Farmers-Herders Conflict and Local Security in Langtang South LGA, Plateau State: A Critical Exploration

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ABSTRACT

Historically, farmers and herders in Langtang South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria existed together in relative harmony, sharing land, water, and other available resources essential to their livelihoods. This interdependence fostered a symbiotic relationship that lasted for generations. However, in recent decades, this balance has been disrupted by a complex mix of demographic, environmental, economic, and political pressures. The main objective of this study is to explore the causes, impacts, and possible solutions to the recurring farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Anchored on the Governance and State Fragility Theory which focuses on the role of weak or failing state institutions in contributing to the persistence of conflict, the study explores how competition over land and resources, ethnic identity, and weak governance contribute to conflict. As an empirical study, data were collected using questionnaires and interview discussions with major stakeholders including farmers, herders, community leaders, and security officials. This paper employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. Quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using the descriptive statistical technique, while qualitative data from open-ended questions and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that land disputes, climate change, ethnic tensions, and inadequate government response are key drivers of the conflict. The conflict has resulted in loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of residents, and food insecurity. Efforts at conflict resolution, such as peace committees and government interventions, have been largely ineffective due to poor implementation and lack of community involvement. The study concludes by recommending improved land policies, inclusive dialogue, and stronger governance structures to promote peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in the area.

Keywords: Farmers, Herders, Conflict, Security, Langtang South

INTRODUCTION

Farmer-herder conflicts have remained one of Nigeria's most pressing security challenges, with Plateau State, particularly Langtang South Local Government Area (LGA), at the center of their devastating impacts. Historically, farmers and herders coexisted peacefully, with farmers depending on arable land for cultivation and herders relying on grazing routes to sustain their livestock. This interdependence created a long-standing balance between both groups (Audu, 2013; Tonah, 2006). However, in recent decades, pressures arising from rapid population growth, environmental degradation, and economic transformations have disrupted this equilibrium, fueling tensions that now threaten local security (Blench, 2017; Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

The conflict has had severe implications for local peace and security in Langtang South. Recurrent clashes between farmers and herders resulting in the loss of lives, destruction of property, mass displacement, and a general atmosphere of fear and instability (Okoli & Ogayi, 2018) have been the order of the day. Over the years, the conflict in has escalated leading to a breakdown of social cohesion, economic stagnation, and severe security challenges. Recurrent clashes have resulted in casualties, forced displacement of residents, and destruction of property, leaving communities in a state of perpetual fear and uncertainty. The inability of security forces to effectively prevent or mitigate violence has exacerbated the problem, creating an atmosphere of lawlessness and impunity (Adamu & Ben, 2019).

A major issue contributing to the conflict is the struggle over land resources. Farmers accuse herders of allowing their cattle to destroy crops, while herders claim that farmers block traditional grazing routes and attack their livestock. The lack of clear land tenure policies and the increasing pressure on available arable land due to population growth and climate change have further fueled hostilities (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Moreover, the conflict has taken on ethnic and religious dimensions, deepening societal divisions. The stereotyping of herders as violent aggressors and farmers as victims has led to retaliatory attacks and the involvement of militias, worsening the situation (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). The absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms and the perceived bias of state actors in handling disputes have further alienated affected communities.

Coincidentally, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have been weakened, combined with the inability of security agencies to respond effectively, fueling lawlessness and deepened mistrust among communities (Akinwotu, 2018). In some cases, political elites have been accused of exploiting the tensions for personal or electoral advantage, further complicating peace efforts (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016; International Crisis Group, 2017). Also, the enactment of anti-open grazing laws in states like Benue and Ekiti has contributed to the influx of herders into Plateau State, intensifying conflicts in Langtang South (Adamu & Ben, 2019). Violent encounters over land and water have escalated, causing widespread displacement and eroding community cohesion.

Economically, the conflict has devastated farming activities, the backbone of Langtang South's economy. Many farmers have abandoned their fields for fear of attacks, leading to food shortages, rising prices, and worsening poverty levels (World Bank, 2020). Security-wise, the conflict has fostered the rise of militias, retaliatory attacks, and ethnic profiling, turning once-peaceful communities into zones of hostility. The lack of effective law enforcement and perceived bias in state responses have contributed to a climate of impunity, making violent reprisals more likely (International Crisis Group, 2017). The ethnic and religious undertones of the conflict have further polarized groups, complicating reconciliation and long-term peace-building.

Given its destructive consequences, the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South LGA represents not only an agricultural and economic crisis but also a profound security challenge. Thus, considering the ongoing devastation caused by these clashes, there is a need for an in-depth investigation into how the farmer-herder conflict affects peace and security in Langtang South LGA.

This article therefore explores the impact of farmer-herder conflict on local security in Langtang South LGA, highlighting its causes, security implications, and consequences for peace and development, projecting the need for effective conflict resolution strategies.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the primary causes of the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South LGA?

2. How has the conflict affected the socio-economic lives of farmers and herders?

3. What measures have been implemented to resolve the conflict, and how effective have they been?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Farmer-Herder Conflict

Farmer-herder conflict refers to violent disputes that arise between agriculturalists (farmers) and pastoralists (herders) over the control and use of land and water resources. This conflict is often rooted in competition for resources such as grazing land, water sources, and arable land, with tensions intensifying when these resources

are limited or scarce. In many cases, these conflicts escalate into violent clashes that disrupt communities and threaten the security and livelihoods of those involved.

In Langtang South, as in many parts of Nigeria's Middle Belt, the conflict between farmers and herders is not a recent phenomenon but has deep historical roots. Traditionally, farmers and herders coexisted through informal agreements regarding land and grazing routes. However, rapid population growth, changes in land use and environmental factors such as desertification have strained these traditional arrangements, making the conflict more frequent and severe (Adamu & Ben, 2019). The conflict often manifests as violent attacks, destruction of crops and livestock, loss of lives, displacement of families, and sometimes the emergence of militias to protect the interests of either group.

