

The Dynamics of Farmers and Herdsmen Violent Conflict in Nigeria: A Reflection on the Vulnerability of Women and Children

Tyavwase Theophilus Aver

Department of Sociology, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria,
Nigeria

theophilusaver@yahoo.com

Abstract: The violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen seems to have taken a life of its own, with dire consequences on women and children in Nigeria. This paper dwells on the dynamics of the violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria. A reflection on the vulnerability of women and children. The environmental resource scarcity and violent conflict theory of farmers and herdsmen is used in explaining the phenomenon. Many scholars associate the phenomenon with the failure of security agents to perform their statutory functions. The paper argues that the desire to avoid the consequences of this violent conflict has led to the displacement of women and children leaving them in vulnerable situations. The existence of this conflict has led to constant fear of attacks in livelihoods. Women and children continue to bear the brunt of this conflict as they suffer various forms of abuses such as loss of the sources of subsistence occupation of either farming or livestock herding. This instability of their family system creates a mass population of widows because husbands are killed in the violent conflict. The paper discovers that most children drop out of school because there is lack of cash crop to sell and raise funds for stationeries and tuition fees. Some of the children are separated from their families during violent conflict. This exposes them to climatic hazards, abuses and child labour. The paper concludes that in view of the increasing violent conflict and its negative effects on women and children's lives, farmers and herdsmen should evolve ways of resolving their violent conflict amicably in order to reduce the vulnerability of women and children. The paper recommends that national and international organizations should help implement state strategic campaigns on the negative effects of violent conflict on women and children in Nigeria.

Keywords: Dynamics, Farmers, Herdsmen, Violent, Conflict, Reflection, Vulnerability, Women and Children.

Introduction

The history of humankind is replete with violent conflicts. The prevalence of the phenomenon has pitched individuals and ethnic groups against each other in the modern society. It has become a contemporary global social problem that has imposed danger on the entire human species in the world today. For instance, countries like Ukraine, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine/Gaza among others are struggling with the problem of violent conflict in recent years. It is estimated that, about 78 million people were internally displaced worldwide between 2000- 2014 due to violent conflict (Ngigi 2015). Most developing countries and African states in particular have continued to experience dangerous scenes of incessant violent conflicts, which have occurred between communities, cultural and religious groups in modern days. Women and children are more vulnerable to becoming victims' violent conflict in form of rape, forced marriage, trafficking, child labour and abuses.

In Africa today, violent conflict has become a common phenomenon that affects the entire continent. Indeed, the African continent has continued to embroil in these violent conflicts, which have adversely affected women and children. This factor negatively affects women and children (Iruonagbe & George 2007). Countries like South Africa, Mozambique, Chad, Liberia, Mali, Ghana, Libya, Cote'Ivoire, Angola, Somalia, Cameroon, Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic

of Congo, Chad and Rwanda have suffered from the menace in Africa (Cheruiyot, 2014). These violent conflicts seriously affect the lives of women and children of the countries that are engulfed in these violence. With the dynamics of the activities of farmers and herdsmen in recent times, these violent conflicts have increased on a high magnitude on the continent. Tsa (2014) maintains that herdsmen are linked to several violent conflicts in the African Sub-Region. Particularly Cameroon, Mali, Guinea, Senegal, Ghana, Niger, and Nigeria which has affected the social and economic development of its people. UNICEF recently stated that up to 350 million people are adversely affected by the activities of herdsmen in Sub-Sahara Africa; the majority are women and children (Duru, 2017). Tsa (2014) reports that 20 people were killed and thousands fled Cameroonian villages on the border with Nigeria following violent conflict between Cameroon farmers and armed herdsmen.

Nigeria is a large multi-cultural country where socio-cultural cleavages remain a critical problem. Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has been struggling with the challenge of managing her ethnic groups and cultural relations in order to promote social, economic, national integration and unity without violent conflict among Nigerians. These efforts have however, been thwarted as a result of violent conflicts. Violent conflicts have become a recurring decimal with its devastating effects on lives, property, women and children. These have been witnessed in virtually all the 36 states of Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Violent conflicts are not confined to specific parts of the country, but are spread across Nigeria's geopolitical zones (Iruonagbe & George, 2007). These include Hausa, Fulani and the

Kataf ethnic group of Zangon Kataf in Kaduna State, 1999; Ijaw/Urhobo and Itsekiris of Warri in Delta State, 1999; Hausa, Fulani and Yoruba in Oyo and Lagos States respectively, 1999/2000; Jukun/Chamba and Kuteb, Jukun and Tiv in Taraba State, 1999, Jukun and Tiv in Taraba and Benue States 2001. In addition these conflicts include Tiv and other ethnic groups in Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba States in 2001, the Tiv and Kuteb in Katsina- Ala and Takum Benue and Taraba States, Tiv-Jukun in Benue 2016, Hausa and Yoruba in Ile-Ife 2017 (Isa 2001; Angya, 2006; Utsaha; Ugbah & Ugbah, 2007; Abubakar 2015; Agbese, Ahmadu-Suka & Shehu 2017).

