

THE EFFECTS OF INSURGENCIES ON THE WOMEN IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Fulani Herdsmen and farmers conflict in Benue state, Nigeria began over two decades ago. The conflict has in recent times escalated to the invasion and forceful occupation of some parts of the state, leading to terrorism. The invasion and occupation of the land by armed Fulani herdsmen which has gone on for so long unhindered, has destroyed homes and farmland, massacred indigenous people and allowed for the molestation of women in the state. While many have fled from the land, others are either kept in the Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps or resort to living under the threats of insecurity in the state. The objective of the study is to examine the human security impacts of insurgencies as it concerns women in Benue state, Nigeria. Extant literatures such as books, journal articles, periodicals, and internet materials are employed. The study adopts the qualitative content analysis. Research shows that women's indigenous activities, including agriculture and trade, have been disrupted, leaving them in despair and destitution. The Nigerian government should implement effective security measures to reduce the nuisance.

Keywords: *insurgencies, women, human security, indigenous economies*

Introduction

The occurrence of conflict has remained a major problem confronting both developed and developing countries throughout the world (Igbini, 2022). Insurgencies in Nigeria have claimed several lives of its citizens. Particularly, the farmer-herders conflicts in Benue state since 2018 have claimed more lives than the Boko-haram insurgencies did (International Crisis Group, 2018). There are about twenty million Fulani herdsmen scattered across the African states, particularly found in Nigeria, Niger, Guinea, Mali, Chad, Sudan and Cameroun (Bamidele, 2018). These herdsmen are known for animal husbandry and the production of livestock. Bamidele (2018) argues that the quest for an increase in livestock stock production, the unfavourable climatic conditions and the mismanagement of the

available grazing lands have resulted in the search for alternate lands for grazing. Due to the want of an effective government grazing policy, the search for an unconventional grazing space has formed the nomadic lifestyle of the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria who further encroach on farmlands of farmers who are only maximizing the available farmlands for crop production. The incessant encroachment of farmlands by the herders then turn into conflicts.

The reasons for the rancour between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers is partly embedded in the fact that, the herder who has nurtured his livestock to an appreciable level continues to seek for resources and pastures for grazing to preserve the lives of the livestock that worth even a fortune. The farmers on

the other hand, who have painstakingly cultivated their crops are not willing to have it grazed upon by herds of cattle. The herdsmen and farmers are in one way or the other protecting their interests and means of subsistence. An encroachment on these farmlands therefore result in conflicts and insurgencies. Due to the continuous growth in population, the lands that once served the purpose of grazing is being utilized for crop cultivation. When the herders insist on grazing on same cultivated lands, there must occur the damage of food crops. Infuriated and frustrated herders and farmers begin to react negatively; gradually there is the invasion of herders on farmers, their farmlands and the communities they belong to (Brottem, 2021).

In Nigeria, states such as Kogi, Ekiti, and Benue states have witnessed spates of the Fulani herdsmen encroachment and conflicts. These insurgencies are often characterized by rape, abduction and the destruction of farmlands (Bamidele, 2018). The crisis has negatively impacted women's business activities as agriculture remains the main business of the inhabitants. They continue to be affected psychologically by the trauma of conflict, destruction of property, killings, rape, and violence (Ajibefun, 2018).

Thenceforth, subsequent sections of this study discusses; the security of women in the concept of human security; an overview of the insurgencies in Benue state, Nigeria; the Impacts of the insurgencies on women in Benue State, Nigeria; factors that stimulate farmer - herder conflict in Benue State, Nigeria and the responses by relevant authorities to address farmer-herders conflict in Nigeria.

Methodology

The paper adopts the qualitative research method of data analysis to investigate the objective of the study. Secondary data is derived from various scholarly resources, including published journal articles, books, book chapters and internet materials, which are descriptively analyzed for easy understanding.

The security of women in the concept of Human Security

World over, the daily concerns of individuals as per the feelings of insecurity include; job security, income security, environmental security, health security and the security from crime (Human Development Report, 1994). The worries on insecurity have grown steadily in recent times; more people are depressed and feel insecure about their lives and future (Human Development Report, 2022). Insecurity threatens individuals variously, some experience threats to their jobs, feeding, healthy living, environment or serenity.

