

CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AMONG FARMERS IN TARABA STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract: Agriculturalists and pastoralists tend to differ from each other both regarding principles and practices of land use. For instance, many disputes often occur around water courses where farmers grow vegetables in dry season and herder's water cattle there. If crop damage occurs and it does frequently, conflict occurred when vegetable farmers claim right to grow vegetable around the water courses and the herdsmen should stop destroying their crops. However, the herders will perceive this act as sabotage, indicating that their cattle need to be watered somewhere. The conflicts in Taraba State have been over land resources and the settler phenomenon. In the conflict large settlement were burnt and villagers were murdered. The Nigeria government believe in resolving conflicts by using force. The international community has gone beyond the level of brute force. Conflict resolution cannot be achieved in that way. This brutal method will not only drive violent conflict parties underground the remaining parties will make those vestiges regroup and fight back in a vicious manner, thus escalating the conflict situation in the area. Hence attempt made to resolve these conflicts by governmental and non governmental agencies only calm the conflict but could not provide sustainable resolutions to the conflicts that necessitate this study. Opinion research sampling technique was used to generate sustainable conflict resolutions from farmers. The local government that witnessed violent conflicts were purposively selected. One hundred and twenty eight farmers were randomly selected from the list of farmers kept by extension agents in Taraba State Agricultural Development Programme (TADP). Data

were collected using interview schedule and analysed using frequency counts, percentage, chi-square and regression analyses. Finding revealed that mean age of farmers was 40.5 and 72.1% had one formal education or the other. Prominent causes of conflict in the area were agitation for farm land and scrambling for political power between the settler and land owner as rated by 72.1% and 62.2% farmers respectively. Concerning level of involvement in the violent conflicts 70.0% of the farmers consented that they were actively involved. Farmers 90.6% and 95.3% rated clear demarcation between grazed land and farmland and farmers should compensate landowners for using their land respectively. There is significant between farmers personal and socio economic characteristics of the farmers and farmers' level of involvement in the conflict. Hence, there is need to search for farmers oriented solutions to conflict in order to make recommended solutions to conflict sustainable in conflict ridden areas.

Keywords: Conflict, causes of conflict, farmers, land and resolution strategies

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country with a Gross National Income of below \$300 per capita, a federation of 130 million people (close to 20% of Sub-Sahara Africa), living in 36 states and 774 local government areas. Nigeria is agrarian in nature and greater percentage of the farmers dwell in the rural areas where farming activities happen to be their primary sources of livelihood. (1) opined that agriculture is by far the largest sector on which fast

majority of Nigeria populace depends for their well-being and livelihood. However, Nigeria recorded several violent conflicts in many rural communities. Since 1999, when President Olusegun Obasanjo won democratic elections, conflict has resulted in over 10,000 deaths, and the internal displacement of over 300,000 people (2). Such conflicts explain noticeable distortions in farmers' livelihoods since they live and earn their living from rural areas. (1) once reported that these conflicts are due to internal boundary disputes, rival interest of nomads and sedentary farmers as well as agitation for improved prices for agricultural commodities and improved standard of living by groups of farmers or peasants in some local government's areas.

Prominent conflict was reported in the middle belt region of Nigeria among the TIV and Jukun in Wukari community of Taraba State. History recorded indicates that Jukun the ancient Kingdom of Kwarafa has been in existence as far back as 17th century (4). The Tiv migrated into Benue valley from Cameroon in 18th century. Fertile land of Wukari was the one that attracted large population of Tiv farmers to Taraba State.. It can be deduced from Tiv action that search for fertile land is the prominent factor to be considered in farming.

Land fertility is a united factor to be considered in an attempt to understand how land use principles and practices are perceived and how it is culturally constructed in different context. Therefore, it is very important to understand different perceptions of land use principles and practices in the study of dispute settlement. Land is not only a matter of power and wealth, but is loaded with meaning. Land is sinequano to life; it is a bridge between livelihood and beyond, as people spend useful parts of their living on land till transition to grave for external preservation inside the land (5). Hence, the way by which people perceive land culturally may be instrumental to how disputes between agriculturalist and pastoralists as well as land resource explorers are handled.

Agriculturalists and pastoralists tend to differ from each other both regarding principles and practices of land use. For instance, many disputes often occur around water courses where farmers grow vegetables in dry season and herder's water cattle there. If crop damage occurs and it does frequently, conflict occurred when vegetable farmers claim right to grow vegetable around the water courses and the herdsmen should stop destroying their crops. However, the herders will perceive this act as sabotage, indicating that their cattle need to be watered somewhere.