The farmers and herdsmen conflict has resulted in many deaths across the nation. With the increasing activities of farmers and herdsmen in contemporary times, violent conflict has become a pervasive phenomenon in Nigeria. Different communities across the nation are brutally attacked and their sources of livelihood mindlessly destroyed. Properties worth billions of Naira, including places of worship, schools, hospitals and business enterprises are torched and turned to ashes. Ubanna & Wada, (2013) maintain that over the last 30 years, herdsmen and farmers crisis has caused major security threat to the country as they kill, maim and destroy farm crops, rob and rape women across the country. Kwaja (2017) reports that herdsmen attacks on farmers have cost 6500 lives in the middle belt region of the country between 2010 and 2015. Over 2,500 people died nationwide during farmers and herdsmen conflict especially

in Kaduna, Benue, Narasawa, Plateau, Adamawa and Taraba States between January 2015, and February 2017 (Umeagbalasi, 2016; Abubakar 2017). Ozor (2016) observes that anxiety and confusion have engulfed Abbi Community in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, Enugu State, following the invasion of the area by herdsmen who unleashed mayhem on the people killing 19 persons and razing down seven houses, shops, crops and several motorcycles. Social and economic activities were disrupted following the killing of 40 persons by armed herdsmen at Ukpabi-Nimbo, Ngwoko, Ugwuijoro, Ekwuru, Ebor, Enugu Nimbo, Umuome and Ugwuachara in Uzo- Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State (Mamah, Ndujihe, Nkwopara & Ozor 2016).

In all these attacks, women and children suffer all kinds of abuses such as the loss of the sources of subsistence occupation may be farming or livestock rearing. This results in family instability and creation of a mass population of widows because their husbands are killed in the violent conflict. This increases the inability of children to attend schools due to the fact that they are rendered homeless and living in IDP camps. This creates tension and social hardships on them, leading to long run deprivations (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour 2017). These women and children have no access to medication and sleep on bare floors anywhere they found themselves a development that has exposed them to chronic cough due to cold (Iorhemen 2018). They are exposed to hardship leading to the death of 12 people in the internally displaced camps across some states (Bashir 2018). They are denied the relevant support for their social, educational and long-term development. The

long run effects of the violent conflict is deprivations of the social stability of the community as a whole.

Based on the foregoing, this paper unveils the dynamics of the effect of violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria; a reflection on the vulnerability of women and children. To achieve this goal, the paper is subdivided into the following themes: the introduction, conceptual framework, theoretical framework the vulnerability women and children in conflict zones, recommendations and conclusion.

Conceptual Framework

For the sake of better understanding of the phenomenon in any social research world, there is a need to clearly explain some concepts.

Farmers and Herdsmen Violent Conflict

In this research, farmers-herdsmen, violent conflict is typically used to refer to conflict between farming and herding groups in the society. The phrase separately is misleading because most farmers nowadays turned to herdsmen rear livestock, while many herdsmen are crop farmers on a seasonal basis. Farmers-herdsmen violent conflict is referred to as the physical competition over resources between crops producers and cattle grazers in a given area.

Vulnerability

In the context of this paper, vulnerability refers to the inability of individuals and households to defend resist and respond effectively with any violent conflict

situation around them. Vulnerability is the inability of individuals and households to react or respond effectively to any situation or event adjudged to threatening the capacity of available resources at the disposal of the groups.

Vulnerable women

Vulnerable women here connote adult female persons, wives of some people, sisters or daughters and above all human beings who cannot defend them during the calamities in a given area.

Vulnerable children

The vulnerable children here include those children whose families cannot afford money, food, healthcare, clothing items and cannot attend schools as a result of the situation they found themselves in a given place.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts Environmental Resource Scarcity and Violent Conflict Theory of Farmers and Herdsmen as its theoretical framework to analyze the dynamics of farmers and herdsmen violent conflict in Nigeria.