The conflict has become a major security concern in Nigeria, with significant implications for peace, economic development, and social cohesion. A major factor in the intensification of this conflict is the inability of the Nigerian government and local authorities to effectively mediate or resolve disputes, leaving both farmers and herders to take matters into their own hands (Blench, 2017). Moreover, over time the periodic clashes have precipitated a general climate of insecurity. This widespread insecurity both allows for and is perpetuated by acts of broader criminality in which gangs of bandits target locations in the area for raids, mass kidnappings and looting.

Causes of the Conflict

Peace

Peace is a complex concept that extends beyond the mere absence of war or conflict. In this study, peace is understood as a state of stability, harmony, and mutual understanding within a community, where social, political, and economic systems function effectively and without violence. Peace is not only the absence of direct violence but also the presence of conditions that foster social justice, equity, and cooperation between various groups.

In the context of the farmer-herder conflict, peace involves the creation of conditions where both farmers and herders can coexist without fear of violence or economic disruption. This includes securing land rights, ensuring access to resources, and creating avenues for dialogue and conflict resolution. Achieving peace in Langtang South requires addressing the root causes of conflict, such as resource scarcity, land disputes, and ethnic tensions, and finding lasting solutions that ensure both farmers and herders can pursue their livelihoods without resorting to violence (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

Security

Security in this context refers to the protection of lives, property, and societal stability against threats such as violence, crime, and insurgency. In Langtang South, security is heavily impacted by the ongoing farmer-herder conflict, which has led to widespread violence, displacement, and fear among local populations. Insecurity arising from this conflict affects not only the immediate parties involved—farmers and herders—but also the broader community, undermining public trust in governance and law enforcement institutions.

The concept of security in this study includes both physical security the protection of individuals and property from harm and human security, which focuses on the well-being of individuals, their access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare, and their ability to live without fear of violence or displacement. The breakdown of security in Langtang South due to the farmer-herder conflict has led to negative outcomes such as a decline in agricultural productivity, rural-urban migration, and the proliferation of criminal activities as people attempt to protect their property or seek refuge elsewhere (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Insecurity

Insecurity refers to the state of being unsafe or vulnerable to danger, violence, or loss. In the context of Nigeria, insecurity has become a pressing national concern, particularly in the Middle Belt region, where

violent clashes between farmers and herders have contributed to widespread instability. Insecurity in Langtang South LGA arises from persistent attacks, reprisal killings, and displacement of communities as a result of the farmer-herder conflict.

The escalation of insecurity is marked by loss of lives, destruction of properties, forced migration, and disruption of agricultural activities, which are the mainstay of the local economy. As herders move in search of pasture and water, their migration into farmlands often results in violent confrontations with farming communities. In many cases, these confrontations have evolved into ethno-religious and communal conflicts, further deepening insecurity in the region (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

Insecurity in conflict-prone areas like Langtang South is also aggravated by the inadequate presence of security agencies, slow response to attacks, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These gaps in security have emboldened both farmers and herders to resort to self-help and the formation of local vigilante or militia groups, thereby undermining state authority and contributing to a cycle of violence (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Furthermore, insecurity disrupts food production and trade, leading to food insecurity, economic decline, and social disintegration. This condition also discourages investment and development efforts in affected communities. The chronic nature of insecurity not only threatens individual safety but also erodes trust in government institutions, making long-term peace and reconciliation more difficult to achieve (Adewumi & Egwurube, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical studies reveal both primary and secondary factors in the recurring menace of farmer-herder crises in the country, such as migration, insufficient land for farming and grazing, insufficient water sources, climate change and weather conditions, desertification in the northern part of the country, and many others. This informed why Blench (2017) identified competition over land and water resources as one of the primary drivers of the conflict. The study shows that climate change, desertification, and population growth have intensified competition for these scarce resources, making the traditional systems of land allocation and mutual agreements between farmers and herders untenable.

According to Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016), the lack of effective land tenure policies exacerbates land disputes between farmers and herders. The research argues that while land is a critical resource for both groups, the absence of a clear and enforceable system of land ownership or usage rights often results in conflicts over land access and control. This is particularly problematic in rural areas, where there is often ambiguity over who has the right to use land for farming or grazing.

Adamu and Ben (2019) identify the role of ethnic and cultural differences in fueling tensions between farmers and herders. The scholars noted that the ethnic identities of the groups involved, particularly between the predominantly Tarok farmers and Fulani herders in Langtang South, complicate the conflict, transforming what might be a resource-based dispute into one with deep-rooted ethnic tensions.

Concerning the socio-economic consequences of the farmer-herder conflict, Okoli and Atelhe (2014) investigated how the conflict in Plateau State has led to a significant decline in agricultural productivity. They argue that the destruction of crops and the displacement of farmers from their lands have resulted in reduced agricultural output, which has directly impacted food security and economic stability in the region. This reduction in agricultural production leads to increased food prices, inflation, and food insecurity, affecting not only the farmers but the broader community as well.

In their study on the socio-economic impact of the conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt, Kuna and Ibrahim (2015) reported that the conflict has led to a high rate of rural-urban migration. They point out that many farmers and herders who have been displaced by violence are migrating to urban centers, where they face difficulties integrating into the urban economy due to a lack of skills or capital.

The displacement of communities has also disrupted social systems, particularly in terms of education and healthcare. Blench (2017) discusses how schools and health facilities in conflict-prone areas have either been abandoned or destroyed, reducing access to basic services. This, in turn, affects the long-term socio-economic development of the region, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

The security implications of the farmer-herder conflict have been widely explored, with many studies emphasizing the role of violence and instability in undermining peace and governance. International Crisis Group (2017) pointed out that the farmer-herder conflict has escalated into one of the most significant security threats in Nigeria, particularly in the Middle Belt region. The study explains that these violent clashes have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, the destruction of property, and the displacement of communities. Moreover, the increasing frequency of attacks has strained local security forces, which are often ill-equipped and under-resourced to handle such widespread violence.

The proliferation of arms and the rise of ethnic militias have further complicated the security situation. Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) explored how the availability of firearms in conflict zones has intensified the violence. They argue that the rise of ethnic militias, often organized to defend local communities from perceived external threats, has led to a cycle of retaliatory violence. These militias, composed of both farmers and herders, often engage in violent reprisals against the other group, further escalating the conflict and making it more difficult to achieve lasting peace.