In case of Tiv and Jukun conflict what accounted for the violent conflict are; the Jukun have a low growth rate while the Tiv were polygamous and had a fast

population rate. The Jukun are largely sedentary and very loyal to traditional and constituted authorities. The Tiv on the other hand were militant republican and migratory (4). The type of relationship between Tiv and Jukun was profitable venture as one provided farmland the other provided labour in exchange prior to crisis period (6). That is the relationship between Tiv and Jukun was cordial prior to the date when the conflict started. The attitude of appropriating properties belonging to another and the tendency to create violence due to lawlessness ushered in conflict

The two ethnic groups had several conflicts between 1990-1992 which claimed several lives, retarded economic growth and destruction of properties and displacement of farmers from their farms. In 2000 and 2001 the affected communities under focus recorded another violent conflict tagged operation sweep that resulted to burning of farms, destruction of properties and killing of youth and adults. Conflict within the two communities became a menace when farmer employed negative or aggressive conflict handling style. It is evident from diverse sources that negative conflict handling style employed in the affected communities in Taraba led to destruction of lives and properties, diversion of resources meant for development to conflict mitigation. It further imposed hardship on the citizens, worsening their social conditions and led to mass migration of farm families.

The Nigeria government believe in resolving conflicts by using force. The international community has gone beyond the level of brute force. Conflict resolution cannot be achieved in that way. This brutal method will not only drive violent conflict parties underground the remaining parties will make those vestiges regroup and fight back in a vicious manner, thus escalating the conflict situation in the area. Hence, the high handedness employed by the security agents during Tiv and Jukun conflict led to destruction of properties and the extra-judicial killing. Another methods employed in resolving the conflict is setting up panel of enquire. However, the attempt made by the Federal Government of Nigeria to resolve the conflicts through concerted administrative and judicial panel of enquiries failed on several occasions. The failure was adduced to the panel's lack of competent and courage to examine in details the causes that are often as old as the history of the disputing communities (7).

The most recent conflict resolution method is transformational approach. Transformational conflict resolution is a new concept that provokes minds to look inwards generally taking into consideration the social trends and ensures that things are done in order to change the society by being more proactive, rather than being destructive. Some people are complaining

of being suppressed and of not being listened to. If there is problem facing someone and he/she is complaining, there is a need for all the parties to sit down and discuss. That is nobody should impose anything on another person. There should be mutual negotiations. This method was not used in resolving Junkun and Tiv conflict, hence the quest for research based appropriate and sustainable solutions to the violent conflict necessitate this research. These research objectives are to: (a) identify farmers personal characteristic which influence occurrences of conflict in the study areas, (b) ascertain causes of the violent conflict in the study area (c) determine farmers level of involvement in the violent conflict (d) ascertain the appropriate conflict resolution strategies that will provide sustainable solutions to the violent conflict.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant association between farmers' personal and social characteristics (age, sex, religion, educational level, exposure and occupation) and farmers' involvement in the conflict.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Based on conflict severity or anecdotal account of conflict, villages in each state were stratified into core, peripheral and outside conflict villages. In core conflict villages, violent conflict resulted to destruction of lives and properties. Village register revealed that 610 farmers were in Traba state core conflict areas. Based on intensity of damages of properties recorded in each village, 6 villages were purposively selected in core conflict areas of Taraba state. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 61 farmers from 610 farmers residing in the six villages. Interview schedule using structural questionnaire were used in obtaining information from farmers in core conflict locations in Taraba state. Enumerators were used in the administration of questionnaire and interview method was used in case the farmers were unable to fill the instrument. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistic.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Personal and Socio Economic characteristic which influence occurrences of conflict in the study areas

It is obvious from Table 1 that in core conflict area 91.7% of farmers in Taraba state fell within the age range 25-60 years. Mean age range for farmers in core conflict was 42.5. The implication of these findings is that more than (80.0%) of farmers in core conflict stratum are young and still in their productive years. These findings are in line with the finding of (9) and (10) where they found that fewer older farmers take farming as a vocation due to lack of

strength to cope with farm drudgery. It is an adventurous age when young people explore new horizons for green pastures of which attempt to block this ambition may result into personal and inter-group conflict in the society.

Table 1 indicates that in core conflict areas 86.8% of farmers in Taraba state were males. Investigation during field survey revealed that female farmers are more interested in processing, trading and distribution of agricultural produce than tilling the land and rearing of animal. The findings corroborated (11) who discovered that food processing and agricultural products distribution are main activities of women in Nigeria. Table 1 indicates that in core conflict area 85.3 % of farmers were married.