Environmental Resource Scarcity and Violent Conflict Theory

The fundamental theoretical assumption of the theory is that environmental resource scarcity is the product of an insufficient supply, too much demand or an unequal distribution of a resource that forces some sector of a society into a condition of deprivation (Suhrke 1996). The link between environmental resources and violent conflict has attracted the attention of scholars like Baechler (1998), Percival & Homer-Dixon (1998), Homer-Dixon (1999) and Gleditsch

(2001). These scholars argued that the relationship between environmental (natural) resources and violent conflict probably as old as human settlement. Environmental resources are critical to the survival of people and nations, both for subsistence and for economic mainstay. Access to control of the resources of an environment has been a contentious issue often generating tensions and violent conflicts within, and among nations. The resource issues as they relate to violent conflict focuses on 'hard' resources such as strategic minerals, to the neglect of 'soft' resources such as water, food, and land (Bissel, 1996). Violent confrontations associated with environmental scarcity are not likely to enhance some desirable forms of cooperation. However, when such elements of environmental scarcity are manipulated, without being properly managed by social and economic setting, it will be easily and cheaply hijacked for political agenda. Hence, the confrontational elements of environmental scarcity will gain prominence and currency. The widespread environmental scarcity is highly enormous.

It is conceded that environmental scarcity is but one in a complex web of causes that collectively precipitate violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen. Environmental scarcity functions within the given multilayered matrix of history, economy and politics and is most acute where human and livestock population pressures are reinforced by unequal resources access (Suliman, 1999:32).

These three sources of scarcity are in turn caused by variables such as population growth, economic development and pollution. The continuing violent clashes that have ensued between farmers and herdsmen thus constrain agricultural and economic productivity, further inducing the disruption of livelihoods, poverty and migration. Homer-Dixon & Blitt (1998) observed that large populations in many developing countries are highly dependent on four key environmental resources that are very fundamental to crop production: fresh water, crop, land, forests and fish. Scarcity and shrinking of these resources as a result of misuse, over-use or degradation under certain circumstances will trigger off violent conflicts. Homer-Dixon (1999: 30) maintained that;

Decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and unequal resource access act singly in various combinations to increase the scarcity, population groups, of crop, land, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts.

Migration will occur either because the environmental quality of a habitat has become unlivable or, more commonly, because the migrants economic outcome is likely to be better in areas with greater resource availability. Both constrained productivity

and migration are likely to strengthen the segmentation around already existing religious, class, ethnic or linguistic leavages in a society and thus precipitate violent conflicts (Gleditsch & Urdal 2002). Gleditsch & Urdal, (2002) explained that, intricate linkages develop between environmental resource scarcity, livelihood, and conflicts. For instance in the Lake Chad area where rapid population growth and converging environmental trends contribute to the shrinking of the Lake, violent conflicts in the basin are likely to worsen considerably as resource scarcities interact with, or exacerbate other conflict-related social variables. Coser (1956) perceived that in terms of the struggle between parties over desirable values.

One crucial defining element of violent conflict is the presence of two or more actors struggling to secure a thing of value or adjudged to be valuable of which the gain by any of the actors amounts to a loss or deprivation to the other actor (s). The benefit that goes with access to or control of the 'valuable' and the deprivation or insecurity that follows denial of access underlie all violent conflicts. Mark & Synder (1971) contended that a key element of all violent conflicts is the existence of resource scarcity where the wants of all actors cannot be fully satisfied and where the quests for such resources result in violent conflict behaviour. Opportunities for violent collective action can decrease, even under conditions of environmental scarcity, when the power of potential challenger groups is diffused by vigorous

horizontal interaction within society and vertical interaction between civil society and the state. However, if poor socio-economic conditions persist, grievances will remain. These grievances will probably be expressed through an increase in deviant activity, such as crime. Unless the grievances are addressed, the legitimacy of the government will decrease, society will once again become segmented, and opportunities for violent collective action will correspondingly increase.

The theory further assumes that during conflicts of this nature people adopt varying ways to survive. Some of these coping strategies include living internally displaced person's camps (IDPs), churches, mosques, town halls, abandoned and uncompleted buildings, their relatives, friends, among others. The environmental resource scarcity and violent conflict theory is criticized on the grounds it failed to consider technological advancements and human ingenuity increased agricultural production, which gave rise recently violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen (Ikoh, 2014). Critics also point out that theory failed to foresee the possibility of reclaiming lands that were then considered waste for human use or either animals agricultural production or human habitation. Marx on his part held that poverty and unemployment were not due to the increased farming activities, but due to the capitalist system, which failed to provide jobs for the timing population to survive. The violent conflict emanates as a result of the consequence of uneven distribution of wealth and the failure of the bourgeois class to provide jobs for the timing population in the society. No country in the world violent conflict will increase on the account of scarce

resources but will increase only because of capitalist policies, which the masses access to the resources (Basiago, 1996). The capitalists make labour a major factor of their production but under pay the labour leading people to seek other means of survival like farming and rearing of animals, which often result in violent conflict. To worsen it by installing labour saving machines a capitalist maxima surplus value out of the labour. As a result of this unemployment spreads, wages decline and poverty increases which often lead one to such employment like farming and rearing of herds that result in violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen. He maintains that the cause of violent conflict is nothing else but the wrong politics of the capitalists to expropriate lands from the peasants for their selfishness, which lead to the violent conflict in the society.

