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New Dimensions of the Farmers and Herdsmen Crisis in Nigeria and the Implications for Development

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Abstract

Conflict is believed to be a normal outcome of human social relationships. However, the concern of conflict sociologists is how this normal human response can become detrimental and dangerous to persons and the society as a whole. What has informed this paper is the deepening nature of the crises between nomadic herdsmen and farming communities in Nigeria, particularly its widespread nature and the socio-economic implications of the feud between these two livelihood groups. A more worrisome concern is some of the new factors being assumed to underpin the conflict, such as political, religious and ethnic drivers. Added to these are also the enormous costs in human and material losses as well as the loss of social capital in form of breakdown of social relationships that have been built over the years between these groups and neighbouring communities. Relationships that are known to be fragile have further nosedived and the development status of the country is deeply affected by this perennial crisis. This paper argued that the herdsmen and farmers' crisis is a manifestation of the failure of the Nigerian State to provide good governance and contain contestations within its territory. To address this crisis, the key drivers of conflict must be adequately and objectively handled by all the stakeholders and policy makers. Government should also be firm, fair and decisive in handling the crisis.

Key Words: Conflict, Crisis, Development, Farmers, Herdsmen, Underdevelopment and Violence.

Introduction

A cursory examination of the Nigerian society will reveal that the numerous development problems facing the country seem to be constantly on the rise in recent times. This pessimistic view is held in the face of the increasing socio-economic, environmental and political challenges bedeviling the country since independence till date. Challenges such as political instability, economic insecurity, social disorder and disintegration, multiple ethnic dissensions, unexplained killings, uncontrolled environmental pollution and degradation, and many other bizarre terrorists' activities that threaten lives and property in the country, have all remained recurrent and intractable till date. For instance, the Boko Haram scourge, amongst many other security concerns in the country, is yet to be sufficiently dealt with as there are still existing pockets of attacks and carnages ongoing, while at the same time the challenge of poverty, unemployment and many other social malaises in the country remain unabated. The concern of this paper is to critically examine the new dimensions of the renewed herdsman and farmers' crises in Nigeria and to analyse its implications for sustainable development.

History and Perspectives of Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Nigeria

One of the major security challenges facing Nigeria today is the incessant and seemingly intractable periodical clashes between cattle herders and farmers in various parts of the country, particularly in the wetland areas of the middle belt and the North East of Nigeria. Following the history of Nigeria, violent conflicts between nomadic herders from northern Nigeria and sedentary agrarian communities in the central and southern zones have spanned through decades and have today escalated in various dimensions, threatening the country's security and development.

The herdsman are largely Fulanis, a *migrant*, ethnic population scattered throughout many parts of West Africa, from Lake Chad in the East, to the Atlantic coast. They are concentrated principally in Cameroon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Nigeria. The Fulani in Nigeria are a part of the Fula ethnic group which has existed in some form for thousands of years. There are about 50 million Fulani in Africa today, with the largest community located in Nigeria, where they make up one of the nation's largest ethnic groups (Levinson, 1996). The Fula people are almost solely Muslims, with a semi-nomadic lifestyle, earning them the appellation of "Fulani herdsman". As noted by *Levinson (1996) and Nwogu (2018)*, the Fulani people belonged to a large Fula-led empire in West Africa in 1903, namely the Sokoto Caliphate. When this caliphate was abolished by the British, its people remained, and have endured to the present day. In the modern era, many West African governments have tried to force the Fulani to abandon their pastoralist, nomadic way of life in favour of a more sedentary existence, a demand that has not been met with uniform acceptance. Along with governmental restrictions, drought and desertification have conspired to shrink the amount of land available in West Africa for Fulani herds, with some sources claiming that nearly half of Nigeria's land could be at risk of desertification in the future. The Fulani in Nigeria have long competed with other communities for land and vegetation, and these struggles over land have only increased since the 1999 democratization of Nigeria. In the past, the Fulani have engaged in fighting with other local groups, particularly the Jukuns, Eggons, and the Tivs for space and resources, as the disputes primarily focused around access to land and water resources. However, never before have the Fulani resorted to such widespread terrorist activity as it is currently. In fact, between 2010 and 2013, only 80 people were recorded killed by Fulani militants compared to more than 1,200 killed in 2014 alone, an escalation for which many factors have been credited (Nwogu, 2018).