According to the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report (1994), there are seven dimensions to human security. These include; economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. Human security describes the fact that there is an interconnectivity of threats when addressing the various forms of insecurities. For instance, incessant conflicts may result in dearth, further leading to outbreak of diseases, depletion of resources, deficiency in the education system among other menaces (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2001). Human security broadens its scope rather than dwell on the archaic idea of security from conflicts and wars, understanding that individuals' rights also need to be secured rather than the sole security of the people from external aggressions (Parmar et al., 2014). Individuals must be protected from the threats that jeopardise human development.

For the purpose of this paper, human security emphasizes on the gender-based aspect of the notion; the need for adequate and effective mechanisms for the protection and empowerment of women from such insecurities. These include the; vulnerability of women, sexual abuse, sudden killing of women, displacement of the properties of women, loss of the means of livelihood for women, during terrorist attacks in Benue state, Nigeria.

Women particularly in the remote areas of Benue state, Nigeria where the issue of terrorism in recent times is predominant, are very instrumental to agricultural and rural development of the communities. Even in cases where the men are at

liberty to migrate to more developed areas in search of a better livelihood, the women remain in the rural areas, tilling the lands and tending to their immediate families' needs (Mbah et al., 2017). The women engage in agricultural undertakings such as the food production, fish farming and poultry. The critical roles of women as regards agriculture include; 'producing, processing and providing food for consumption' (Sharon, 2008).

Terrorist attacks in Benue state, Nigeria, to a large extent results in the socio-economic displacement and destabilization of women in the state. Many women are subjected to security threats such as sexual gender based violence and abuse during the Fulani herdsman attacks on the communities in the state, ripping affected women of their very essence and dignity as females. These attacks further make other women in the area to live in fear and despair. The destruction of farmlands during the violent attacks only destroy the livelihood of many women in Benue state, Nigeria. The women who have been ripped off their economic mainstay are thereafter left to live in penury. Although there are alternative provisions made for their shelter and feeding in Internally Displaced Camps, the fact remains that these women, so long as they bear the title – "Internally Displaced Persons", cannot live life as they used to do.

An Overview of the insurgencies in Benue state, Nigeria

Benue state has been recognized as the host to the largest pastoralists across the West African sub-region (Ajibefun, 2018). A cursory exploration into the development of the crisis shows that the two groups have coexisted peacefully in the past decades, exchanging products, and engaging in mutual symbiotic relationships (Ndubuisi, 2018). The earlier conditions and pattern of the relationship between local farmers and herders were based on seasonal migration for a short period (Adigun, 2019). The traditional arrangements, as defined by the native culture, allow the herders to be admitted into the locality through traditional authority (Adekunle & Adisa, 2010).

The seasonal nature of crop farming and grazing of animals frequently put farmers and herders in

conflict positions (Ofuoku & Isife, 2010). The herders are permitted to occupy lands in the neighbourhood not earmarked for food plantation to prevent trespass on vegetation. However, it is often insignificant, and in the case where there is the destruction of crops by stray cows, the owner is made to pay compensation adequate for the crop destroyed or settled through other traditional mechanisms (Adigun, 2019).

The tension between local farmers and herders grows drastically due to climate, economic, and population changes, including ethnic strife, political interference, and the collapse of the traditional conflict management mechanism (Onuoha & Ezirim, 2010).

The conflict between farmers and herders has a long historical underpinning. In 1965, the Grazing Reserve Law was enacted to regulate herders from open grazing (Braukämper, 2000). The government later abandoned the project following the discovery of oil in the 1970s, which shifted the government's attention from agriculture as the strength of the economy to the oil economy (Adebayo & Olaniyi, 2008). This has allowed for the return to traditional and seasonal open grazing practices, thereby interrupting or interfering with industrialization, urbanization, demographics, and other natural factors (Olayoku, 2014).

The early 1980s witnessed violent conflict between local farming communities and herders, traced to the Land Use Decree of 1978, which gave the government control over all lands (Ogebe, Abah, & Ligom, 2019). The Decree destroyed the pre-existing system of customary land ownership and the traditional conflict management mechanism. With this new structure, it was no longer prudent for herders to follow their long-standing custom of requesting permission to enter settlements to conduct their businesses.

The constitution also provides fundamental human rights that guarantee everyone in Nigeria the freedom to move about without restrictions. Similarly, the Economic Community of West African States Transhumance Protocol, which was adopted by some West African countries, allowed for the unrestricted movement of people and cattle as a result of the non-implementation of specific

policies controlling the movement of people into and outside a country within the West African region (Shettima & Tar, 2008).