While criticize, believe that because of the population growth and introduction of modern farming technology the bourgeoisie exploit the working class by suppressing wages and keeping them in relative poverty make poor people resort farming and grazing of animals as coping strategies that result in violent conflict (Murphy, 1992). The increase in population growth has also witnessed the depression of wages especially for the unemployed and proletariat who depend on wages for subsistence cannot survive making it compulsory to have farms. While the herdsmen on their side adopt the rearing of animals as means of survival as encroaching into farmers products which always lead to the violent conflict. It also strains investment by

diverting funds for maintaining a lumped proletariat (a body of unskilled people) (Rifkin, 1994). Marx was of the opinion that the general law of capital accumulation; the appropriation and accumulation of surplus value by the capitalist class leads to the poverty of those who are precisely the source of that surplus value which often result in violent conflict. Criticizes are of the opinion that the environmental resource scarcity and violent conflict theory supported bourgeois ideology and blamed the poor for many of the world's problems such as crime and violent conflict. Conflict, poverty, hunger, and unemployment have continued to be on the rise as a result of the inequalities of capitalism perpetuated by the bourgeois class (Franke, & Chasin, 1989).

Inspite of all these criticisms, the environmental resource scarcity and violent conflict theory of farmers and herdsmen theory remain relevant for studies of violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen. During periods of drought, farmers encounter problems not because of the drought itself, but also owing to the tendency of some herdsmen to practise unfair pasturing methods. Farmers complain of herdsmen deliberately feeding their livestock where the farmers had already planted their food crops (Ruttan, 1991). This is a common practice as during dry season herdsmen had little to feed their cattle. However, this tendency cause great conflict, with the farmers on the one side and the herdsmen on the other (Onuoha, n.d).The herdsmen often cross borders in pursuit of the receding greener pastures for their herdsmen. This violent conflict has resulted in a complex web of social and economic issues, which spill over into human rights issues (Dixon & Fallon, 1989). The increase in the influx of

herders for grazing from the Republic of Niger and migrates from Chad further south in search of optimum opportunities leads to violent conflict between herdsman and farmers. This has contributed to the violent conflict between farmers and herdsman in Nigeria. Onuoha, (n.d) asserted further that farmers and cattle herders have moved deeper south wards where they have ended up competing for the available scarce resources such as fresh water and arable or grazing lands with other economic groups or with host communities. Harsh environmental trends in the northern part of Nigeria, such as the shrinkage of Lake Chad and desertification, have made the seasonal movement of the cattle rearers to the southern part of Nigeria more permanent (Moore, 1994). In the previous years, the herdsman migrated to Benue valley during the dry season and return back to the north during the rainy season. Due to the deteriorating situation in the region, many of them are now settling permanently in the Benue valley contributing to violent conflict over scarce resources in the valley with the possible potential to spill over into ethnic clashes. In the use of environmental scarcity resources grievances arise which contributes to violent conflicts.

Based on the foregoing, the environmental resource scarcity and violent conflict theory is adopted as the theoretical guide for the study.

The Vulnerability of Women and Children in the Farmers-Herdsman in Violent Conflict

The frequent eruption of the conflict has some deleterious effects on women and children in societies the world over (Gbenro 2008). Displaced women and children are suffering in camps across the nation as a result of violent conflict. Perpetrators of this violent conflict view rape and other forms of violence against women and children in displaced persons camps as bounties of conflict (Aluko (2017). For instance, about 80% of the Africa refugees are women and children (Gbenro 2008). According to Anonymous (2018), Nigeria has the number of IDPs represented by 4.5 per cent increase to the 1,702,680 in December 2017. This shows that 766,206 persons have become displaced as a result of violent conflict in the country (Anonymous 2018). In Nigeria, there are about 1.7 million IDP camps across Nigeria out of which 70% are women and children (Aluko 2017). Women and children are adversely affected by farmers-herdsman violent conflict. Their abductions have been on the increase in recent times. The men seem to have the ability to defend themselves during this violent conflict better than women and children. Women and children are regarded as vulnerable groups in violent conflict because of their inability to defend themselves from the occupying militia.