According to Nigerian Environmental Study Team (NEST) (1991), the recent crises between the cattle herders and farmers in Nigeria is built on an age long contest over space and resources. An earlier NEST report of 1989 revealed that there have been pockets of violent clashes between Fulani cattle herders

and farmers in Bornu, Benue, the then Gongola and Plateau States. These clashes are largely provoked by the ownership and utilization of available land, water resources and vegetal resources. Today the inharmonious relationship between nomadic herders and sedentary agrarian communities in Nigeria has become very fierce and increasingly wide spread, and if unchecked stands the risk of mutating into a greater security threat where ethnic and religious groups are pitted against each other resulting in a colossal destruction of lives, property and stagnation of development.

The very recent Southern Kaduna experience and that of some communities in Benue, Enugu, Delta, Abia, Oyo, Nassarawa, Gombe and Bauchi States are cases in point. Benue and Kaduna States seem to have received more than a fair share of this crisis with the recent attacks that left in its wake an outrageous number of lives and property lost and destroyed at a go. According to very conservative figures compiled by The International Crisis Group in 2017, it was revealed that in 2017 alone, the herdsmen group killed at least 2500 persons in Enugu, Benue, Taraba, Zamfara, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Cross Rivers, Adamawa, Katsina, Delta and Ekiti states with many thousands displaced from their homes in these places. According to Amnesty International (AI), a global human rights watchdog, clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Adamawa, Benue, Taraba, Ondo and Kaduna states have resulted in 168 deaths in January 2018 alone, with scores of communities razed and hundreds of buildings destroyed (Sahara Reporters, 2018).

Other burdening aspects of this crisis are the sophistication of the weaponry involved, the number of human casualties, destruction of property and loss of good network of relationship built over the years, where neighbouring communities are involved in the feud. Also, perturbing are the sources of the weapons used, who are those that directly or indirectly ignite and fuel such crisis, what reasons account for this crisis and what does one or the groups stand to benefit or lose as a result of its occurrence. According to the Global Terrorism Index, Fulani militants were the fourth deadliest terrorist group in 2014, using machine guns and other light weapons to assault and intimidate farmers in communities in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba states. In addition to terrorist attacks, Fulani militants were also involved in non-state armed conflicts with groups from Eggon, Jukun and Tiv farming communities. These conflicts have resulted in the death of hundreds and the destruction of houses and property worth millions of naira.

The Nature and Dynamics of the Crisis

The nature and dynamics of the conflict between the herders and farmers of uttermost concern include the frequency, the sophisticated weapons, the easy availability of such weapons irrespective of their cost and the bizarre nature of the crisis, as every population category is affected. Other perplexities are; the enormous losses incurred, which can hardly be accurately quantified, associated criminal behaviours, such as raping of helpless females and waste of lives of innocent children too young to understand any details about the clashes. There is no arguing the fact that the present administration in Nigeria has witnessed unparalleled increase in clashes between her cattle herders and farmers. It has also witnessed a high level of precision and sophistication in the way attacks are launched during the crisis. The cattle herders are often the ones first launching the attacks with elements of surprise and coordination novel to this kind of clash. A *Vanguard Newspaper* report of March 18, 2016, explained that the attacks are neither random nor spontaneous, but predictable in nature. In further description of the nature of the attacks, the report observes with reference to the crisis in the Middle Belt that every massacre is followed by two developments: the desertion of villages and towns by surviving members of the communities and a subsequent occupation of these communities by the herdsmen and their cattle.

