

Dissecting Management Strategies of Farmer – Herder Conflict in Selected Vulnerable States in North-Central Nigeria

Vahyala, Adamu Tari

Department of Economics and Management Science, Nigeria Police Academy,
Wudil, Kano State

Email: vahyalatariadamu@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined farmer-herder conflict through the prism of management approaches/preventive conflict strategies in selected vulnerable States and Local Government Areas in North-Central Nigeria. Cross-sectional survey design and ex-post facto were used as research designs. A sample size of 57 Key Informant Interview (KII), 17 Focused Group Discussion (in a syndicate of 10 persons per group) and 10 Study Chat (SC) were carried out across the targeted communities with the aid of purposive sampling techniques. The participants were generated under the leadership of Community Security Architecture Dialogue (CSAD) a local peace structure which comprised of representatives of farmers, herders, religious group, traditional leaders, women wing, youth leaders, government security officials among others, under the supervision of Search for Common Group (SFCG), an NGO interfacing between farmers and herders in North –Central Nigeria. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was used to analyze the content of the data generated in the course of the interviews. Rational choice theory was used as a framework of analysis. The study discovered that; peace building structure achieved greater success in terms of mediation, dialogue, psycho-social and trauma healings among aggrieved parties. The study discovered that even though a number of arrests were made they were not sufficient enough due to sabotage from immediate communities. It noted further that the detention of suspects had significant impact in de-escalating conflicts between farmers and herders among others. Thus, the study recommended that; there is need for greater participation and cooperation the locals for building trust, confidence, resilience and trust among the contending parties, while members of the communities should be motivated by the governments of the States that make up the North-Central region to volunteer credible intelligence security tips to relevant authorities towards result oriented investigation, arrest, detention and prosecution, to guarantee lasting peace and stability in the region.

Keywords: Conflicts; Farmer; Herder; Management; North-Central.

Introduction

There is need to explore alternative means to conflict management in addressing the recurring dynamism decimal in the insecurity waves bedeviling our societies today. While the peace building initiatives are germane in addressing conflicting situations, punishment of offenders would as well go a long way as deterrence to intending offenders. The Central focus of this study is to examine the effectiveness

and relationship of peace building, arrest, detention, prosecution and conviction of farmer-herder offenders on security management in North-Central Nigeria in an attempt to curtail the fragile working relationship among farmers and herders. Furthermore, the study interrogated the intrigues surrounding conflict management which, from this point of view include; prolonged litigation, weak justice system, and ineffective prosecution, weak local peace initiatives, weak intelligent gathering among others.

Furthermore, diminishing confidence in state security agencies, prolonged litigation, weak justice system, poor parenting and increasing involvement of a huge number of youths in drug trafficking and abuse overheat the climate of insecurity leading to rural banditry, cattle rustling and trespass across the region. This situation does not only translate to mutual suspicion, fear and mistrust, but turns to violent conflicts due to weak conflict management structures at the local level. The deficiency ineffective and proactive community policing and prolonged litigations/ lack of quick justice dispensation have exacerbated the rise of the climate and wave of insecurity in the form of, rural banditry and reprisal attacks in the study areas.

It is against this backdrop that, this study examines the management of farmer-herder conflicts from the prism of peace building, arrest, detention, prosecution and conviction of offenders in North- Central Nigeria in an attempt to build trust, confidence, resilience and trust among the contending parties over scarce land resources in the region.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of peace building on de-escalating farmer-herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of arrests in curtailing farmer- herder conflict in North-Central Nigeria?
3. To what extent has detention of culprits' reduced violent conflicts among farmer-herder communities in North-Central Nigeria?
4. To what extent has prosecution of offenders' resolved farmer – herder conflicts in North- Central Nigeria?
5. To what extent has conviction served as deterrent to farmer-herder offenders in North- Central Nigeria?

Objectives

1. To examine the effect of peace building in de-escalating farmer – herder conflicts in North-Central Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the effect of arrests in managing farmer – herder conflicts in North-Central Nigeria.
3. To determine the extent to which detention of culprits mitigates farmer – herder conflicts in North-Central Nigeria.
4. To ascertain the level to which prosecution of farmer – herder suspects curtail violent conflicts in North-Central Nigeria.
5. To determine the effect of conviction of farmer – herder offenders in curtailing conflicts situations in North -Central Nigeria.

Contextual framework

Security

It is instructive to note that security is the primary and foremost duty of government. It is the sole responsibility of any government to protect lives and property from internal or external threats. Section 14 (2) (b) of the 1999 constitution (as amended) provides that; “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government”.