The manifestation of this violent conflict on women and children cannot be quantified. During this conflict, they lose their lives, relationships and as such become induced to trauma. (Mercy Corps 2015). They also have to endure the loneliness and vulnerability of separation from their families, as a result of the loss of the

husbands. More importantly is their forced migration which inadvertently thrust the sudden changes on the rural economy and the family (Oluyemi-Kusa 2010). During violent conflicts their households and family are often separated. This forces them to flee without their husbands or breadwinners who are usually left behind or killed in the violent conflict. This group of people are pushing them to IDP camps without their family members as a result of the displacement and do not know the fate or whereabouts of their loved ones resulting to traumatic conditions (International Committee of the Red Cross ICRC, 2016). Their forced migration to other communities or IDP camps resulting in their lack of potable water, inadequate sewage facilities and severe overcrowding resulted in dangerous and unsanitary conditions in those IDP camps they found themselves (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017). Their family members who survived the violent conflict and became displaced members of the refugee community try to establish their new household in an alien setting without the comfort and resources of the rural economy they left behind.

Moreso, their displacement often entails finding new sources of livelihood, which could be prostitution or child labour in order to cope with the new demands of life (Musa; Shabu; Igbawua, 2014). This exposed some of them to treatable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis due to the prostitution or hard labour (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017). For those who found themselves in the IDP camps

in the course of the violent conflict, they are exposed to widespread sexual violence, abduction, abuse, unwanted pregnancy, sex trafficking, forced labour, forced marriage and religious conversions, which often result to physical and psychological trauma (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour 2017). Reports indicate that government officials, security forces, local communities and others in charge of IDP camps commit sexual exploitation on women and young girls in exchange for food stuffs (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017). In most cases the gatekeepers in control of some IDP camps, at times in collusion with police officers and soldiers, force them to have carnal knowledge of them in exchange for food and other services in the IDP camps (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour 2017).

In the IDP camps, the condition of this people remain very poor as Berliner & de Casas (2009) posit that women and children living in IDP camps are prone to infectious diseases as they have less access to sanitation and in most places water from the tap needs to be boiled before it is potable. Most of the women are poor single mothers with children. The women and especially children often come down with colds, catarrh, pneumonia and other respiratory infections. Gbabo (2017) states that women and children in most camps often come down with different sicknesses. If it is not cold, it is catarrh, pneumonia or malaria. Vulnerable children are left without any medical care in most IDP camps. For instance in LGEA primary school in Daudu, Guma Local Government Area of Benue State when displaced villagers arrived at the camp, most of their children started complaining about

headache and stomach ache but there were no drugs to give them. Most of these children sleep in bushy parts and have no nets that would shield them from mosquito bite as a result of malaria and fever. A woman tending her sick girl and has been vomiting all day without drugs (Owolabi 2018). Aluko (2017) affirms that the sick women and children in camps across the nation depend on herbal drinks in the absence of orthodox medicines. Ejembi (2017) also supports the view that many sick women and children in the IDP camps depend on herbal drinks in the absence of orthodox medicines. He further stated that a member of the IDPs in one of the camps in Nigeria posited that her daughter just recovered from malaria using concoctions, attested to the efficacy of the herbal solutions. Ejembi (2017:5) succinctly reveals the view of the IDP camps that:

We do not have drugs to use here either. We are suffering. It has been a while since the good Samaritans that used to bring us drugs and other things came to us. I had to drink herbal solutions when I had malaria last month.

Lack of healthcare facilities is a major challenge in IDP camps. Travel at least 40 Km to access medical treatment for common ailments like malaria, cold and catarrh (Adimula, 2016). Health facilities and services in IDP camps are almost non-existent, as many displaced persons do not even access Panadol there in camps (Maier, 2000). Baker (2006:163) succinctly found that:

Children, who are taken to internally displaced people's camps (IDPs) particularly the younger ones, become preoccupied and anxious about potential illness for themselves and their families. Many start having trouble sleeping, and fretting about their homes, their possessions, the life they left behind, and friends who were not with them in the same IDP camps. Older children, while sharing some of these concerns, were more preoccupied with the family's financial concerns and showed general anxiety about their future.

Agreeing with the findings the World Children, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), (1996; 1) captured that;

Even if they have never seen a gun, millions of children suffer from violent conflict, as resources that could have been invested in their development are diverted into armaments. Indeed, one of the most distressing realities of the time is that most violent conflicts have been fought in precisely those places that could least afford them.