In their study of the security dynamics in Plateau State, Adamu and Ben (2019) discuss how the inability of the government to decisively address the conflict has contributed to the breakdown of security in the region. They emphasize that the absence of a comprehensive strategy for addressing the root causes of the conflict—such as land disputes, ethnic tensions, and resource competition—has left communities vulnerable to further attacks and instability.

The effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies in the farmer-herder conflict has been explored in several empirical studies. Blench (2017) discussed the role of community dialogue in resolving disputes between farmers and herders. The study suggests that while traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have been historically effective, they are no longer sufficient in the face of large-scale violence and modern political dynamics. In response, Blench recommends the establishment of more formalized conflict resolution structures, such as peace committees, that can work alongside traditional systems to address grievances and mediate disputes.

Adamu and Ben (2019) investigated the potential for policy reforms to address the conflict. They suggest that the introduction of more inclusive and transparent land tenure systems, as well as the establishment of grazing reserves or ranching systems, could provide long-term solutions to the conflict. These reforms would require the active participation of both farmers and herders, as well as the support of local governments, to ensure that they are fair and sustainable.

Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) explored the role of local and state-level governance in managing the conflict. They argue that effective governance, including the establishment of conflict-sensitive development policies, can play a key role in preventing violence. Strengthening the capacity of local governments to manage land disputes, improve security, and facilitate community dialogue is essential for achieving sustainable peace in regions like Langtang South.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Governance and State Fragility Theory

The Governance and State Fragility Theory focuses on the role of weak or failing state institutions in contributing to the persistence of conflict. According to this theory, the inability of a state to maintain order, provide security, and administer justice can result in prolonged instability and violence. In the context of the farmer-herder conflict, weak governance structures in Nigeria have allowed the dispute to escalate and remain unresolved for years.

The failure of government institutions in Plateau State to effectively manage land disputes, enforce laws, and ensure justice for victims of the conflict has contributed significantly to the ongoing violence in Langtang South. The Nigerian government's inability to implement effective land-use policies, particularly in rural areas, has left a void that has been filled by informal, and often violent, methods of conflict resolution. Traditional institutions, which once played a key role in managing disputes between farmers and herders, have also been weakened, further exacerbating the situation (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

The fragility of the state in Plateau State has also contributed to the proliferation of arms and the rise of ethnic militias. These groups, which often act outside the control of the state, have exacerbated the violence and created an environment of insecurity. Without effective state control, local communities are left to defend themselves, sometimes resorting to violent measures, which only intensify the conflict (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

A critical component of this theory is the lack of political will on the part of government officials to address the root causes of the conflict. Local leaders in Langtang South and other areas of Plateau State have been accused of exploiting the conflict for political gain, either by inciting violence for electoral purposes or by failing to intervene in a meaningful way (International Crisis Group, 2017). This lack of leadership and governance further undermines the potential for peace building.

Moreover, governance failure in the context of the farmer-herder conflict is also linked to corruption, inadequate law enforcement, and a lack of coordination between different levels of government (local, state, and federal). In some cases, government policies are either poorly implemented or manipulated by powerful elites, which exacerbates local grievances and delays meaningful conflict resolution (Adamu & Ben, 2019). According to this theory, strengthening governance structures, improving accountability, and ensuring equitable resource distribution are key to resolving the conflict.

The governance failure in Plateau State also manifests in ineffective security responses to the violence between farmers and herders. Security forces are often criticized for not intervening promptly or effectively, leading to the continued displacement of people and the erosion of public trust in government institutions. Without a strong and impartial state apparatus to mediate between the conflicting parties and address grievances, the conflict is likely to persist.

Application of the Theory

The Governance and State Fragility Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South:

1. Weak governance structures fail to manage the conflict, allowing it to escalate and become entrenched.
2. The inability of the state to provide equitable resource distribution and security mechanisms leads to the proliferation of arms and the rise of ethnic militias, further fueling violence.

The theory suggests that resolving the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses not only the scarcity of resources but also the ethnic identities and grievances of both groups, as well as the structural weaknesses in governance. Policy interventions should focus on sustainable land management, inclusive conflict resolution processes, and the strengthening of state institutions to ensure the protection of lives and property.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized both the qualitative and quantitative research methods. The descriptive survey research design complemented by qualitative interviews to ensure that the set objectives are achieved. These two datasets were compared to see if they confirm, disconfirm, or complement each other, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. As such, the descriptive survey design (quantitative

component) was used for the systematic collection and analysis of data from a representative sample to describe current conditions, attitudes, and perceptions related to the causes and impacts of farmers-herders conflict.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Given the large and diverse population of Langtang South LGA, this study adopts a stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation of all key stakeholder groups. The population is divided into five distinct strata: farmers, herders, community leaders, security personnel, and government officials. From each stratum, participants are randomly or purposively selected based on their relevance to the study.

Instrumentation

The Likert Scale was used in certain sections of the questionnaire to measure the intensity of respondents' attitudes toward the conflict, its causes, effects, and potential solutions. The Scale ranged from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1), and respondents indicated their level of agreement with various statements about the conflict and its impact on peace and security. This scale allowed the researchers to quantify subjective responses, making it easier to analyze and interpret the data.

The questionnaire consisted of the following sections:

1. Section 1: Demographic Information: Questions on gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, and level of education.

2. Section 2: Causes of the Conflict: Items designed to assess respondents' views on the factors driving the farmer-herder conflict, including land competition, climate change, migration patterns, and political influences.

3. Section 3: Impact on Peace and Security: A Likert scale section where respondents rated the extent to which they believe the conflict affects local peace, security, and social harmony.

4. Section 4: Conflict Resolution: Questions about the role of traditional leaders, security agencies, and government interventions in managing or resolving the conflict.

5. Section 5: Policy Recommendations: Open-ended questions that allowed respondents to suggest ways to address the conflict and promote long-term peace.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was executed over a three-week period in 2025. Questionnaires were personally administered. Interviews were conducted in person at neutral locations.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Responses from the Likert scale items were analyzed to calculate the frequency distribution, percentages, and mean scores for each statement. This allowed proper quantification of respondents' attitudes and perceptions toward the farmer-herder conflict.