Consequently, while farmers are accustomed to the traditional institutional norms that permit them to have customary ownership of land, herders capitalize on the recent institutions that enable them access to lands that once required that the farmers permitted them to access (Adebayo & Olaniyi, 2008). In the same vein, the herders increasingly showed reluctance to compensate for agricultural damages that had previously been centred around existing traditional methods of resolving disputes between conflicting parties.

In reaction to this development, the local communities grew wary and finally cautious about continuing to grant requests to the admission of herders into their communities (Ogebe, Abah & Ligom, 2019). The herders ignore the request for admission considering their understanding of the Nigerian constitution as it concerns the freedom of movement and land ownership (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). As a result, the herdsmen's repeated pleas to enter the localities were denied and inevitably resulted in a violent confrontation between farmers and pastoralists (Ajiye, 2018).

The growing tension between these groups is additionally connected to issues of drought and desertification, which has forced many herders to move to some places and maintain a permanent stay among local communities to graze their animals (Adishi & Oluka, 2018). It was similarly recorded that the northern region lost some of its grazing reserves as a result of rapid population growth, the creation of more states, and infrastructural development for commercial benefits (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). The tension between farmers and herders can also be traced to cattle rustling and rural banditry, which had recently confronted several Northern States. Cattle lost to theft were reported in 2013 to account for more than 64,750 cattle, and 2,991 herders were reported to have been killed (Igbini, 2022).

It is glaring therefore that the Fulani herder encroachment of lands in Benue State, Nigeria occurs particularly because the herders are in search for a land to graze. Simultaneously, the indigenous

farmers in the state have had communal crises stemming from the tussle for farmlands and the misuse of resources related to land (Aule & Bello, 2022; Cinjel, et al., 2020). In effect, it turns out that the farming communities in Benue state guard jealously its land resources, and an encroachment on the lands or destruction of food crops will only lead to an uproar. Hence, the spate of violence and tussle for land-use between the farmers and Fulani herdsmen within this middle belt region of Nigeria.

Since the escalation of violence in 2018, about 300,000 inhabitants of the state have fled the state in search for safety (International Crisis Group, 2018). This development has obstructed farming activities and automatically led to the hike in the price of food items within the state.

The Impacts of the insurgencies on Women in Benue State, Nigeria

The ensuing conflict and hostilities have had varying degrees of adverse effects on the socio-economic and political lives of humans, particularly the women in Benue state, Nigeria. The security of women is most affected by these spates of insurgencies (Shettima & Tar, 2008). The lengthy conflicts between the farming and pastoralist groups adversely impact women, who frequently become displaced, widowed, and experience other forms of economic, social, and psychological harm in several communities in Benue State. The negative impact of Farmers-herders conflict on the women population, their town and villages, public facilities, occupation, and economic activities, including their psychological status, cannot be adequately estimated due to the continued increase in casualties and unreported cases of death and missing individuals daily.

The following sub-topics give in insight to the impacts of Farmers-Herder's conflicts on the women population in Benue state, Nigeria.

Loss of Lives and Displacement of Properties

The invasion of the local farming community in Benue State became worsened at the beginning of the year 2009. This has resulted in the loss of lives and livelihood, as well as the dislocation of people

from their homes (Chukwuma & Ateli, 2014). Women and children are especially affected by this incidence as they make efforts to escape. Most women who cannot access the Internally Displaced Person's (IDP) camps seek shelter in rural communities and other neighbouring localities, exposing themselves to abuse and other social vices (Ajibefun, 2018).

The disputes intensified in 1999 upon the return of the country to democratic rule. Agrarian violence was first launched in rural villages in the Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria, in 1999, resulting in the deaths of 4 people, the destruction of fields, and the rape of several women (Amnesty International, 2018). A follow-up attack in 2009 on MbaAbena village in the Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State destroyed every home in sight and uprooted the whole village (Ojewunmi, 2013).

Between 8 and 10 February 2011, another incidence of agrarian conflict among farmers and herders in Gwer-West Local Government led to the death of 19 people and the destruction of valuable properties. Another attack was launched on Gwer-West Local Government on 4th March, 2011, and 46 lives involving men, women and children were lost in the clash (Ajiye, 2018).

The entire Benue State witnessed series of attacks by Fulani herders in 2014. The herders' attack on farmers reached its full-scale war in 2012 as the attack on Gwer-West Local Government Area quickly expanded to Guma, Makurdi, Gwer-East, and then to the Local Government Areas of Logo, Katsina-Ala, and Kwande in Benue State. The Governor of the state, Gabriel Suswan, on-the-spot evaluation tour of Benue State's Guma Local Government Area, became entangled and nearly lost his life during the attack (Igbini, 2022).