In the past, there have been instances of clashes between the Fulani cattle herders and the farming population in Nigeria. However, the traditional clashes were limited mostly to between Fulani herders

and their Hausa neighbours who are mostly farmers. The traditional institutions were capable of handling such clashes with both parties fairly satisfied with the outcome of such reconciliation exercise. Thus, cordial social relations were maintained to a large extent. Today, all that is lost due to the extremities involved in the crisis. All these have changed tremendously as traditional institutions have become weak and are no longer revered. New dimension of politicizing the crisis has also exacerbated the crisis and make it very re-current.

Currently, the crisis has become extensive stretching from the north to other parts of Nigeria. No part seems to be spared. Alade (2018) observes, “From Oyo to Kwara, Ekiti, Enugu, Plateau, Anambra, Taraba, Adamawa, Edo, Delta, Kogi, Kaduna and Benue states, it has been trailing of blood, of deaths and of agony.” The observation of Alade is an apt description of the current crisis situation with regards to the Fulani herders and the farmers. Also, casualties were very limited as well as loss and destruction of capital, stock and property in the past. Monumental losses of food crops and farm produce have been reported in several places where such crisis had been experienced recently. For example, Alabi (2018) reported that in Kwara state Lehin Investment Farms lost 22 hectares of cassava and rice farms worth twenty million naira to the activities of the Fulani herders. In previous clashes, women and innocent children were spared the agony and frightful treatment they now receive in current crisis involving the feuding livelihood groups. Children are killed; women violated and are also killed brutally. The aged are also not spared, neither the leadership of communities. Weapons were also not sophisticated, but in the present crisis, Alade (2018) confirmed the use of deadly weapons such as AK47, sub-machine guns, grenades, fire or smoke bombs and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by the Fulani herdsman. The herdsman are no longer satisfied with the simple weapons they hitherto carried to protect their animals. Cattle predatory were also minimal.

However, the current use of deadly weapons and the bizarre manner of these attacks have made some analysts like Okenwa (2018) referred to Fulani herders as terrorist group. The *Vanguard Newspaper* (January 11, 2018) reported the view of International Crisis Group think tank as stating that the Fulani herdsman could become “as potentially dangerous as the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast”. The clash of the cattle herders and farmers in Nigeria could suggest a deeper-seated problem or an early warning signal that needs to be further investigated to avert a more intensive and widespread problem. Most farming communities are under threat and their fears concerning their existence are real. This has placed undue stress on them and has led to their fleeing their communities out of fear of further attacks. Some reasons can be advanced for this state of affairs.

Key Factors Responsible for The Farmers/Herdsman Crisis in Nigeria

It is a fact that man must always compete for resources which are usually in short supply. Herein underlies the basis for conflicts in society. Following the tradition of Marxian analysis, conflicts have always emerged in the face of competition for scarce resources and the exploitation and exclusion of one social group by another, especially in production relations. Marx, as noted by Applerouth and Edles (2008) also contended that struggle to realize economic interests also underpin conflicts in society. In congruence with this line of thought, land is identified as the critical factor at the epicentre of the conflicts or clashes between the cattle herdsman and the farmers. Farming and herding are basic traditional livelihoods of most Nigerians, and both require land for their practice. Whereas the farmers require arable land to cultivate their crops, the herdsman depend on land for healthy foliage for their animals.

Nigeria is said to have a land mass of about 910,770 sq., but not all of it is useful for both activities. This reality thus, has implications which basically are; struggles over land and protection over the right to use land. The increased pressure on demand for land for various purposes could account for the

frequency of land related crisis. When a valued resource like land is limited in comparison with its demand, it will be fiercely contested and therefore, could account for the high frequency rate of the Fulani and farmers' crisis.

Violation of rights regarding use of land is also responsible for the crisis between the cattle herders and farmers. Every social group has the right to carry on with its legitimate productive activities within the stipulated laws of Nigeria. Such laws must be fair and balanced to all, as much as possible. Therefore, when people fail to respect the rights of others or treat them unfairly, without equity and justice, clashes of this kind will surely become common place. Livelihoods are important to their practitioners, but one livelihood must not be seen as being regarded as more important than others. If this reality is disregarded even in the least of ways, conflict will result (Igbo, 2003). Alade (2018) also clearly supported this opinion when he reiterates that when the quest for social order, restraint, mutual respect and resolution of conflict are trampled by a group which displays insensitivity to the mores, traditions and customs of society, the result is conflict. In the light of the considered crisis between the herders and farmers who usually operate within the same environment, when sharing land resource, if consideration is not accorded to the interests of both groups, conflicts are inevitable.