Qualitative data from open-ended questions and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying and categorizing key themes that emerge from the data. These themes were used to explore the causes of the conflict, the impacts on peace and security, and the effectiveness of conflict resolution measures.

In addition, cross-tabulation was used to explore relationships between different demographic groups (e.g., farmers vs. herders, young vs. older respondents) and their perceptions of the conflict. This helped in understanding how different factors influence respondents' views on the conflict and its resolution.

Data Presentation

Chart 1: Personal and Demographic Information of Respondents
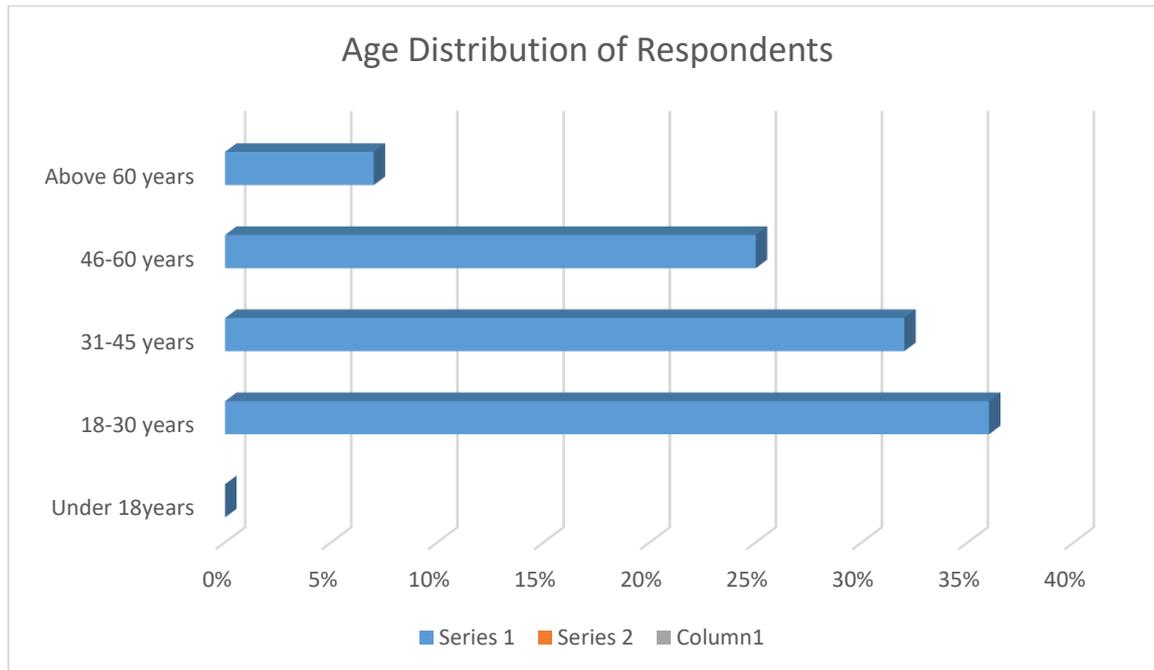
Source: Field Survey (2025)

Chart 1 shows that respondents in this study were drawn from various age groups, reflecting a diverse demographic. The largest proportion, 36%, fell within the 18-30 years age range, indicating a strong representation of young adults. This was followed by 32% in the 31-45 years age range, indicating a strong representation of young adults. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents were aged 46-60 years, and the remaining 7% were 60years and above. This distribution suggests a predominantly youthful population, with a balanced inclusion of middle-aged and older participants.
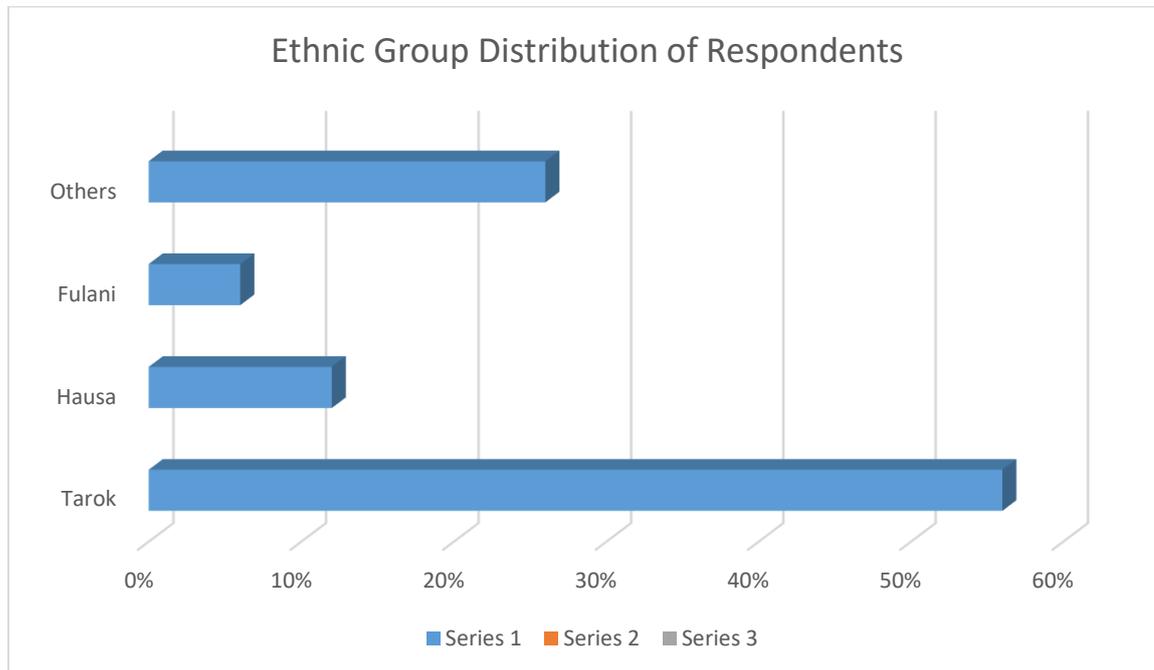
Chart 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents.
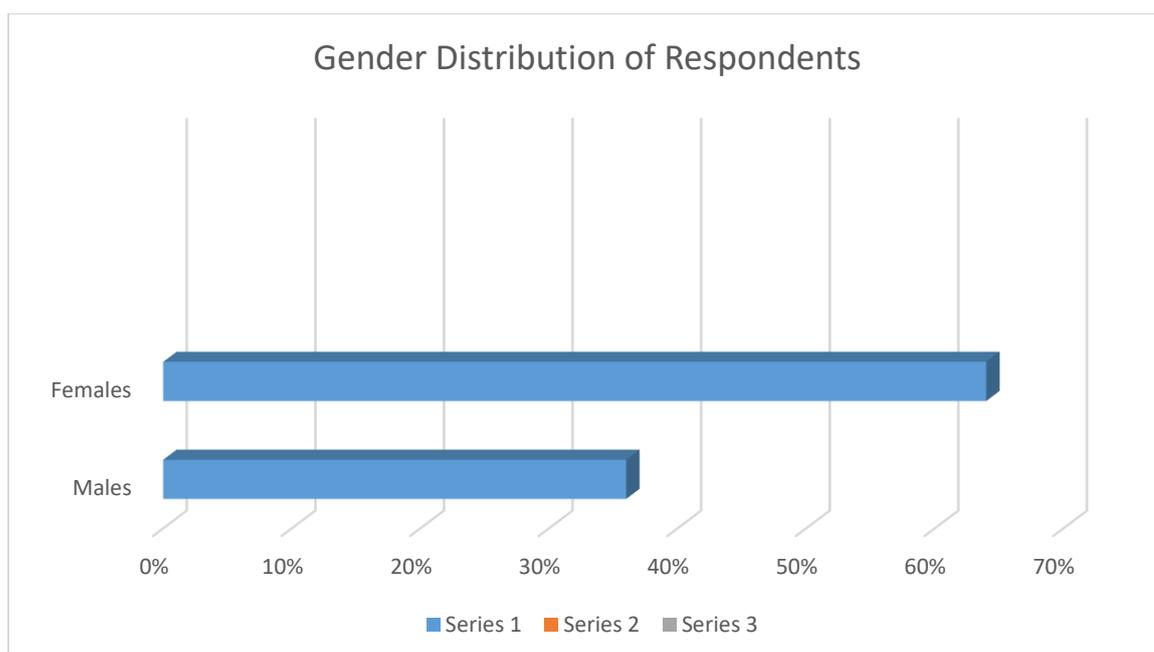
Source: Field Survey (2025)