Like any other social science concept, security as a phenomenon has no consensus definition. In many conceptualizations, discipline influences one’s perception of the concept of security. Some scholars see security from livelihood point of view while some see it from protection of human lives and culture perspective. We shall in this segment conceptualize security from the protection of human lives approach. To this end, security refers to the safeguarding of material conditions that make for sustainable human living. The conditions include optimal safety, health, livelihood, education, employment, feeding and psychological balance. Conceived in this sense, security entails absence of conditions that threaten human life and progress in society. It presupposes the protection of man from all forms of societal, economic, socio-economic, environmental, physical and psycho-social vulnerabilities (Okoli & Okpaleke, cited in Iortyer & Okoli, 2017).

In another perspective, Ukpere cited in Nnamani and Iloh (2017), asserts that security means protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life in homes, offices or communities. He further argues that security must

be related to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and the protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis, threats to human beings, among others.

According to Elaigwu (2012), security is a set of measures taken to guard against espionage, sabotage, crime, attack, terrorism, insurgency and other forms of danger to the state. He further advanced that these measures are aimed at preventing the state and its citizens from experiencing dangers, fears and/or anxiety. It means the ability of a state to ward off all forms of threats both internal and external to its survival, and these may include ensuring the internal stability and predictability of the system. It can be seen from the above definitions that security implies freedom from any form of internal or external threats to lives and property in a society.

To shed more light on security, Zabadi, cited in Boumo (2017), sees security as freedom from danger or threats to an individual or a nation. It is the ability to protect and defend oneself, be it an individual or a nation of its cherished values and legitimate interests and the enhancement of wellbeing. The above definition connotes one's capacity or capability to defend oneself or a nation within the ambits of law signifies security. Hence, security encompasses all approaches towards safeguarding human as well as material resources against all forms of aggression or violent conducts. By implication, security is synonymous to freedom from danger, and or threats to an individual or a nation among others (Boumo, 2017).

Therefore, in an attempt to depart from the traditional conceptualization of security as presence of military, police and other related agencies, it is pertinent to establish that security has gone beyond the presence of military or police apparatus even though it encompasses it. Kofi (1998) in Lamidi (2007), posited that "security means much more than the absence of conflict but also that lasting peace, an inherent ingredient of security will encompass areas, such as education, health, democracy, human rights, the protection against environmental degradation and the proliferation of deadly weapons".

According to Dambazau (2010), there are two positions of human security: "first, *"Freedom from fear"* which focuses on protecting individuals from violent conflicts while recognizing that violent conflicts are strongly associated with poverty, lack of state capacity, and other forms of inequalities; and second, *"Freedom from what"*, a position which says that the threat agenda should be broadened to include hunger, disease and natural disasters, because they are inseparable concepts in

addressing the root of human insecurity and that they kill more people than war, genocide, and terrorism combined”.

Paradigm Shift to Conflict Management Strategies

The search for better policing has necessitated the paradigm shift to security management. This is not far from the fact that, the inability or failure of the NPF to address the perennial security challenges confronting the corporate existence of Nigeria as a political entity compelled some state governments to resort to self-help in forming vigilante groups as an alternative approach to policing. Okeke (2013) noted that, the state in Nigeria unlike other federations like the United States of America, are not constitutionally empowered to have their own police. Thus, there is only one federal police for the whole of the country, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the Nigeria Police to effectively police or secure over 170 million people with diverse cultures, religions and languages in an unevenly distributed geographical area of 913,075 square kilometers.

It is a known fact that a single security department cannot surmount the security challenges in a complex setting like Nigeria despite the existence of numerous security departments and agencies. The recurrence of crime and criminality suggests the urgent need for wider consultation and communality collaboration to supplement the deficiency in policing outfit in Nigeria. According to Oppler, cited in Inyang and Abraham (2013).

It is widely believed that no one agency alone can succeed in reducing crime. This fact is acknowledged by security experts who argue that, ‘any comprehensive strategy to reduce crime must not only include the contribution of the police and the criminal justice system but also the whole range of environmental, social, economic and educational factors which affect the likelihood of crime”. To this end, many countries of the world due to the ravaging security challenges and the apparent inability of the conventional police to handle the situation alone satisfactorily have encouraged the establishment of partnerships between governments in addressing crime. Increasingly, comparative experiences have shown that this approach of incorporating a professional police service and a responsible public seems to be the most effective and fruitful way to achieve positive results and create a safer environment.