According to a report by the Benue State Government in 2014, over 11,700 people were reported to have lost their lives, and about 212,260 people were displaced from their homes in 2014. Governor Samuel Ortom reports that more than 1,878 lives had been lost between 2014 and 2016. The report also recorded that over 36,500 displaced people from Taraba, Kogi and Nasarawa,

neighbouring states became refugees in Benue state. It is also reported that between January 2015 to February 2017, 62,000 people in Kaduna, Benue and Plateau states were displaced (Abdulkarkindo & Alupsen, 2017).

About \$6.374 billion in household values and \$3.198 billion in food and tree crops were estimated to have been lost in the course of the crisis in 2014 (Abdulkarkindo & Alupsen, 2017). According to the Nigerian Watch Database, 615 violent deaths related to cattle grazing were recorded between 2006 and 2014. In 2016, approximately 2,500 people was reported dead, and at least 62,000 people displaced (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Report analysis in 2015 shows that the Federal government lost \$13.7 billion in income yearly due to this conflict (Enor, Magor, & Ekpo, 2019). Samuel Ortom, the Governor of Benue State, said that attacks by herders cost his state about \$207 million between 2012 and 2014 (Abdulkarkindo & Alupsen, 2017). The ethnic Nzor-Tiv Global Association claimed that the early 2016 herder conflict costs its Agatu villages in Benue state property losses of about \$142 million (Amnesty International, 2018).

If this volume of lives and properties have been lost to the crisis, by implication, the girl-child, mothers, wives, sisters and grand-mothers must have been severely hit by these insurgencies. This is particularly because husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons who worked hard to also financially sustain the families and acquired properties have either lost their lives or fled the ravaged communities. The women who stay alive are left with little or nothing for survival.

Rape and Post Psychological Trauma

Women are affected by the trauma of killings, destruction of valuable properties, threats, intimidation, and famines resulting from continued conflict (Ndubuisi, 2018). Similarly, they are the most vulnerable target of violence and abuse in the course of the attack on farmers' communities (Abdullah & Hamza, 1998). The conflict between the two groups has reinforced the condition of poverty, caused rural-urban displacement,

aggravated the crime situations. This is owing to the bizarre situations such as; the loss of livelihood, reduced agricultural incentives owing to insecurity, and destroyed local economy and food insecurity (Ajiye, 2018).

A supplementary study by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2017 found that more and more families in conflict-prone areas are headed by women, children, and older adults whose husbands died in the Fulani herders attack (Igbini, 2022).

Similarly, Ms Nyamve described how alleged armed herders raided Chembe, a Benue community bordered with Nasarawa and Taraba states, and killed about 17 people, including her husband. The young widow, however, bears a severe burden as a result of witnessing her husband being killed by a bullet and the burden of taking care of their two children all by herself (Amnesty International, 2018).

Food insecurity

Agriculture is still regarded as a source of income and a significant occupation for many people, including the women in Benue state, Nigeria (Adekunle & Adisa, 2010). Although farming is a majorly male-dominated occupation, the women population in Benue State also engage in farming activities such as planting, harvesting, processing and marketing agricultural produce (Abdullah & Hamza, 1998).

However, socioeconomic factors such as credit facilities, improved seedlings, and technical knowledge exposing them to the use of modern technology, among other factors, constitute some significant constraints on women's engagement with agricultural businesses (Abdullah & Hamza, 1998). Similarly, women have limited access to extensive services in the food chain sector, attributed to their multiple roles in domestic activities and family obligations (Ojukwu, 2013).

Painfully, the above problems were compounded by the conflicts between farmers and herders in Benue State (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). The relationship between the two conflicting groups worsened, and by 2013, there was growing mistrust

and feelings of suspicion between the two groups (Ajiye, 2018). As previously demanded, the accusation of vandalism of farmlands by stray cattle without compensation intensified mistrust.

As tensions heightened between the Fulani herders and local farming communities, food production becomes affected since both groups lacked cooperation as regards ensuring food security (Bello, 2013). As a result, the women lost their source of income, and expose themselves and their children to hunger (Adelakun, Adurogbangba & Akinbile, 2015). The Fulani herders' encroachment on the farms belonging to local farming communities also affected the production of crops. The conflict crippled agricultural and socio-economic activities in which women are majorly affected (Ofuoku & Isife, 2010).