The chart above shows that out of the 250 respondents surveyed, a majority were females, accounting for 160 individuals (64%). Male respondents made up the remaining 90 individuals (36%).

Chart 3: Ethnic Group Distribution of Respondents

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The above chart shows that the study captured responses from individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds. The Tarok ethnic group formed the majority, accounting for 140 respondents (56%). This was followed by respondents from other ethnic groups within the state who made of 65 individuals (26%). The Hausa ethnic group comprised of 30 respondents (12%), while the Fulani had the smallest representation with 15 respondents (6%).

Chart 4: How long respondents have lived in Langtang South LGA.
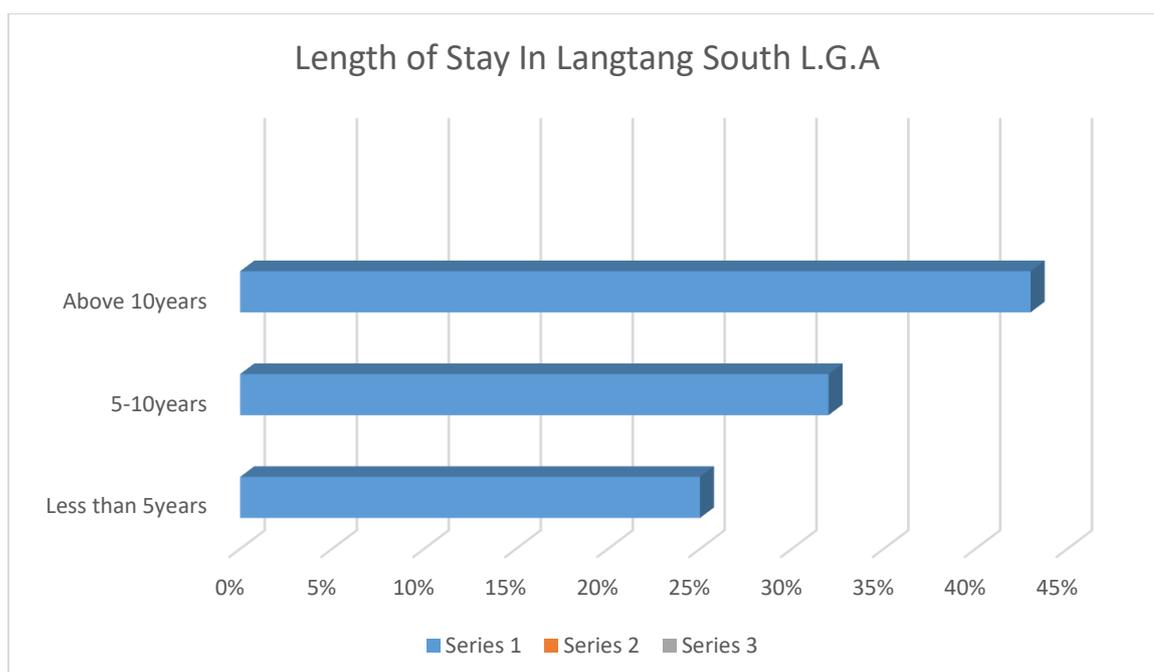
Source: Field Survey (2025)

The chart above shows that 43% of the respondents have lived in the area for over 10 years, 32% of the respondents have lived in the area for about 5-10 years and 25% of the respondents have spent less than 5years living in the area.

Chart 5: Role of Respondents in Community.