The idea behind collaboration between the conventional police and the community is to ease the rigorous aspect of policing and to share experience and intelligence

toward crime prevention. It is also an attempt to address the reactionary nature of policing in favor of pro-active response in surmounting crimes at the local level. Through this strategy, it would be less likely to experience much crime in the cities and escalation of violent conflicts would be minimized to its barest minimum. Kpae and Eric (2017) submit that the philosophy of community policing is for citizens and the police to share responsibility for their community's safety. It means that citizens and the police will work collectively to identify problems, propose solutions, implement action and evaluate the results in the community. The idea of community policing is quite different from traditional policing that emphasizes strict police authority on crime prevention. In community policing, the police must share power with residents of a community, and critical decisions need to be made at the community level, rather than at police stations (Bohm and Halen, 2005 cited in Kpae and Eric, 2017).

The strategies would build the confidence and trust of the community who see themselves as partners in progress. In this aspect security becomes everybody's business since responsible members of the community form part of the policing structure. Thus, traditional ways of curbing crimes, settling disputes and other native security management techniques would be unveiled to minimize the level of criminal activities and facilitate law enforcement in the communities.

Kasili and Odetola (2016) succinctly state how best to establish and operate a community based policing, thus;

“Community policing demands that police departments reform their relationship with local communities, and that police officers change their attitudes and behaviors toward citizens and police work. In order to foster police-community cooperation in tackling community problems, police agencies must first elicit community input. This can be achieved via a variety of methods, including door-to-door visits conducted by police officers, mail-out surveys, and residential block meetings. The gathering of this information helps the police identify and prioritize community concerns. In their attempts to reduce crime and disorder, the police can seek the assistance of community members by encouraging citizens to report illegal or suspicious behavior”

In view of this, the new paradigm shift would help to revive public perception of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) whom the civil community views as unfriendly, untrustworthy, unprofessional, without integrity, corrupt and lacking sense of responsibility. The NPF has the duty and responsibility to eliminate such

perception and one of the best strategies to do it is to redefine the operational procedure in engaging the civil community through sharing responsibilities and concern for a better, safe and secure society.

The need for trust forms the nucleus in the building block of security at any level and this seems to be grossly absent in the policing structure of the NPF and it undermines the success against crime prevention and control. It is instructive to note that in this new paradigm shift of security management, trust serves as the engine room in building solid partnership with the civil society to achieve a desired objective. On this note Farrell (1988) cited in Kasah and Odetola (2016), reiterated that;

Certainly, trust is the value that underlies and connects the components of community partnership and problem solving. A foundation of trust will allow police to form close relationships with the community that will produce great achievements. Without trust between police and citizens, effective policing remains elusive. Community policing partnerships develop information exchange: the community provides the police with information about problem conditions and locations, crime concerns, active criminals and stolen property, and in return police provide the community with information pertaining to community fears, problems, tactical information and advice about preventing and reducing crime.

However, the eroded confidence and trust in the NPF have continued to pose a challenge from many studies across Nigeria. There is apparently no genuine framework towards reforming and redefining the NPF towards international best practice in Nigeria. In as much as the way forward is partnership ideas and making crime a difficult task to achieve, many responsible community members are still skeptical relating with the saying that the police is “trained” to be their friend and that affects intelligence gathering and the anticipated community support and encroachment.

Okeke (2016), comprehensively captures the whole scenario when he declared; With the corruption in the police, the suspected criminal easily finds their ways back in the streets terrorizing people and even in extreme cases unleashing vengeance on those people that handed them over to the police or masterminded their arrest by the people. The police are also accused of revealing the identity of their informants to the suspected criminals after being released by the police in questionable circumstances who later go after the informants. Also, the police have

on many occasions failed to redeem the price tag it puts on suspected criminals at large. The police have been accused of bribery and corruption, extortion of motorists, illegal road blocks, extra-judicial killings, intimidation and the use of excessive force on innocent citizens, giving arms to armed robbers, involvement in the armed robbery, mass and illegal arrest, unable to confront the armed robbers etc... the perceptions of the people of the police worsened to the extent that community members perceived as police informants are derided. Under this state of affairs, many Nigerian communities no longer look to the Nigerian Police Force for their protection from violent criminals or from other sources of danger. Instead, they have resorted to other means like self-defense or mob action for their own protection including unregulated and often violent reprisals against suspected sources of their collective endangerment.

The increasing incidence of extra-judicial execution otherwise known as “Jungle Justice”, killings of suspects by communities across the nation is worrisome and an indication of the fact that people have lost confidence and the conviction that police can channel justice on suspects. It also rests on the views that the Nigeria Police Force are feeding fat on suspected criminals to get “bail” only for the suspect to come back and become a threat to lives and property of the same communities. It is common in Nigeria for a suspect to be arrested more than three times and get released from the police without trial and prosecution. Such incidents have demoralized the communities’ zeal to partner with the police in reducing criminal activities across Nigeria. The end product is that, it was the malcontent between the police and the community that resulted to the outgrowths of the vigilante security in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theory chosen for this study is the Rationale Choice theory. Rational choice theory appears to possess explanatory capacity in analyzing security management. Scholars such as Homans (1961), Blau (1964), Coleman (1973), among others, has written on rational choice theory. The theory which is derived mainly from the expected utility model in economics has over time become topical in criminology, sociology, political science and law. The basic assumptions of the theory are that,

- (a). Human beings are reasoning actors who weigh means and ends, cost and benefits, in order to make a rational choice.
- (b). People are able to freely make up their minds towards certain actions and behavior.