According to Gefu and Kolawole (2003), the periodic clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria are largely due to intensification and extension of production activities that are necessitated by the increasing human population. Similarly, Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016), Mikailu (2016) and Alade (2018) have argued that the conflict between the two groups can be traced to problems relating to land and water use, obstruction of traditional migration routes, livestock theft and crop damage which tend to trigger more disputes. Studies by Fabiyi and Otunuga in 2016 revealed the root causes of the conflicts stem from two events that have combined to exacerbate the resource challenges imposed by Nigeria's burgeoning cattle population. These events are climate change and the Boko Haram crisis. For Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016), and Onwuamanam (2016), climate change has slowly changed the landscape of Northern Nigeria. Much of the far north has been inundated by desertification. The Northern tip of the foraging grounds of Nigeria's cattle has disappeared. Watering grounds are disappearing. Lake Chad, once a massive oasis in the North Eastern tip of Nigeria has lost 95% of its volume over the last 50 years. The impact of climate change is not limited to northern Nigeria. Across the country, communities are dealing with extended droughts, reduction in water reserves and reduced crop yields. The most recent data available suggests there has been as much as a 20% reduction in crop yields in Nigeria; and this can be attributed to climate change largely due to the slow adaptation of mostly subsistence-based farming practices to profound changes in climate. Nigeria's dams and rivers are at the lowest levels they have been in years – with significant implications for hydropower generation. On the other hand, the Boko Haram crisis has also had a profound impact on northern Nigeria, specifically the North Eastern states of Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Adamawa and Taraba. As the sect rampaged through the North East, its decimated communities and spread insecurity across the region. Cattle rustling increased, millions of people were displaced from their communities, farm lands were abandoned, and a land mass that is almost 15% of Nigeria, has essentially become a no – go area for nomadic herdsmen. The North Eastern region of Nigeria has some of the richest foraging stock in the country – and much of that is no longer available for use because of the Boko Haram crisis. The impact has been a downward, southwards movement by nomadic Fulani herdsmen as they move in search of water and foraging resources for their cows. This has led to intensification of resource pressures on north central and southern communities, culminating in violent struggles that have led to an estimated 8,000 deaths since 2005.

According to the International Crisis Group (2017) rural banditry is also a factor driving herders and farmers' crises in various communities. Over the last decade, cattle rustling has grown in scale and organization in several northern states where large bandit groups operate with mounting audacity. While this occurs throughout the north, the main theatres have been the Kamuku forest in Kaduna, Falgore forest in Kano, Dansadau forest in Zamfara and Davin Rugu forest stretching through Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara states. The loss is hard to estimate: many thefts, especially those occurring in remote villages or forests with limited state security presence, go unreported. One report estimated that in 2013 more than 64,750 cattle were stolen and at least 2,991 herders killed in states across the north-central zone. As noted by the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), from 2011 to 2015, bandits, cattle rustlers and other criminals killed 1,135 people in Zamfara state alone. Vigilante groups formed to combat bandits (variously known as *Yan Banga*, *Yan Sa Kai* and *Kato da Gora*) have compounded insecurity in some areas where the arrest and summary execution of rustlers sometimes has invited massive retaliatory violence. Elsewhere, vigilantes have turned into predators themselves, extorting cash and cattle from herders as "protection levy" (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Growing cattle population has also been added to the list of the conflict drivers. Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016) have estimated the current cattle population in Nigeria to be about 25 million as against a figure of about 9 million cattle heads in 1975. Human population is also growing in Nigeria. The implication of this population growth of both humans and cattle is that land will hotly be contested for food production for both livelihood categories.