Source: Field Survey (2025)

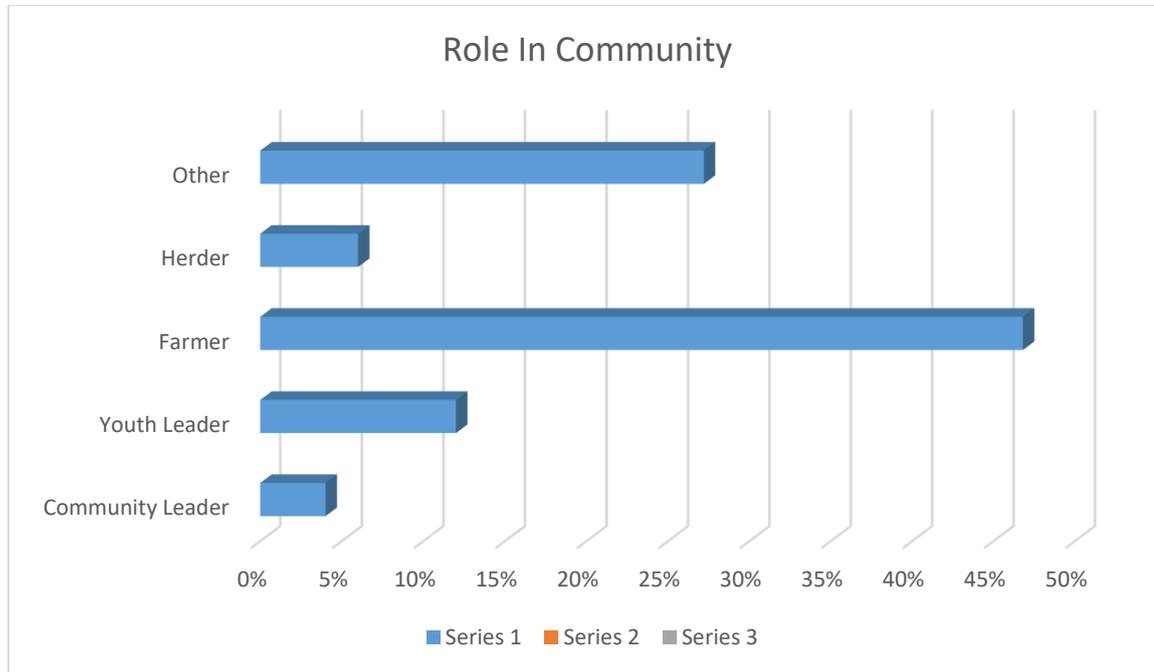The chart above shows the role of respondents in the community. Farmers made up the largest portion with 117 respondents (46.8%), highlighting their significant presence and influence. The "Others" category followed with 68 respondents (27.2%), encompassing individuals who do not fall under primary leadership or livelihood roles. Youth leaders accounted for 30 respondents (12%). Herders were represented by 15 respondents (6%) and Community leaders being the smallest group comprised 10 respondents (4%).

Causes and Nature of the Conflict

Table 1: Assessment of causes of conflict.

Indices	Frequency	Percentage
Have you experienced any farmer-herder conflict in your area?		
Yes	188	75%
No	62	25%
Frequency of conflicts		
Rarely	30	12%
Occasionally	109	47%
Frequently	65	26%
Very frequently	46	18%

Main causes of the conflict		
Land	77	31%
Grazing space	52	21%
Water	9	4%
Religion	44	18%
Ethnicity	37	15%
Politics	31	12%
Is land competition the major cause?		
Strongly agree	66	26%
Agree	107	43%
Neutral	38	15%
Disagree	25	10%
Strongly disagree	14	6%
Have herders encroached on farmlands?		
Yes	213	85%
No	26	10%
Not sure	11	4%
Have farmers blocked migration routes?		
Yes	19	8%
No	188	75%
Not sure	43	17%
Has weapon use escalated the conflict?		
Strongly agree	65	26%
Agree	90	36%
Neutral	47	19%
Disagree	32	13%
Strongly disagree	16	6%
Role of ethnicity/religion in conflict		
Major	166	66%

Moderate	43	17%
Minor	27	11%
None	14	6%

The table 1 above shows that majority of respondents (75%) have experienced farmer-herder conflict, with 47% reporting it occurs occasionally. Land (31%) and grazing space (21%) are the leading causes, followed by religion (18%), ethnicity (15%), politics (12%), and water (4%). Most respondents (69%) agree that land competition is the main cause. Encroachment by herders on farmlands is widely reported (85%), while only 8% say farmers block migration routes. Weapon use is seen to escalate the conflict by 62% of respondents. Ethnicity and religion are also significant factors, with 66% identifying them as major contributors.

Socio Economic Impact

Table 2: Assessment of Socio Economic Impact

Indices	Frequency	Percentage
Has the conflict caused loss of life?		
Yes	236	94%
No	14	6%
Were farms/crops destroyed?		
Yes	222	89%
No	28	11%
Were cattle/livestock lost?		
Yes	173	69%
No	77	31%
Has your livelihood been disrupted?		
Yes	159	64%
No	16	6%
Partially	75	30%
Has displacement occurred?		
Yes	153	61%
No	38	15%
Not sure	59	24%
Impact on education/healthcare		
Severe	162	65%

Moderate	50	20%
Mild	22	9%
None	16	6%
Were public spaces attacked/closed?		
Yes	211	8%
No	39	16%
Has the local economy declined?		
Strongly agree		
Agree	183	73%
Neutral	46	18%
Disagree	17	7%
Strongly disagree	4	1.6%
Poverty increase due to conflict?		
Yes	227	91%
No	13	5%
Not sure	12	5%

The table 2 above shows that the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South has had severe socio-economic effects. Most respondents (94%) reported loss of life, 89% experienced crop destruction, and 69% lost livestock. About 64% said their livelihoods were disrupted, and 61% were displaced. Education and healthcare were severely affected according to 65% of respondents. Public spaces were attacked or closed in 84% of cases. Furthermore, 73% observed a decline in the local economy, and 91% believed poverty increased due to the conflict.

Peace and Security

Table 3: Assessment of Peace and Security in Langtang South LGA.