- (C).The offender is capable of weighing the chances of getting caught.
- (d).The offender is aware of the possible punishment that will be dispensing if caught.
- (e). The offender is capable of calculating whether the severity of the punishment outweighs the benefit of getting along with the crime.

According to Pratt (2008) scholars working within the rational choice theoretical tradition have noted how individual perceptions of the relative costs and benefits of engaging in any particular form of criminal activities or behavior are consequences of a host of individual and contextual factors ...One significant development in rational choice theory has involved efforts by scholars to uncover the conditions under which sanctions may be effective in deterring criminal behavior.

The relevance of this theory to this study justifies how sanctions within the context of security management tend to work best and improve prosaically behavior of large offender population in North-Central Nigeria. This is because potential offenders make rational or calculative thoughts before indulging on their action. Thus, they weigh potential cost and benefits derivable from the crime in question. This implies that offenders make decisions according to a cost-benefit analysis however brief or limited in reasoning or scope. Notably, the cost-benefit calculation is driven exclusively by the reward (penalties) set aside for the offender. These could be in the form of arrest, detention, interrogation, prosecution and conviction by the appropriate authorities. When the cost of crime activities is higher than its benefits due to the effectiveness of security management strategies, potential offenders of farmer-herders, would reason otherwise. Emphasizing on the above decision rule is that, crime is worth pursuing only when its benefit is higher than the risk.

The Rational choice theory has some inherent weaknesses; for instance, it cannot answer important questions like what the offender thinks when he/she commits or plans to commit a crime and how the offenders' acts. However, the strength of the theory lies in the fact that everybody makes a decision by weighing the risks and benefits of each outcome, which is rationality. This helps to make the best choice based on the outcome he/she foresees. By implication, rational choice theory helps to prevent crime from happening. It is a crime- prevention theory which is very relevant to this study.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts the cross-sectional survey design and ex-post facto research designs. The method enables the researcher to study a group of people in the population by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people that are considered to be true representatives of the entire group (population) and also analyze existing documented secondary data. Therefore, rather than obtain data from the whole population in the research area, only a sample is selected from the whole through an appropriate sampling procedure.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

This study adopted a community case study approach, which according to Yin in Kwaja and Abdul (2015), is investigation built on an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. This approach enabled this study to investigate real farmer-herder clashes in North- Central Nigeria (Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa State which constitutes the scope of this study).

Fieldwork was carried out in the selected states and local government areas; selection was largely based on these areas of persistent farmer-herder conflicts with fragile security management structures/strategies. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focused Group Discussion (FGD) Town Hall Meetings with government with community stakeholders and representatives of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Government Security officials (Operation Safe Heaven, Operation Rainbow, Police, NSCDC) were carried out under the auspices of Research For Common Ground (SFCG) an NGO dedicated in creating a common ground for peace between farmers and herders in Nigeria.

Focused Group Discussion (FGDs) and study chats were held in these communities as summarized in Table 1 below.

The study chat was adopted as an alternative data collection tool to surmount the challenge of conducting a normal Focused Group Discussion (FGD) as originally planned. According to Okoli (2015) the Study Chat (SCs) takes the form of casual discussion whereby persons deemed to be knowledgeable on the various aspects in the subject matter were interacted with based on chance contact.

Firstly, the study adopted purposive sampling technique to gather data from the participants for this research. This method helped the researcher to identify the target population and volatile areas where information of the subject is available. The technique was harnessed based on firsthand knowledge, participants' knowledge and the experience and the willingness to share information.

Selected states and locals includes; communities in Plateau (Riyom and Barkin-Ladi), Nasarawa (Awe and Doma) and Benue (Agatu and Guma) that have directly experienced farmer-herder clashes.

