agyemang (2021) in the study of farmer-herder conflict in Africa explored the causes and the effect of farmer-Fulani herdsman conflict, and the mitigation responses towards the conflict. The study used one hundred and thirty respondents (130) gathered through purposive and snowball sampling procedures in the study area. The researcher adopted qualitative research strategy; semi structured interviews and FGDs responses, and relevant documents to obtain information. The findings of the study revealed that the prevalence of Fulani herdsman in Agogo is due to availability of pasture, water, adequate land for leasing, influential people and market. Moreover, the conflict was due to several cases of intimidation such as farms and crops destruction, shooting and killing of innocent people, sexual harassment, armed robbery by nomads, spraying of weeds with weedicides and cattle rustling. The response of the government at both community and national level code named "Operation Cowleg" to deal with the conflict failed. This was because of competing interest in the cattle business by influential Ghanaians', corruption and ECOWAS protocol.

The study suggested dialogue and settlement committee, ranching system, proper land arrangement, socialization and integration among others as probable solutions to the conflict. This study was done in Ghana and none of the studies under review emphasized the effect of the herders and farmers conflict on livelihood and quantitative and qualitative housing availability in the affected rural areas which is the focus of this paper.

STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The study area is Oke-Ogun, Oyo state. Oke-Ogun economy is being driven by agriculture because it is the predominant activity in area. Moreover, cases of killer herdsman menace in Oyo state is rampant in Oke-Ogun. Notable ones are the attacks, rapes among others at Igangan which is what prompted some activists and youths to resist the herdsman barbaric acts. There are cases of several attacks and reprisal attacks by herdsman and indigenes. These have resulted in loss of many lives and destruction of several houses, housing facilities and properties including the palace of the King of Igangan. Hence, the suitability of Oke-Ogun for the study.

Secondary data obtained through related existing studies via journals, thesis, conferences, news etc. is being used for the study. The implication of farmers-herders conflicts on the farmers' livelihood and housing condition is being observed though the information obtained.

THE INFLUENCE OF FARMER-HERDER CRISIS ON RURAL LIVELIHOOD AND HOUSING

It has been established that farmers' livelihood is directly related to number of assets owned. This is evident from different researcher's opinions on how farmers' livelihood is influenced by the available assets to each farmer (Majale 2004; Solomon 2014; Odebode 2019; and Odebode, Olatoye, Adisa and Olaniyan 2020) among others. Assets in this context are social capital, natural capital, human capital and financial capital. Access to one or more of these capital assets by each farmer determines the level of resilience of the farmer in time of shocks and hazards.

Consequently, farmers with greater access to most or all of these capital assets usually have better livelihood. This, in most cases reflected in better housing condition than those having restricted access to different capital assets (Majale 2004; Solomon 2014 and Odebode 2019).

However, evidence from previous studies revealed that most farmers in Nigeria are not well educated

(Yusuf 2010 and Odebode 2019). Consequently, most of them rely so much on natural capital such as farming land, crops, number of animals or birds. Many of them also lack social capital such as membership of various organizations and financial capital such as houses, grinding machines, vehicles among others that can provide additional source of income as opined by Fang *et al.* (2013), Solomon (2014) and Odebode (2019).

Hence, most farmers are highly vulnerable if for any reason they lack access to their farm which is the main and only capital asset from which they derive their livelihood. Hence, it is expected that farmers in the affected rural communities are highly vulnerable to poor livelihood due to the farmers-herders conflicts. The crisis between farmers and herders in the study area has resulted in displacement of most farmers which has led to inability to access their farms from which they derive their livelihood. This is in tandem with the findings of (Adebo and Olotu (2018); Solomon (2021) and Agyemang (2021) that opined that farmers and herders crisis has led to farm abandonment, low farm productivity and crop and farm destruction. This is further corroborated by Ukamaka *et al.* (2017) that conflicts between crop farmers and herders is a challenge to economic development and sustainable livelihood of the agrarian communities in Nigeria. Thus, there is great tendency towards increase poverty among the affected farmers. For instance, evidence from (Taiwo-Hassan, 2021) and personal observation by the author revealed that a lot of houses were burnt or destroyed during the crisis. The implication is that homelessness that is not the characteristic of the study area will now be endemic.

In conclusion many rural dwellers are experiencing worst housing conditions ever due to farmer-herder crisis in the rural area, such as the experience of those leaving in internal displacement camp (IDC) in the northern parts of Nigeria. The crisis could lead to policy implications on issues such as need for more IDC due to continuous displacement, high rural urban migration, unemployment, increase crime rate, destruction of lives and property. Hence, the paper suggested that Oyo state government should beef up security and also embark on a functional approach to providing a lasting solution to the crisis to enable affected farmers have access to their farms. The author also plea for government financial assistance to those affected.

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