Factors that stimulate Farmer - Herder Conflict in Benue State, Nigeria

Several factors have been considered to stimulate the conflict between farmers and herders in Benue state. Specific institutional frameworks and the complexity of the response of the Nigerian government in mediating between farmers and herders' groups have also been recognized to play some part in the crisis (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). These factors are thenceforth discussed.

The Land Use Act of 1978

Prior to the passage of the Land Use Act of 1978, the relationship between the farmers and herders in Tivland was cordial (Chukwuma & Ateli, 2014). With the implementation of the 1978 Land Use Decree, the herders gave up discussing their admittance and disregarded the custom that limits how many herders may enter the community each season (Ojukwu, 2013).

The herders' reluctance to compensate for crop damage, which formerly relied on established customary systems through which disagreements between them and crop farmers in the villages were addressed, led to difficulties in controlling grazing practices (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010). Subsequently, the intervening organizations in contemporary times, such as, the police and courts likely developed

new interests and failed to understand the cultural traditional practices which had hitherto regulated the behaviour of the two groups (Ajiye, 2018).

The migrants responded violently to the increasing pleas for admittance into Tivland, which the community gatekeepers turned down. The intergroup ties between farmers and herders in Benue state, Nigeria was broken in the process.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Transhumance 1988

The motive behind this strategy was to control transhumance within the ECOWAS sub-region, ensure that herders do not trespass on the territories of member states, and promote the basic notion of the incorporation of member states (Shettima & Tar, 2008). Herders who wish to engage in animal grazing must possess international trans-human certifications, health certificates, and livestock passports (Economic Community of West African States, 1998). However, enforcing this protocol cannot be claimed to be effective in Nigeria because the Migration Management Agency is yet to publicly demonstrate its commitment to upholding the requirements for unrestricted access to each state (Olayoku, 2014).

The ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance is similar to the traditional institutional standards that once governed farmer-herder relations and controlled their mutual coexistence (Shettima & Tar, 2008). A notable difference between the ECOWAS protocol on transhumance and the traditional institutional norms of herders' admission into Tivland, borders around the centralization of entry requirements instead of also permitting the local people who are the stakeholders in agricultural land from participation in matters that directly affect them (Adebayo, & Olaniyi, 2008).

The Fundamental Human Rights

The fundamental human rights provisions are designed to defend people's lives, freedoms, and means of subsistence (Ogebe, Abah, & Ligom, 2019). Indeed, Section 39, which demonstrates an explicit limitation on the scope of

such rights exercise, tends to impose restrictions on fundamental human rights. The influence of these rights in this context is that the Fulani herders, under the guise of fundamental Human Rights, disregarded the formal traditional land ownership system, which regarded the local people as the rightful owners of their land. The local farming communities, therefore, maintained their stance to prevent Fulani herders from grazing on their farmlands, but were violently opposed by the herders. Unfortunately, this only fuelled incessant conflict between the two groups (Ajiye, 2018).

Responses by Relevant Authorities to Address Farmers-Herders Conflict

Several responses have been developed by relevant authorities at different times to address the growing mistrust between the two groups. Some of these measures have proved useful, while some have generated intense struggle between the two groups. Some of these measures are discussed below.

Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee on Grazing Reserves

An inter-ministerial technical group on grazing reserves was established by the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan in April 2014 to develop solutions to the problems (Ogo-Oluwa, 2017). The committee's report recommended that the Central Bank of Nigeria released a total of \$317 million to the 36 state governments of the nation for the development of ranches. The administration also requested that encroached grazing routes be recovered and improved upon (Ofuoku & Isife, 2010).

These suggestions were approved by the National Executive Council (NEC). However, the 36 state governments of Nigeria needed to account for a total of \$317 million in ranch construction funding from the Central Bank of Nigeria (Ogo-Oluwa, 2017).

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) was directed in 2017 to develop a comprehensive livestock development strategy and steps to reduce farmer-herder conflicts. It was recommended that ranches be constructed in all 36 states, which most of the Governors rejected

as they see this move as an attempt to favour the Fulani herders (Akinsuyi, 2019).

The Sultan of Sokoto's Committee on Tiv Farmers/Fulani Cattle Herders Relationship

The persistent quest for sustainable peacebuilding between the Tiv farmers and Fulani herdsmen allowed for the establishment of the 'Sultan of Sokoto's Committee on Tiv Farmers/herders Relationship' on February 26, 2008, at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja (Ciboh, 2017). Similarly, on March 4, 2014, the former Governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswam, inducted the Committee on Conflict Resolution and Peace Building in Benue State to inspect and recommend measures to ensure sustainable peacebuilding between the two groups.