Table 1: State, L.G.A. and Districts Targeted for Key Informants Interview (KIIs) Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and Study Chats (SCs)

S/No .	State	Name of L.G.A. where Field work was conducted		Targeted communities		Targeted population		
				BakinLadi LGA		Riyom LGA		
1.	Plateau	* Riyom	i.	Gashirts	i.	Ganawuri	i.	Farmers
		* Barkin - Ladi	ii.	Fan	ii.	Riyom	ii.	Pastoralists
			iii.	Hipang	iii.	Bachit	iii.	National security & civil Defence Corp (NSCDC)
			iv.	Gana Rapp	iv.	Fan	iv.	Community leaders
			v.	Foron	v.	Tom	v.	Police
			vi.	Bisichi	vi.	Hoss	vi.	Religious and traditional leaders
			vii.	N.T.V.	vii.	Fanroi	vii.	CSOs & NGOs and CBOs
			viii.	Kwok				
			ix.	Sho				
			x.	Kakuruk				
			xi.	Lure				
			xii.	Katako				
				Awe L.G.A		Doma L.G.A.		
2.	Nasarawa	* Awe	i.	Tuga district	i.	Alagye	i.	Farmer
		* Doma	ii.	Galadima	ii.	Agbashi	ii.	Pastoralists

		iii. Jangangari iv. Mahage v. Huse vi. Kanje vii. Azara viii. Amapana	iii. Doma iv. Yelwa v. Gidarai vi. Ruhuki vii. Sarkin viii. Doka ix. MadoKI x. Dawaki xi. Akpanag a	iii. National security & civil Defence Corp (NSCDC) iv. Community leaders v. Police vi. Religious and traditional leaders vii. CSOs & NGOs and CBOs
3.	Benue * Agatu * Guma	Agatu LGA i. Enungba ii. Ogwule iii. Ogbaulu iv. Oshigbudu	Guma L.G.A. Kaambe Nzoror Sagher	i. Farmer ii. Pastoralists iii. National security & civil Defence Corp (NSCDC) iv. Community leaders v. Police vi. Religious and traditional leaders

				vii	CSOs & NGOs and CBOs
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Source: Field Survey, 2019

After a careful and proper identification of the target population and communities, simple random sampling within each of the localities was selected for interview and questionnaire administration. Samples were drawn from representatives of registered members of Community Security Architecture Dialogue (CSAD) which comprised of registered members of MACBAN, AFAN, Community leader (religious and traditional), representatives of local government chairmen, government security officials, vigilante groups, social welfare departments, youth leaders and women leaders of the six (6) local governments in the three selected States of Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa.

Essentially, 30 KIIs, 17 FGDs and 10 SCs were carried out across the communities targeted for this study. The languages of investigation were Hausa and English. Understanding of the terrain and culture of the people in the study communities was a huge advantage for the researcher. Verbal ethical clearances from the community heads through CSAD were obtained. All respondents were assured of confidentiality before they were interviewed. They were told that their responses would be used for academic purposes only.

This clarity coupled with the endorsement and presence of CSOs, NGOs and Plateau Peace Building Agency (PPBA) in the case of Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Doma, Agatu and Guma created a favorable working ground for this study in facilitating and eliciting quality and reliable data for this study (See table 1). It is therefore, important to highlight here that, CSAD is a non-kinetic effort by relevant NGOs and CSOs, in collaboration with government Peace Building Agencies (PBAs) towards building trust, confidence and resilience and also an opportunity for aggrieved parties to talk to themselves in search of a common ground.

Method of data Collection

The strength of this research lies on the KIIs and FGDs and SCs carried out in the course of the investigation and that afforded the researcher an opportunity to understand the content, context and dynamics of the subject matter. The interviews were recorded with the help of a recording device; permission was sought from the

respondents, and the record was later transcribed for reporting purposes and subsequent analysis. In a similar way, close ended questionnaire was duly administered through Research Assistants (RAs) in all the selected communities. These RAs were originally trained and served as informants to many CSOs and NGOs interfacing in the communities. Thus, this study found their knowledge and experience of great benefit to this study.

Techniques for Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of interview and FGDs & SCs conducted adopted the Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). TCA according to Kwaja and Abdul (2015) generates a descriptive set of qualitative data from the interview transcripts collected. By grouping and distilling interview texts, then extracting a list of common themes; this revealed the common meanings and expressions from the set respondents.

The sieving of common denominators reinforces direct examination of the relationship between security management and farmer-herder conflicts in North Central Nigeria. Analysis of data obtained from all the respondents such as community leaders, narratives of members of the security agencies; media reportage of crisis, print and electronic narratives were subjected to further thorough analysis in the attempt to underscore their relevance to the study.

Study Area

The North Central comprised of six (6) State and Federal Capital Territory, (FCT) Abuja. In this study, focus was placed on three (3) States namely; Plateau, Benue, and Nasarawa State. The justification for choosing them is based on the prevalence of Farmer-Herder clashes in the zone.