There are only 3 main occupations in the study areas, farming, trading and civil service. In core conflict areas as shown in Table 1, distribution of farmers by occupation indicated that agriculture provides the primary means of livelihood to 50.6% of farmers in Taraba state core conflict areas. Table 1 also show that in core conflicts 24.6% of farmers in Taraba state respectively have no formal education. The implication of these findings is that many(75.4%)of the farmers in core conflict area were educated and would be able to adopt new agricultural technologies, have access to credit facilities, which will leads to improvement in farmers' livelihood. This finding substantiated the assertion of (12) that broad mindedness can be determined by the level; of education which is very important in farmers' acceptance of new technologies that will increase agricultural production. Entries in Table 1 revealed that in 50.8% of the farmers from Taraba state inherited their pieces of land. On the other hand 49.2% of the farmers in Taraba state got farm land through any of the following least purchase and gift. The implication of this finding is that the most common land sources to farmers in Taraba core conflict area are inheritance. Therefore, land allocation to farmers should be done in such a way that it will not generate violent conflict that may adversely affect their livelihood.

Causes of Conflicts in Tarba state

Data in Table 2 shows that 72.1% of farmers from the core conflict areas of Taraba state claimed that land use autonomy is the primary source of incessant conflict among and between them. It is also; evident from Table 2 that 55.7% of farmers from the core conflict areas of Taraba state claimed that population growth is the cause of the violent conflict while grater proportion (63.9%) of the farmers consented personal disagreement could be the cause of violent conflict in the area.

Table 1a : Personal characteristic of farmers which influence occurrences of conflict in the study areas

Variables description	Frequency	Percentages
Age		
12-24	-	-
25-36	13	21.3
40-48	24	39.3
50-60	19	31.1
>60	5	8.3
Sex		
Male	53	86.8
Female	8	13.2
Marital Status		
Single	3	4.9
Married	52	85.3
Divorce	3	4.9
Widow	3	4.9
Religion		
Christianity	27	44.3
Islam	20	33.7
Traditional	14	22.0

Table 1b: Socio-Economic characteristic of farmers which influence occurrences of conflict in the study areas

Variables Description	Frequency	Percentages
Educational Status		
None	15	24.6
Adult Literacy	20	32.6
Primary	4	6.6
Secondary	18	29.5
Tertiary	4	6.7
Cosmopolitness		
7-10 times	37	60.7
11-20	7	11.5
>20	17	27.8
Source of land		
Inheritance	31	50.8
Lease	10	16.3
Purchase	16	26.2
Gift	3	6.7
*Occupation		
Farming	31	50.6
Farming& artisan	5	8.2
Farming & Baker	-	-
Farming and Blacksmithing	6	9.8
Farming and Trading	11	18.0
Fish farming	1	1.6
Farming & Traditional medicine	1	1.7
Farming & Civil Servant	5	8.2

- **Multiple responses**

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Farmers by Suggested Causes of Conflicts in Tarba state

Variables Description	Frequency	Percentages
*Cultural Values	28	45.9
Land Space	20	42.6
Land uses autonomy	44	72.1
Creation of local government council	26	42.6
Scarcity of Resources	29	47.5
Population growth	34	55.7
Violation of tenancy agreement	10	16.4
Personal disagreement	39	63.9
Territorial dispute	27	44.3

- **Multiple responses**

Table 3: Farmers' level of involvement in the conflict

	Frequency	Percentages
Actively involved	43	70.0
Partially involved	-	-
Not involved	18	30.0

Table 4: Farmers' Suggested Conflict Resolution Strategies

Suggested Solutions	Frequency	Percentages
*Political offices should be shared among people regardless of whether tenants or landlords	39	63.9
Military or police security to be beefed up in order to maintain peace in the area	59	96.7
Clear demarcation between grazed land and farmland	55	90.6
Tenant farmers should compensate land owners for using their land.	61	100
Farm land should be allocated free to farmers.	30	49.2
Use of derogatory language against each other should be discouraged or stopped	32	52.5
Killing of farmers on their farm land should be stopped	29	47.5
An illegal appointment of village head by tenants should be discouraged	29	47.5
Payment of tax regularly to the local government individual belong	26	42.6
Conflict between individual and groups in the community should be resolved amicably instead of degenerating into destruction of life and properties.	21	34.4