Indices	Frequency	Percentage
Do you feel secure in your community?		
Yes	140	56%
No	79	32%
Sometimes	31	12%
Has security presence improved safety?		
Strongly agree	59	24%

Agree	110	44%
Disagree	46	18%
Strongly disagree	35	14%
Are security forces neutral?		
Yes	137	55%
No	35	14%
Not sure	78	31%
Are there vigilante/self-defense groups?		
Yes	166	66%
No	33	13%
I don't know	51	20%
Trust between groups post-conflict?		
Improved	27	11%
Same	86	34%
Worsened	137	55%

Table 3 above shows that findings indicate that only 56% of respondents feel secure in their communities, while 32% do not, and 12% feel secure only sometimes. Regarding the role of security presence, 68% agreed it has improved safety, whereas 32% disagreed. On the neutrality of security forces, 55% believed they are neutral, 14% said they are not, and 31% were unsure. Vigilante or self-defense groups were reported by 66% of respondents. However, post-conflict trust between groups remains low, with 55% saying it has worsened, 34% reporting no change, and only 11% observing improvement.

Conflict Resolution

Table 4: Assessment of Conflict Resolution in Langtang South LGA.

Indices	Frequency	Percentage
Role of Traditional rulers?		
Very active	77	31%
Active	136	54%
Inactive	24	10%
Not involved	13	5%
Government intervention?		
Effective	44	18%

Partially effective	54	22%
Ineffective	87	35%
No intervention	65	26%
Peace talks/dialogues held?		
Yes	132	53%
No	51	20%
Don't know	67	27%
Were interventions successful?		
Yes	65	26%
Partially	71	28%
No	80	32%
Don't know	34	14%
Role of NGOs/Civil Society?		
Significant	19	8%
Moderate	48	19%
Minimal	64	26%
None	119	48%

Policy and Recommendations

Table 5: Assessment of Policy and Recommendations in Langtang South LGA.

Indices	Frequency	Percentage
What should the government prioritize?		
Land reform	65	26%
Security	99	40%
Education	21	8%
Dialog	18	7%
Compensation	47	19%
Sustainable solution?		
Community dialog	30	12%
Law enforcement	96	38%

Grazing reserves	71	28%
Inclusive governance	53	21%
Others	0	0%
Should herders be restricted to designated grazing areas?		
Yes	163	65%
No	30	12%
Not sure	57	23%
Would community-based security groups help maintain peace?		
Strongly agree	61	24%
Agree	118	47%
Neutral	38	15%
Disagree	23	9%
Strongly disagree	10	4%
Should the government enforce stricter land use policies?		
Strongly agree	71	28%
Agree	102	41%
Neutral	46	18%
Disagree	23	9%
Strongly disagree	8	3%
What should be the role of traditional institutions in conflict prevention?		
Leading	123	49%
Supporting	89	36%
Observing	33	13%
No role	5	2%
Should youths be engaged in peace building programs?		
Yes	181	72%
No	21	8%
Not sure	48	19%
What peace strategy do you believe is most effective?		

Dialogue	66	26%
Enforcement	81	32%
Mediation	33	13%
Compensation	51	20%
Others	19	8%
Should peace building programs be integrated into local governance?		
Yes	195	78%
No	7	3%
Not sure	48	19%

Table 5 shows that traditional rulers have played a notable role in conflict resolution, with 85% of respondents describing their involvement as active or very active. However, government intervention was largely seen as lacking, as only 18% rated it effective, while 35% said it was ineffective and 26% claimed there was no intervention at all. Peace talks and dialogues have been held according to 53% of respondents, though 27% were unaware of such efforts. In terms of success, only 26% believed interventions were successful, 28% saw them as partially successful, and 32% said they were not successful. The role of NGOs and civil society was rated low, with just 8% seeing their role as significant and 48% stating there was no involvement at all.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The research investigated the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South LGA, focusing on its socio-economic impact, peace and security situation, conflict resolution mechanisms, and policy recommendations for sustainable peace. The key findings are provided as follows:

Socio-Economic Impact

Loss of Life and Property: 94% of respondents reported loss of life due to the conflict, while 89% experienced destruction of farms and crops. About 69% lost livestock, and 64% reported total disruption of livelihoods.

Displacement: 61% of the population experienced displacement, while 24% were uncertain about their displacement status.

Impact on Basic Services: 65% indicated that the conflict had a severe impact on education and healthcare services.

Economic Decline and Poverty: 73% agreed that the local economy has significantly declined due to the conflict, with 91% confirming an increase in poverty levels.

Peace and Security Situation

Community Security Perception: Only 56% of respondents felt secure in their community, while 32% felt insecure.

Security Agencies: 68% (strongly agree + agree) believed that the presence of security agencies has improved safety, but 32% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Neutrality of Security Forces: 55% believed security forces were neutral, while 31% were uncertain.

Vigilante Groups: 66% confirmed the existence of vigilante or self-defense groups in their communities.

Post-Conflict Trust: 55% of respondents stated that trust between groups had worsened since the conflict, while only 11% reported improvement.

Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Role of Traditional Rulers: Traditional rulers play a major role in conflict resolution, with 85% describing their involvement as active or very active.

Government Intervention: Only 18% rated government interventions as effective, while 61% considered them partially effective, ineffective, or absent.

Peace Dialogues: 53% confirmed that peace talks have been held; however, only 26% considered these efforts successful.

NGOs and Civil Society: The involvement of NGOs and civil society is generally low, with 74% describing their role as minimal or none.

Policy And Recommendations

Government Priorities: Security (40%) and land reform (26%) were identified as top government priorities, followed by compensation and education.

Sustainable Solutions: Law enforcement (38%) and grazing reserves (28%) were seen as the most viable long-term solutions.

Restricting Herders: 65% supported restricting herders to designated grazing areas.

Community Security Initiatives: 71% (strongly agree + agree) supported the establishment of community-based security groups.

Stricter Land Use Policies: 69% favored stricter land use policy enforcement.

Traditional Institutions' Role: 85% believed traditional rulers should play a leading or supporting role in conflict prevention.

Youth Engagement: 72% supported involving youths in peace building programs.

Peace building Strategy: Enforcement (32%) and dialogue (26%) were the most preferred peace building strategies.