The population of the study areas are as follows; 4,200,400; 5,741,800; 2,523,400 for Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa State respectively (National Population Commission, 2006). Land mass of the selected vulnerable states include; 26,026km² area, 30,783 km² area, and 26,256 km² area for Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa State. The population density of the study areas include; 161.4/km², 186.5/km² and 96.11/km² for Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa State respectively. (Wikipedia, 2020).

Economic activities of the study areas have many similarities. In Plateau, even though is historically best known for its mining production, like other selected states for this study, agriculture is the major activities of the people. Some of the produced crops in the study areas include; Acha, Corn (Maize) potatoes, rice, fruits, vegetable, yam, cassava and melon are some of the economic comparative advantage the state enjoys.

Quantitative Data

Peace building as Management Strategies

Synthesizing the responses of both farmers and herder, it was discovered that with the development in relation to the activities of CSAD, progress is being recorded in building trust, confidence and willingness to talk or have a conversation on how best to live together. Court processes frustrated both herders and farmers who subsequently desired to always take laws into their hands or sometimes address issues locally. The study areas are said to be militarized with poor civil-military relationship, inadequate understanding of the local terrain, poor responses to early warning signals and mostly reactive to violent attacks. Thus, both parties recently discovered that security issues are local issues and are best addressed locally. This necessitated the formation of CSAD across the communities because according to the officials of CSAD;

What we have right now in many local communities here is peace enforcement as against conflict management. We appeal to the military officials to be civil in their operations (FGD, June 1st, 2019) During the FGD, six (6) male and eight 8 female were in attendance. Age bracket of (25-65) constituted the sample age. The location and venue of the meeting was Barkin-Ladi Local Government Secretariat, Plateau State, Nigeria.

The local communities rely much on vigilante groups who were seen to be insiders, local, and unbiased and have good understanding of security and conflict dynamics of the study areas. This situation also led to the formation of Community Security Architecture Dialogue (CSAD), a forum where security issues are deliberated and consolidated into mechanisms for sustainable peace in the study areas. This local forum is anchored by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) an NGO working primarily on farmer-herder clashes in Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa States which meets monthly to discuss security matters. Some of the respondents reacted as follows;

We don't like going to court, we don't have money to hire a lawyer. The process is always time wasting. The local peace committees (LIC) through the CSAD and NSCDC help to settle farmer-herder clashes. The LPCs, are responsible for assessing damage valuation and compensation price... we always like to work with the NSCDC because they don't have prosecution structures after every case, the community only reports to the police for record purposes (FGD July, 29, 2019) This view was expressed during the regular monthly meeting of stakeholders such as NGOs, Association of Farmers and Herders, religious and traditional leaders under the umbrella of Plateau State Peace Building Agency (PPBA) in Plateau State, Jos North Local Government Area.

Arrest of Offenders and Security Management

One of the measurable indicators of security management is the arrest of suspected perpetrators of farmer-herder conflicts. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF), National Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) in collaboration with the military have been in the forefront in arresting offenders. In an interview with senior NSCDC officers in charge of Agro-Rangers department, they said:

“The security agencies across the affected States have been making progress in arresting suspects relating to farmer-herder violence... What most civilians/communities fail to note is that, we are not permitted by law to make public pronouncements on the number of arrests, methods and time. We are not at liberty to divulge how arrests were made. Nevertheless, all I could say is, we are doing our best to bring the perpetrators of farmer-herder conflicts to book (KII, 5th June, 2019) In this regard, only one officer was in charge of peace and conflict resolution and Head-Agro Rangers Unit, Plateau State, Nigeria”

This study understood that arrests were made although, in interacting with civilian target population across the study areas, they tended to have mixed feelings about the rate of arrests. Many of the respondents claimed that pockets of arrests were made but not commensurate with the frequency of farmer-herder attacks. In an FGD session with some respondents, they have this say:

We have been distanced in assisting the security agencies in making meaningful arrest, although some parents are covering their erring children in resisting arrest, thus, sabotaging the security management of the unending violence between us and the herders and likewise on the side of the herders as well... Nevertheless, even with that, arrest of offenders in most cases is not proportionate with the offences committed (FGD, July 2019). This view was expressed by NCSDC official during the Monthly dialogue meeting held at Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. During the FGD with other security officials, four (4,) with age bracket of (40-55) of Police, NCSDC, Army and Vigilante comprised the formation of the discussion. The meeting took place in Doma Local Government Secretariat in Nasarawa State.

What can be deduced from the above responses is that, while the security agencies are making progress in terms of arrests of offenders, people in the affected communities were said to poorly involved in the process which makes them perceived that no effective control mechanism in place to curb the lingering crisis in the zone.