The committee recommended that ranches be adopted considering the fact that there existed pasture species that may be further manufactured in large quantities to support ranching. These species are advanced and tested by the National Animal Production and Research Institute (NAPRI) Zaria, Nigeria. Furthermore, the founding of a Grazing Commission to monitor the encroachment of the desert aided by adverse climate change also has the objectives of reclaiming, re-grassing and reactivating the desert lands and to follow-up with the patterns of climate change so as to deduce its impact on pastoralism and agriculture (Ciboh, 2017).

It was also recommended that the ECOWAS sub-regional Protocol be implemented in order to organize a specific regional conference where measures to halt nomadic pastoralism may be discussed. By so doing, the three negative capacities of low population, environmental degradation and conflict stimulation associated with nomadic pastoralism will also be revealed (Ciboh, 2017).

The Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law of Benue State

The Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law of 2017 tries to address the already precarious peace between farmers and herders (Silas, 2017). The Benue state government formulated the policy to secure lives, properties, and livelihoods (Kwaja & Adelehin, 2017).

The basic aims of the legislation include: (a) to minimize open grazing and animal rearing from damaging crop farms, local ponds, villages, and property, (b) to avert conflicts between crop farmers and nomadic livestock herders, (c) to safeguard the environment from deterioration and contamination brought on by cattle overgrazing and open grazing, (d) maximizing the use of land resources in light of the overburdened environment and rising population (e) Reduce obstacles to the enforcement of regulations that improve the production of high-quality, healthy cattle for domestic and international markets by preventing, controlling, and managing the spread of diseases. Furthermore, (f) establish a favourable atmosphere for large-scale crop cultivation (Bello, 2013).

The Fulani herders' organization has criticized the program, claiming that it violates the objectives of the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 and the 1978 Land Use Law. In particular, the restriction violated the fundamental right to freedom of movement (Kwaja & Adelehin, 2017).

Rural Grazing Areas

The Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA) strategy established by the Federal Government of Nigeria calls for a designated piece of land to be set aside for the purpose of settling herders and their cattle; and to strategically address the incessant killings and conflict associated with local farming communities and herders' clashes (Braukämper, 2000). Under this arrangement, herders were provided with specific basic social amenities like pastures for grazing, health facilities, water, good road networks, schools, security, veterinary clinics, markets, and production companies to maintain some seclusion (Ofuoku & Isife, 2010).

The proposed RUGA, Cattle Colonies, and Livestock Transformation Plan have all been rejected because they are perceived as attempts to expand the Fulani hegemony's policy (Akinsuyi, 2019).

Concluding Remarks

In the course of conflicts, the women are most vulnerable and faced with such challenges as the loss of indigenous occupations, the trauma from the loss of husbands, fathers, and sons, dispossession of valuable assets and displacement for their original places of comfort. Many women who survived on agriculture and trading are deprived of their means of livelihoods. Those who depend on their male counterparts for a means of survival are exposed to hardship, and penury in the face of conflicts. Some other women are exposed to gender-based violence which is exerted as a weapon of war by the conflicting factions. Sexual violence, torture and in some cases, forced marriages are also exerted by the captors depriving women of their rights to life.

The intense crisis between the farmers and herders in Benue State, Nigeria has destroyed many lives and properties. In recent times, the movement of pastoralists into the South due to insecurity in the North and the safety of their livestock from rustlers has heightened insecurity. Women have been hit badly by the menace. They have experienced such gruesome consequence such as the; loss of lives, loss of properties, loss of sound psychological wellbeing, loss of means of livelihood and the loss

of their fundamental human rights.

The responses of the relevant authorities to the herders-farmers conflicts in Benue state has not been effective in dousing the tensions. It therefore becomes pertinent that the government develops an agricultural plan and implement a conflict management system, including immigrant policy, to address the negative effects of environmental changes and curb the illegal trans-border movements of armed herders and cattle rustlers.

The notion of 'human security from below' may be applied to the situation of people in Benue state, Nigeria. Owing to the fact that the various security measures adopted by the Federal government and state have not been totally effective in curbing the conflicts between the farmers and herders in Benue state, it is important to consider Colak and Pearce's (2009) idea of applying security from below. This notion suggests that the provision of security may not be only state centred, but should be people-centred, where the individuals in the affected communities adopt informal ways of ensuring that justice and security is achieved even without slighting the government security agencies.

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