Regarding the educational development of the children during the violent conflict all the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning in the affected areas remain closed. The buildings destroyed with the supporting facilities destroyed, while their re-opening becomes indefinite. Owolabi (2018) maintains that a head teacher, who has been displaced from his village in Kambe, is worried about the children who are now out of school because of the incessant attacks by herdsmen across communities in Benue and Nasarawa states. He further observed that most schools have been under lock, and

children meant to be in school are scattered across displaced persons' camps, with their education now on hold all the schools are closed. Since we came to IDP camps, there has been no educational provision for the children. They cannot go to school again because we are now homeless people (Owolabi, 2018). More than 60% of children who are supposed to be in school are forced to drop out (Duru, 2017). For instance, the report indicated that most IDP camps in the conflict areas like Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba and Adamawa States among others, which are dominated by women and children of nursery, primary and secondary school age (Duru 2016). Benue and Nasarawa States the breakdown show that 80,450 children currently trapped in eight internally displaced persons, camps established by the Benue and Nasarawa States Government to cater for victims of herdsmen incursions (Charles 2018). This has affected the entire life of facets of the children in these states. Jumare & Surma (2015) further state that most these children drop out of school because there is no cash crop to sell and get money to buy uniforms, purchase books and pay for their school fees. A student in one of the IDP camps in Barkin Local Government Area of Plateau State asserted that:

I registered for 10 subjects but could not write three papers because we had to run from our community when the herdsmen attacked us; my father was killed in the process. I am the second child of five children. We paid N3,

500 for the exams and my mother might not be able to finance the exams as a widow, in addition to the school fees of my other four siblings. Many of my classmates have lost a parent or both in the attacks and did not have the resources to re-register for the exams next year, we paid N34,000 for the exams, and most of us cannot afford to pay again next year (Obasi 2018: 1-3).

Agreeing with the above quotation most families' livelihood have been destroyed as such, they moved to a safe place where they become dependent. Many children are separated from families during violent conflict exposing them to danger; abuse and child labour (CPWG 2012). When many households' livelihood practices are seized and throwing them into poverty, children are often forced to join armed forces or groups (Child Soldiers International 2012). Ndahi (2015) postulates that in New Kuchingoro, a village hosting about 5 million IDP camps in one of the states, the community normally contributes N480,000 monthly to pay the school fees of over 300 hundred children living in IDP camps in the community. Sometimes this problem also affects even some schools outside the conflict zones as they are forced to close down temporarily because people are taking refuge in those schools especially women and children among others (Mohammad, 2018).

Most classrooms in these schools are occupied by IDPs so normal academic activities in the schools converted for IDP camps resume as soon as the situation of the displaced people is resolved. In the other word, the children's classrooms are turned

into sleeping rooms by the IDPs. Owolabi, (2018) affirms that a head teacher who camped at the LGEA primary school in Agasha, Guma Local Government Area of Benue State, said the government knows that we have converted most schools to IDP camp but no one has come to assure us of better days, especially the children. The children have resumed school but our own children cannot go back to school now, we cannot go back to the village. A day before yesterday, we were asked to move to RCM School Gende, where other displaced people are camped, but we don't have anything to move ourselves and that is why we remained here (Owolabi 2018). The same goes with St Francis LGEA primary school in Daudu where hundreds of displaced persons are camped, their children who should be in school are loitering around the school field. Most of these children are prevented from going to school as such, forced to withdraw from schools leading to obstacles on their development as a result of their mass displacement and destruction of school structures. The long run effects of this violent conflict in Nigeria is deprivations of the social stability of the community as a whole. Women in poverty tend to raise children in poverty who are less likely to enjoy good health, education; employment in turn breeds unstable lives with long-term consequences in the country. The increase in the violent conflict threatens women's livelihood as the loss of earnings and income has negative consequences beyond their personal lives. For example, as women are usually partly responsible for paying their

children's school fees, their declining financial status means that the children are taken out of school or moved to a less expensive one.

Considering the malnutrition of women and children in IDP camps it was observed that the displaced persons are totally neglected by the government and they are seriously suffering and looking very miserable (Duru, 2017). Jelili, & Olanrewaju, (2016) reveal that in most of the IDP camps, there is a high rate of malnutrition which is 18% threshold; the situation is higher than the global emergency threshold of 15%. Ogundamisi (2015) asserts that lack of malnutrition in both adults and children is occurring at alarming rates in the IDP camps. Moreso, their inability to feeding well exposes them to malnutrition, poor condition of infrastructure such as power, water, roads, lack of healthcare, security, education among other basic amenities are some of the agonies of vulnerability of women and children in IDP camps (Adimula, 2016). Some camps have shown to be derelict and unfit for human habitation while food supply and security have posed serious challenges both for managers and inmates. Again Jelili, & Olanrewaju, (2016) identified welfare, security and rehabilitation as problems faced by IDPs in their camps. Systematically the shortage of food supplies and essential necessities amidst these travails, women, most of whom often have little or no capacity to manage household economies, are compelled to take full responsibility for fending for hungry children and sustaining the family member (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017).