Detention of Offenders and Conflict Management

Detention of farmer-herder suspects has been one of the security management strategies that are revealed in this study. Although, in the course of conducting this study, efforts were made to know and take statistics of detained suspects of farmer-herder conflicts in the police stations visited but they were said to have been released on bail, while some are in correctional centers awaiting trial. In an FGD and KII sessions across Barkin Ladi, Riyom and Doma LGAs of Plateau and Nasarawa State respectively, respondents cutting across farmers and herders said;

Parents are fueling violence by quickly seeking bail for their detained children from police stations. This is the sad reality we are confronted with. Once there is arrest, parents spend their last penny to ensure that their children are back on the streets (FGD, 16th July 2019). This session was conducted during the regular Monthly Peace Architecture Dialogue in Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State. Eleven (11)

people were purposively selected for the discussion out of which eight (8) were male, three (3) were female. The FGD was held at Riyom Local Government Secretariat, Plateau State.

From another perspective, it was alleged by both farmers and herders that, the NPF are very much interested in collecting bail money to release suspects regardless of the gravity of offences committed by the suspects. The implications are that an aggrieved party may not have a proper understanding of the workings of police station nor does he/she know what are bail able or non-bail able offence are. This much was apparent in the reaction of one of the respondents.

It is frustrating and heartbreaking to see someone who is alleged to be the cause of one's misfortune working freely in the community after arrest. This does not only resuscitate anger, it generates fresh tension and subsequent reprisal attacks (KII, July 2019). This concern was raised in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. Two of the leaders of All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) made this revelation and was independently verified during the Monthly Peace Dialogue. Age bracket of the informants was (54 and 56) for the two heads of the respective associations respectively.

Prosecution and Conflict Management

Prosecution is another cardinal aspect of security management especially with regards to the protracted farmer-herder conflicts in part of Central Nigeria. Bringing perpetrators of conflicts to justice does not only give hope for the common man in the society, but strengthens peace and tranquility. However, the perception of some of the actors in the farmer-herder crisis about these critical aspects of security management is interesting to note;

We don't like going to court, we don't have money to hire a lawyer(s). The process is always time wasting, the technicalities in terms of presenting evidence is enormous, we prefer Local Peace Committee (LPC) through the CSAD and NSCDC to help in settling farmer-herder clashes. The LPCs are responsible for assessing and evaluating damages to crops

and animals and suggesting compensation price... We always like to relate with the NSCDC because they do not have prosecution structures and after settlements, the community through the CSAD report to police stations for record purposes (FGD July 29, 2019). This revelation was revealed in Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State during the Monthly dialogue meeting. Ten (10) members of the Community Security Architecture Dialogue (CSAD) were randomly selected for the FGD. Out of the elected members, four (4) of which were female, six (6) were male all within the age bracket of 35-55. The meeting was held at Doma Local Government Secretariat, Nasarawa State.

What was learnt in the course of this study with regards to prosecution is that, due to time factor, economic reason, long litigation process couple with the formation of CSAD, aggrieved parties most times preferred out-of-court settlement to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) under the hearing and supervision of communities and religious leaders. In the course of having a Study Chart (SC) with some personnel in the judicial system regarding the option for settlement out of court, one of them said;

“Yeah..., parties are at liberty within the armpit of the law to withdraw their case to settle out of court (SC July, 28, 2019).

Conviction and Conflict Management

This is virtually the last stage of security management strategies within the context of this study. Survey carried out under this study suggested that many were convicted based on arrest made over the years. Efforts to physically interact with convicts of farmer-herder clashes across the correctional centers in Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Lafiya, Guma and Agatu areas, were not successful.

In the course of the interview with some security personnel, they had this to say: We had a lot of cases, some are on bail, some are undergoing trial and many have been convicted (KII, July 27, 2019). The detail was released by official of the Search For Common Ground (SFCG) the NGO coordinating the activities of conflicting parties in the study area, in Benue State. The KII was held at the State Regional Head office in Makurdi, Benue State and he is of 38 years old.

Although most of the security details were not revealed by the personnel, the understanding is that, justice is served to offenders of farmer-herder conflicts across the States.