Destruction of livelihood capital of any of these two occupational groups can also be a triggering factor to the clashes. For instance, when cattle trample or even consume farmers' crops or herds of cattle are lost in an attack by farmers to protect their farms from the rampaging effect from cattle rearing, violent conflict becomes almost inevitable. Mikailu (2016) observed that when herdsmen fail to control their cattle and crops are damaged conflict is likely the result. In Benue State for instance, farmers have reported the massive losses of their farm produce and yet to be harvested farms completely destroyed by the rampaging cattle. Thus, insensitivity to the needs and interests of others can underpin such confrontations. In difficult economic times as the one Nigeria is currently facing, such losses can set back individuals to the extent that recovery may be near impossible. With a bleak future looming over them, they could resort to reprisal violent attacks.

Recently it has been observed that speeches from significant members of various groups that are capable of inciting followers are common. It is very observable on different media platforms to hear or read inciting and inflammatory comments made by Nigerian opinion shapers, prominent personalities and the clergy in defense of their interest groups. These verbal attacks exacerbate the conflict and make it seem insurmountable. Animosity and intolerance of people towards out groups are possible reasons that can bring about such violent clashes or confrontations. All these are capable of not only driving the crisis but also intensifying it.

Government's ineptitude towards handling the initial crisis has made its widespread possible. This has led concerned people to have the opinion that government has not only failed in her basic responsibility of securing the lives and property of her citizens, but has been insensitive to the plight of the affected persons in the various clashes. This situation has led to several accusations being levelled against government as being indirectly involved in encouraging the conflict. For instance, nothing much has been done by government and its agencies to curtail or checkmate the activities of the herders who in most cases are held responsible for provoking the conflicts. Such *laissez-faire* or non-interference disposition of government in the face of such heightened crisis can be interpreted to mean complicity on their part. Another reason that may be adduced for the increased frequency of occurrence of the crisis

is the fact that sufficient stringent measures or punishments have not been meted out to arrested culprits to deter subsequent clashes. It is alleged that culprits are released without thorough and proper investigations. This situation leaves victims feeling unsecured, unprotected and marginalized. Delayed delivery of justice may also be held accountable for retaliatory attacks which increase the frequency of the crisis. Government security agencies have not exhausted avenues to curb this social problem neither have they shown sufficient intolerance for such misbehaviour that has overarching consequences. Thus, every now and then we wake up to witness these clashes and their aftermaths that leave mouths gapping. The implication of this situation is that the institutions in Nigeria charged with responsibilities of protection of lives, rights, and property; and justice delivery have all failed.

There may also be an organized body of sponsors of the clashes who train, finance and fuel such crisis. These groups act to ensure that the perpetrators of such crisis are not sufficiently punished or arrested. This argument is put forward when one considers the class positions of the people directly involved in the clashes. It is known for example that most of the cattle herders are not the actual owners of the cattle they rear. Although people assume they are not properly educated in the act of warfare just like their counterparts, prevailing evidence shows that the culprits of the mayhem display military skills that are second to none in military training. In the same vein, some farmers are mere labour hands or renters. So, who are the real images behind the masquerades? Many cattle herders have been spotted carrying very sophisticated weapons. Quite a number of people have found this practice puzzling. Who provides these weapons and trains these non-military persons on the use of the weapons? A school of thought has it that rich personalities who also own the cattle are the brains behind the procurement of the costly weapons and training of their users. They also stand as advocates of the perpetrators in case of arrests. Others are political heavy weights who have some sort of immunity and can bring in these dangerous weapons of destruction under different guises. Since after the Nigeria/Biafra civil war, her history of military coups and turbulent democratic dispensations, arms proliferation in the country is widespread. Government's inability to have effective control over its borders and illegal importation of arms by individuals are majorly held responsible for the profuse arms and their use in the country. To buttress the reality of arms proliferation in Nigeria, Africa Independent Television's (AIT) news of 21/03/17 estimates about 5million arms to be in circulation in Nigeria. It is also being argued that through theft, arms have found their way into the hands of wrong people who have also used them wrongly.