Integration into Local Governance: 78% supported integrating peace building programs into local governance structures.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal the complex and multifaceted nature of the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South Local Government Area. The data confirm that the conflict is both widespread and persistent, with 75% of respondents reporting personal experiences of such conflict and 47% indicating it occurs occasionally. This aligns with prior studies (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014; International Crisis Group, 2017) which describe the conflict as a recurrent phenomenon in Nigeria's Middle Belt.

Land emerged as the most dominant cause, cited by 31% of respondents, followed closely by grazing space (21%). These findings support the Resource Scarcity Theory, which explains that competition over limited natural resources such as land and water fuels communal violence. The perception that herders encroach on

farmlands (85%) further underscores this resource-based tension, while only a minority believe that farmers block migration routes. The widespread belief that the use of weapons (62%) and ethno-religious identities (66%) escalate the conflict confirms the relevance of the Social Identity Theory, which suggests that group identity (ethnic or religious) heightens polarization and hostility.

Socio-economically, the results show devastating consequences. The loss of life (94%), destruction of crops (89%), and loss of livestock (69%) demonstrate the direct threats to livelihoods. Disruption of economic activities (64%) and displacement (61%) have compounded food insecurity and poverty in the region. These findings are consistent with studies by Fasona and Omojola (2005) and the UNDP (2021), which link conflict to rising poverty and underdevelopment. Education and healthcare were also severely impacted, weakening the social fabric of affected communities.

In terms of peace and security, only a little over half (56%) of respondents feel secure, and 66% report the existence of vigilante groups. This indicates a reliance on local security structures in the absence of effective state protection. While 68% believe that security presence has improved safety, skepticism remains about the neutrality of state forces, with 31% of respondents unsure of their impartiality. Furthermore, trust between ethnic groups has worsened according to 55% of respondents, reflecting a deep-rooted breakdown in intergroup relations.

Traditional rulers appear to have played an active role in conflict resolution, as acknowledged by 85% of respondents. However, government interventions were largely deemed ineffective or absent. Only 18% rated them as effective. This reflects a gap in governance capacity and lends support to the Governance and State Fragility Theory, which argues that weak state institutions fail to manage communal disputes or enforce policies equitably. NGOs and civil society organizations were also perceived to have minimal involvement.

The policy recommendations from respondents emphasize the need for stronger security (40%), land reform (26%), and enforcement of land use regulations. The support for designated grazing areas (65%) and youth engagement in peacebuilding (72%) reflects grassroots solutions rooted in prevention and inclusion. The preference for enforcement (32%) and dialogue (26%) as conflict resolution strategies suggests that while punitive measures are desired, peaceful engagement remains important.

Overall, the findings validate the conceptual and theoretical frameworks adopted in this study and emphasize that resolving the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South requires a multifaceted approach involving security reform, land governance, community dialogue, and inclusive policymaking.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was maintained by obtaining informed consent (written or verbal) from all participants, who were briefed on the study's purpose and their right to withdraw. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by excluding all identifiable information and securely storing the data. The study adhered to the ethical standards and principles of the Belmont Report (1979): respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The study encountered two primary limitations:

1. Sensitivity of the Topic: The arms-related nature of the research led to some respondent reluctance, mitigated by strict anonymity protocols.

2. Scope Constraint: Logistical and security constraints limited the study, potentially affecting the overall generalizability of the findings.

3. Despite these constraints, the methodology was deemed robust to yield credible and insightful results.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South LGA and its far-reaching socio-economic, security, and political implications. The findings reveal that competition over land and grazing space, compounded by ethnic and religious tensions, are major drivers of conflict. The conflict has led to severe loss of lives, displacement and destruction of livelihoods, poverty, and the breakdown of social cohesion.

Despite the presence of security agencies and some peace initiatives, interventions by both government and NGOs remain largely insufficient or only partially effective. There is a strong call from the community for enhanced government action, particularly in the areas of land reform, security, law enforcement, youth engagement, and inclusive governance. Traditional institutions and community-based security groups also have critical roles to play in fostering sustainable peace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to address the farmer-herder conflict in Langtang South LGA:

1. Strengthen Security Architecture:

Increase deployment of neutral and well-trained security personnel.

Establish and support community-based security groups under strict regulation and oversight.

2. Land Use Reform:

Government should review land ownership and use policies.

Establish clear grazing reserves and enforce designated grazing routes to minimize encroachment on farmlands.

3. Conflict Prevention through Dialogue:

Institutionalize regular community dialogue forums involving farmers, herders, religious leaders, traditional rulers, and government representatives.

Promote reconciliation programs to rebuild trust between groups.

4. Youth Engagement in Peace building:

Create peace education and employment programs targeting youths to prevent their recruitment into violent activities.

Involve youths directly in local peace committees and conflict resolution mechanisms.

5. Role of Traditional Institutions:

Empower traditional rulers with legal backing to mediate and resolve local conflicts.

Incorporate traditional conflict resolution practices into formal governance structures.

6. Government and NGO Collaboration:

Encourage greater involvement of NGOs and civil society organizations in peace building efforts.

Facilitate partnerships that provide humanitarian aid, capacity-building, and monitoring of peace agreements.

7. Policy Enforcement:

Strict enforcement of laws prohibiting illegal land occupation, violent attacks, and the possession of arms.

Develop long-term policies to address climate change and resource scarcity that often trigger conflicts.

Policy Implications

Integrated Governance: Effective conflict resolution requires integrated efforts combining formal government institutions, traditional leadership, and civil society actors.

Institutional Capacity Building: Strengthening local institutions to handle conflict before escalation can significantly reduce violence.

Inclusive Policy Formulation: Government policies on land use, grazing, and security should involve all stakeholders to ensure fair representation and acceptance.

Sustainable Development: Policies must address root causes such as unemployment, poverty, and environmental degradation to achieve lasting peace.

Suggestions for Further Research

- An in-depth study on the role of climate change and environmental degradation in exacerbating the farmer-herder conflict.

- Comparative analysis of conflict resolution models in other LGAs or states experiencing similar conflicts.

- Investigation into the long-term psychological and educational impacts of conflict on displaced persons and youth.

- Assessment of the effectiveness of community-based peace building programs and their potential scalability.

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