Specific Findings

1. Although some responses received from farmers and herders suggested that they are not very comfortable with the most of the processes involved from arrest to prosecution as a result of alleging bias and unprofessionalism on the part of security agencies, it is however, the position of this study that such allegations still remain at the level of allegations, requiring further study to establish their veracity and authenticity.
2. The efficacy of peace building under the auspices of the CSAD, CSOs and other State peace building agencies has recorded tremendous success in terms of mediation, dialogue, psycho-social and trauma healing among the aggrieved parties of farmer -herder conflicts in selected vulnerable States in North-Central Nigeria. These non-kinetic approaches have significant impact in relation to building trust, building confidence and readiness of the affected population to have useful conversations on how best to manage conflict and stay together among the affected communities in the study areas.
3. There has been a considerable number arrest of farmers and herder's offenders across the study areas, which to a large extent should send a signal to potential offenders to avoid conflict and embrace peace. Although some parents often sabotage the process or seek release of their children at all cost, there is no significant synergy between communities and government security outfits in effecting conflict management mechanisms of farmers and herders conflicts in parts of North-Central Nigeria. This finding is in line with the findings of Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin (2018) that there is mutual distrust leading to compromise in effecting the arrest of suspects/ offenders in the study areas. The finding was also confirmed during the monthly CSAD meeting in the study areas.
4. It was discovered that detention of perpetrators of farmers and herders 'conflicts have reduced the escalation of violence in the study areas. However, it does not serve as sufficient deterrent to other potential attackers or assailants, as pockets of related aberrant conflicts are still unfolding in the study areas. This finding brings to the fore, the adopted theoretical framework of analysis

in this study as emphasized by Wright (2010) where he argued that severity of punishment could serve as deterrent to potential offenders.

5. In terms of prosecution, offending parties prefer settling issues out of court mainly due to time factor, economic reasons, economic activities and intervention of community and religious leaders under the leadership of the CSAD. It was observed that administration of criminal justice operates at a pace that does not reflect the fragility of the situation and the urgency to dispense justice to those who deserved it. The slow justice system is part reason people settle scores in a local way when they cannot redress their rights that have been trampled upon. This gives credence to the fact that Nigeria's justice system is overstretched or overwhelmed.
6. Prosecution takes so long that many offended parties assume that the offender have long been released without serving justice, this encourages violent conduct (reprisal) and raising illegal self-help in the study areas. This finding also aligned with the discovery of Jumare & Surma (2015) who found that failure to punish offenders breeds continuous crime and circle of conflicts.
7. Punishment of offenders seems not to be effective enough. This was observed during the attempt to study the treatment of offenders in the correctional centers across the study areas. Many of the awaiting trial inmates have been in the correctional facilities for too long. Without conviction in terms of prison sentence. This finding corroborated the study conducted by Jumare and Surma (2015) whose findings revealed that failure to serve justice to perpetrators of offenders of farmland trespass and cattle rustling among other related crimes fuels conflicts among herders and their host communities in Kaduna State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated management of farmer-herder conflicts in selected vulnerable States and Local government areas in North-Central Nigeria. Among the seven (7) states in the central zone of the federation, emphasis was given to Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa States; this is because of the persistent issues of conflicts among the two conflicting parties.

The study focused more on management strategies of farmer - herder protected conflicts in the region. Thus, the study interrogated some of the management techniques which include; arrest, detention, prosecution and conviction of offenders of farm land or cattle related offences in the study areas. The study found

that much as the mechanism were effective, there were a couple of challenges that serve as fetters to the achievement of stated goals neither did those mechanisms serve as sufficient deterrence to potential offenders.

In this regard therefore, strengthening local security structures through awareness, mobilization and sensitization should be prioritized in an attempt to come up with home grown solutions that are comprehensive and holistic and have the capacity to stand a test of time, in addressing the perennial unhealthy relationship between the two land users in the areas covered by the study in North-Central Nigeria.

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward for possible policy implementation.

1. There is need for government in collaboration with relevant CSOs, NGOs to make widespread sensitization and awareness campaigns against people embarking on jungle justice or taking laws into their hands at the slightest provocation. Both parties need to be taught habit of reporting issues to local authorities/structures responsible for handling disputes relating to farmland destruction, land grabbing and cattle rustling etc. Thus dialogue and mediation should be preached and embraced at all times. This serves as mechanisms for peace building, trust building and confidence building among the locals in the affected communities.
2. Members of the feuding communities should be encouraged to give credible intelligence reports that will lead to meaningful arrest in such a way that they would see it as part of their civic responsibility with no expectation of reward.
3. There should be stiffer punishment for offenders who deliberately violate laws regarding agricultural activities such as encroachment of farm lands by livestock breeders and killing of herds.
4. There is need for government at all levels to overhaul the judiciary system towards speedy justice dispensation in matters of farmer-herder conflicts. To this effect, government should establish special court to address agro-allied matters. This would speed up dispensation of justice and restore hope and hasten social justice among the locals who see prolonged litigation as a strategy to divert justice.
5. Government at all levels should endeavor to collaborate with CSOs on the need to reach out to the locals for free legal service, sensitization and awareness on legal matters. This would go a long way in addressing silent but

critical issues associated with ignorance of court procedures and self-help by way of reprisal attacks, among others.

6. Government should overhaul the correctional services system to serve the purpose for which it was established by meaningfully correcting those that were served justice by the relevant courts of justice.

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