External sponsors of the confrontation between the two occupational groups are also a possibility and may be an added source of the weapons used. The cattle herders are known to spring such attacks as surprises; the Agatu community clash in Benue State is an example. Adelana (2014) and Abonu (2016) were of the view that the Agatu attack was aided by Fulani backups from the Republic of Congo in response to the call for help by their Nigerian kinsmen. It takes trained personnel to adopt such effective strategy and the implication is that the perpetrators of such violent clashes must have received some organized training of some sort in weapon usage and war strategies. Who then are their trainers? This question has long been posed without any verifiable answer. However, many arguments support the view that some Islamic terrorist organizations such as ISIS, Al-Qaida and Boko haram are the brains behind the military expertise of the cattle herders. They do this in defense of their shared Islamic sentiments, values, beliefs and agenda of action.

Herders and Farmers Crises in Nigeria and Implications for Development

The outcomes of violent confrontations are hardly advantageous when the well-being and safety of the generality of the people are considered, as well as its implications on the growth and development of the nation. For instance, the loss of social capital in form of breakdown of social relationships that have been built over the years between these livelihood groups in neighbouring communities is one of the

fallouts of the cattle herders and farmers' crisis. This situation robs both groups the ability to trust each other in future dealings, thus creating and re-creating tension situations that may give rise to new forms of conflict and crisis. Whole communities have been sacked and displaced thereby increasing the burden of government, groups and individuals in providing care and other necessities of life for them. Also, the crisis has put the Nigerian government under serious spotlight nationally and internationally. Governance in Nigeria has been assessed to have failed to provide the needed security for all her citizens. The tensed social atmosphere has definitely limited her development effort and achievements in so many ways. For example, there is a looming food crisis in Nigeria. Benue, a food producing State has adversely been affected in terms of food production. Farmers having lost so much are discouraged and fearful of continuing with their livelihood. Individual farms, school and corporate or institutional farms have all been negatively impacted. None has been spared the rampaging effects of these clashes. As noted by Abdulsalami Abubakar, a former Nigerian head of State, the estimated annual loss Nigeria incurs as a result of the herders and farmers' crisis stands at a shocking 13.7 billion dollars (Onwumere, 2017). The implication is that scarcity and exorbitant cost of food will be imminent and feeding her population will be most difficult. The only option will be to divert financial resources to importation of food, while ignoring other sectors that require critical attention as well. Industries will also be affected as some of their inputs may be difficult to source. Agricultural Investment firms can be re-located to other countries with favourable social climate.

The loss of human lives cannot be equated with any other form of loss. The herdsmen and farmers' clashes, amongst many other conflict situations in the country, have led to the decimation of many lives since independence till date. Onwumere (2016) quoted the number of deaths as at 2014 resulting from the herders and farmers' crisis as officially recorded by Institute for Economics and Peace as 1,229. This figure pales into insignificance when compared with the most recent killings witnessed in Benue state. This most recent Benue State experience, for instance, recorded over seventy lives lost in one single attack of a community. No doubt many individuals have been affected in several ways such as loss of bread winners and food producers, children being orphaned, women widowed and the emotional and physical injuries sustained are traumatic and longer lasting.

The implication of all these on development is enormous and devastating. As noted by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in 2015, the consequences of conflict, especially civil conflicts, for development are profound. Armed conflict often leads to forced migration, long-term refugee problems, and the destruction of infrastructure. Social, political, and economic institutions are permanently damaged. Bhatti (2015) also noted that violent conflict has serious economic consequences which usually affect other facets of the society. In addition to the lost lives, injuries and the overall scale of human suffering that conflicts create, violence destroys assets and institutions. The consequences, the intensities of conflicts and their linkages with human endeavours to transcend socio-economic, political and environmental challenges pose serious developmental challenges for conflicting societies. Nigeria's strive towards development has remained unachievable largely because of the recurrent violence and conflict befuddling the country, and the inability of the State to contain it and its attendant effects. Sustainable Development implies the consistency in the positive qualitative increment in the standard of living, economic, political and cultural variables in a society. Conflict and violence impede on such increases and renders a nation's development goals static and unachievable. According to Adetula (2009), the effect of conflicts in Nigeria is seen in the diversion of resources from productive uses to the payment of compensation, reconstruction of destroyed public property among others as a result of conflicts. The World Bank reported that \$800 million have been diverted away from development to solve problems of conflict in West Africa, with Nigeria as a key player. Also, International donors and development agencies have made it known that development assistance