- **Multiple responses**

Table 5: Chi- square analysis of farmer's level of involvement in communal conflict and their personal characteristics

Variables	N	X ² Value	P	Contingency co-efficient
Age	188	24.99	0.005	0.34
Sex	188	4.99	0.82NS	0.16
Religion	188	16.97	0.005	0.29
Education	188	29.4	0.005	0.36
Occupation	188	27	0.005	0.36
Cosmopolitness	188	44.6	0.005	0.43

The implication of these findings is that as population increased scrambling for farmland in the study areas and land owners denying tenant farmers from acquisition of more farmland often result to violent conflict. This study corroborates (13) who reported that tenant farmers desire for unlimited freedom to own farmland free of charge that may be undesirable to land owners might inevitably precipitate violent conflict among farmers. This implies that abundant farmland is available in the study areas but landowners need to approve farmland before tenant farmers will be allowed to farm.

This implies that abundant farmland notwithstanding autonomy to use land constitute a problem in the study areas as shown in Table 2. Hence, in designing sustainable agricultural development programme for the farmers land use negotiation committee must be put in place. In addition, farmers should be trained on how to manage conflict before it escalates into destruction of properties and lives.

Farmers' level of involvement in the conflict

Table 3 indicated that 70.0% farmers were actively involved in the conflict in core conflict area. Since farmers were actively involved in the violent conflict it is likely that farmers' livelihood variables will be affected.

Farmers' Suggested Conflict Resolution Strategies

Entries in Table 4 shows that in core conflict areas majority (100.0%) of the farmers opined that farmers should compensate landowners for using their land. Also, 96.7% of farmers suggested that military or police security should be beefed up in order to maintain peace in the area. In another dimension 90.6% of the farmers called for clear demarcation between graze lands and farmlands. According to the farmers all these suggested solutions could be effectively implemented when the parties involved in the conflict play the right role in facilitating the peace process in the affected communities. To accomplish this, they must have the responsibility to promote "common feeling" or denounce the existence of multiple loyalties and by and large consolidate existing expectations of mutual benefit as a consequence of cooperation. Also, they must be ready to reconcile the past and the future and dismantle the existing walls to pave way for reconciliation of the values that will guide future and commitment to cooperate (14).

Hypothesis

There is no significant association between farmers' personal and socio-economic characteristics (age, sex, religion, educational level, exposure and occupation) and farmers' involvement in the conflict.

Entries in Table 5 shows that religion ($\chi^2=16.97; p<0.05$) and education ($\chi^2=29.4; p<0.05$) had significant association with farmers involvement in the violent conflict. Also significant association exists between occupations ($\chi^2=29.4; p < 0.05$) cosmopolitanness ($\chi^2=44.6; p < 0.05$) and farmers involvement in the conflict. These findings found that the conflict situation in Taraba states cut across level of religion, exposure education and occupational personal characteristics variables influence. Therefore, attempts at conflict mediation and transformation should consider the inputs of this study, where attention should be paid to conflict variables such as religion, occupation, cosmopolitanness and educational status of the farmers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the study has provided some vital information on the various methods of generating solutions to communal conflict in Nigeria and how those methods are either top down or planner designed oriented with little participation of parties involved in conflict. This study made use of research oriented conflict resolution approach which enable conflicting parties identify the causes of the conflict and suggest appropriate conflict resolutions to the conflict and the researcher serve as moderator.

The findings in the study revealed that the conflict situation in Taraba states cut across level of religion, exposure, education and occupational personal characteristics variables influence. That is it could be inferred from the analysis that, the conflict situation in Taraba state shows that farmers of different age grades, occupation and educational background as well as exposure beyond their village variables; play vital roles in the conflict. Concerning education variables for instance at the centre of Taraba state crises are the elites' competing for power and relevance. They capitalize on ethnicity to perpetuate their hidden agenda. Therefore, conflict mediation and transformation efforts must entrench conflict-associated variables into conflict management fora e.g workshop and seminars to be organised for the people in order to avert future occurrence of conflict. This postulation is further supported by the communiqué issued at the end of the National Colloquium on Conflict Resolution held in Abuja between conflict management experts and community leaders from core conflict areas where it was agreed that most of the conflicts in Nigeria are triggered by the elites and policy makers struggling for scarce national resources (15).

In designing appropriate conflict resolutions for the core conflict area farmers' suggested solutions; that farmers should compensate landowners for using their land, military or police security should be

beefed up in order to maintain peace, clear demarcation between graze lands and farmlands to the conflict must be effectively implemented.

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