projects have greatly been frustrated in many countries in Africa due to incessant conflicts in the region (Dalhatu, 2012). Transparency International and Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) have noted that Nigerian Government officials spend roughly N241.8 billion (that is \$670 million) yearly in the name of 'Security Votes' (Mutum, 2018). Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff, Abayomi Olonisakin, also disclosed that the country has spent well over \$2.6 billion in 2016 on tackling the humanitarian challenges brought about by the Boko Haram insurgency. NEMA (National Emergency Management Agency), over the years has also spent a lot of money purchasing relief materials for displaced persons in different parts of the country as a result of conflicts. BBC, in 2016, also revealed that Nigeria planned to spend \$10 billion to end conflict in oil-rich Niger Delta. All of these are resources that would have been used in the provision of infrastructure, but now diverted into the management of conflicts.

Conflicts have equally affected the social life of the people particularly in communities where such clashes and violence have taken place. The ability of the people in affected areas in Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, etc., to enjoy night life, go to work, participate in social events, etc. have been greatly affected. Education in such areas is usually stalled as number of displaced persons increase. The implications of these are vast, as human development, peace, social order and economic productivity are hampered. This situation also tends to contribute to the increase in vices such as armed robbery, sex crimes, kidnapping, etc., in the society. This situation explains the theory that no society develops in the face of cyclical violence.

The Way Out

In order to tackle the challenges created by this crisis, government must be neutral and dispassionately handle the situation. Objective measures that will not be seen as favouring one group against the other must be adopted. In line with this recommendation, traditional livelihood groups should be limited to their cultural environments where improved conditions that will enhance their productivity are put in place. This suggestion is specific to the cattle rearing communities of the northern Nigeria. Where they must operate in other cultural environments, then they must be made to realize the importance of mutual respect with regards to the livelihood interests of their host communities. Laws should not only be made to specify such provisions, but punishments must be specified and enforced when such laws are violated. No livelihood group must be accorded more privileges than the other. This way, the values of fairness, equity and social justice will be achieved.

Government should investigate the past clashes between these feuding livelihood groups by setting up a committee made up of people of integrity and unbiased opinions who have no overt or hidden interest in the case. All major groups and the various stakeholders must be represented cutting across ethnic and religious divides. The outcome of their investigation must be further subjected to verification and treated according to its merit. Law enforcement agents must carry out their duties with professional efficiency, according respect to the ethics of their profession. They must never be bought over or act, based on any form of bias. Policy statements can be informed by the outcome of the committee of inquiry into the crisis to forestall any further occurrence of such.

Also, it should be the responsibility of government and its relevant agencies to ensure that arms proliferation be stopped and effort should be intensified to call back arms already in circulation in wrong hands. With greater surveillance, cooperation and collaboration with other agencies the sources of these weapons can be detected and decisively dealt with.

The sinister sponsors of this crisis must not only be fished out by whatever means, but they must be brought to book according to the specifications of the law. No sacred cows must be spared. If the

sponsors are of other nations, then the international law regarding disturbing or destabilizing the peace of a sovereign State must be evoked and followed to its logical end. Opinion leaders and people in governance must be careful and choosy with their public utterances in order to avoid making inflammatory remarks that can intensify the crisis. The various social media platforms must also exercise caution in news and images they carry and beam to the whole world. This is to avoid unnecessary whipping up of sentiments that may further inflame groups against each other. Government can also provide help to get victims of this crisis back to their feet. This will enable livelihoods under shock to recover and make the lives of these victims meaningful again. This way, frayed nerves will be calmed and the call for retaliatory attacks from different people will be ignored. In the long run, Nigeria would have succeeded in addressing one major challenge in her security concerns and concentrate more on her march to development.

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