Boyden, Berry, Feeny, & Hart, (2006) made an overview of current knowledge on children affected by violent conflict and found that six

areas will be of particular challenge to the development of the child. They include (i) social disruption, (ii) loss of service access, (iii) impoverishment, (iv) civil and political violations, (v) threats to physical integrity, and (vi) transformations in roles and responsibilities. Jensen & Shaw's (1993) reveal that children exposed to violent conflict are trauma seems likely to overwhelm most children's coping capacity and resilience. UN (2008) submits that children normally experienced traumatic events in times of violent conflict they suffer from increased anxiety about being separated from their families, they always have nightmares or trouble sleeping at night. Aluko (2017) opines that many children in the camp who have experienced horrible scenes of how family members and friends were either killed or burnt alive are traumatized and they engaged in the psychological trauma healing process to recover from the suck. The effect of the violent conflict turned to affect the entire life cycle of women and children as individuals.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that in view of the increasing violent conflict having negative effects on women and children's lives thus farmers and herdsmen should evolve ways of resolving their violent conflict amicably in order to reduce the vulnerability. The growing farmers and herdsmen violent conflict is the consequent small arms and light weapons proliferation. The inefficiency of security agencies worsened this conflict situation

in most of these communities affected farmer-herdsmen conflict. As a strategy, there is need for stronger collaboration between civil society organisations (CSOs) and security agents to end this violent conflict in order to reduce the vulnerability of women and children. The need for relevant institutions of government and security agencies establish mechanisms for detection, investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of this violent conflict.

Recommendations

The paper recommended that the national and international organizations should help implement a state strategic campaign about the vulnerability of women and children in herdsmen violent conflict in Nigeria. International support organisations and other human rights bodies need to support this campaign to end the violent conflict.

There is an urgent need for the Federal Government to take a decisive action on issues of small arms and light weapons proliferation throughout the country to reduce this violent conflict. The federal government should carry out a thorough investigation to identify those involved in supplying arms for those who involved farmer-herdsmen violent conflict

There is a need for a re-orientation and attitudinal change toward oneness in Nigeria this will go a long way in charging farmers and herdsmen relationship in this country. The herdsmen should fish out those criminal elements among them who are normally involved in killing women and children in the rural areas. The ongoing killing of women and children, the abuse of their rights during this violent conflict need to be stopped and

controlled with urgency. Mechanisms must be put-in place for reporting incidences of herdsmen violent conflict, which affect women and children.

There is also need for increased women's employment in the security agencies and extension workers, as well as deliberate efforts at girl child education in the rural areas. There is the need to provide support to victims of farmers-herdsmen violent conflict especially women and children. Establishment of free education across the IDP camps for the children of violent conflict will be a welcome development. This will go a long way in rehabilitating both parents and children who have been displaced from their astral homes by the violent conflict.

The current trend of ignoring the victims of farmers-herdsmen violent conflict especially women and children who have lost their husbands or fathers need to be discarded. Moreso, government, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil society organisations (CSOs) should provide free counselling and health services for women and children who were abused by either militia or security agencies during the violent conflict. Leaders of farmers and herdsmen need to collectively put heads together and end this violent conflict in order to prevent women and children from the vulnerability.

References

Abubakar, O. (2015) Humanitarian crisis and internally displaced persons (IDPS): addressing the plights of youth and women victims in Nigeria; *Basic Research Journal of Social and*
 URL: <http://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cujpia>

- Political Science*. 3(3) Pp. 42-55
 September 2015 Available online
<http://www.basicresearchjournals.org>
- Adimula, B. (2016). The plight of women and children in Nigeria's IDP camps; *YNaij*; March 8
- Agbese, A; Ahmadu-Suka, M & Shehu, A (2017) Nigeria: Southern Kaduna Killings - the Inside Story; *Daily Trust*, 4 January.
- Aluko, O. (2017) Tears from Ngala: Nigeria's largest IDPs Camp in throes of hunger, diseases; *Sunday Punch*, 3 December
- Angya, A.C (2006) Theatre as a tool for peacemaking: Another look at intra and inter-community conflicts in Benue State; Gyuse T.T and Ajene O (Ed) *Conflicts in the Benue Valley*, Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria, Selfers Books; Pp. 251-259
- Anonymous (2018) Number of IDPs in Nigeria up by 4.5% in January 2018; *Saharareporters*, New York April 1,
- Baechler, G. (1998) why environmental transformation causes violence: Asynthesis. Environmental change and security projects of the Woodrow Wilson Centre; Issue No. 4
- Baker, K. (2006) Quotation taken from Balay Rehabilitation Center (Ed.) Integrating Children's Rights in Barangay Disaster Management and Development. Quezon City: Balay Rehabilitation Center, Inc.
- Bashir, M, & Iorhemen, C. (2018) Herdsmen attacks: farmers, IDPs lament in Benue, Kogi; *New Telegraph*; March 25.
- Basiago, A. D. (1994) Sustainable development in tropical forest ecosystems; *The International*

- Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology*, 11, Pp.34-40
- Berliner, P. & De Casas S. E., (2009) The H1N1 flu - Psychosocial needs in Mexico: A Situation Report. In print.
- Bissell, R. E. (1996) *The Resource Dimension of International Conflict*, in Chester; Crocker, A; Hampson, F. O. & Aall, P. (eds) *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*. Washington DC: Institute for Peace.
- Boyden, J., Berry, J. De, Feeny, T. & Hart, J. (2006) *Children Affected by Armed Conflict in South Asia: A Regional Summary*; Reyes, G. and Jacobs, G. A. (Eds.) *Handbook of International Disaster Psychology*. Vol. 4. Westport: Praeger.
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour (2017) *Children under age 18 participated in Boko Haram attacks*; Nigeria 2017 Human Rights Report
- Cheruiyot K. B (2014) *The Role of Kenyan Government in Administration of Justice to Post Election Violence of 2007-2008 in Kenya: The Dilemma of Internally Displaced Persons Still Residing in Camps*. *International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences* Vol. 4 (16) June.
- Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) (2012) *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action* CPWG/Global Protection Cluster, Geneva.
- Child Soldiers International (2012) *Louder Than Words: An Agenda for Action to End State Use of Child Soldiers*. Child Soldiers International, UK
- Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for (2017) Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); Nigeria 2017 Human Rights Report
- Duru, P. (2016) *7,000 Persons Displaced in Fulani Herdsmen, Agatu Farmers' Clash in Benue*; *Vanguard*, February 29
- Duru, P. (2017) *Over 350m persons may have been adversely affected by herdsmen's activities in Sub Saharan Africa – UNICEF*; *Vanguard*; July 29.
- Ejembi, R. (2017) *Health workers have confirmed 120 births and 15 deaths in the eight Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Benue state since the Fulani herdsmen invasion of the state in January this year till date*; *The Sun*, March 20.
- Franke, R. & Chasin, B. (1989) *Kerala: radical reform as development in an Indian State*. San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy.
- Gbenro, O. (2008) *Middle Belt, not Killing Belt: The History, Dynamics and Political Dimensions of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in the Middle-Belt*; *Action Aid Nigeria with the support of DFID*.
- Gleditsch, N. P. & Urdal, I. (2001) *Environmental change, security and conflict*; Crocker, C. Hampson, F & Aall, P. (eds.) *Managing global chaos II*; Washington DC: United States, Institute of Peace Press.

- Gleditsch, N. P. (2001) Environmental change, security and conflict; Crocker, C. Hampson, F & Aall, P. (eds.) *Managing global chaos II*; Washington DC: United States, Institute of Peace Press.
- Ikoh, M. U. (2014) Lectures notes on Soc 315: Demography; Unpublished.
- International Committee of the Red Cross (2005) *People at war*; Geneva 10 – Switzerland
- Iruonagbe, T.C. and George, G.T. (2007) Conflicts and Inter-Group Relations in Nigeria: What Way Forward *Biudiscourse; Journal of Arts and Education*; 2 (2) December.
- Isa, M. K. (2001) The State and Institutional Responses to Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria: The case of Jukun/Chamba and Kuteb Communal Conflicts of Takum Local Government Areas Taraba State, A Paper Presented at UNESCO/ENA.
- Jelili, M.O & Olanrewaju, S.O (2016) Realities of IDPs Camps in Nigeria; *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: H Interdisciplinary*; USA; Global Journals Inc.
- Jumare, I. M. & Surma, S. (2015) Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Kaduna State, Northern Nigeria; Kuna, M. J. & Ibrahim, J (Eds.) *Rural Banditry and conflict in Northern Nigeria*; Abuja; Centre for Democratic and Development.
- Kwaja, C. (2017) Attacks on Farmers has costs 6500 lives, \$13bn in 5 years; *Viewpoint Nigeria*; 25 September.
- Maier, K. (2000). This house has fallen; Nigeria in Nigeria; Lagos; Spectrum Books Limited
- Mamah, E.; Ndujihe, C.; Nkwopara, C. & Ozor, C. (2016) Bloodbath in Enugu as Fulani herdsmen kill 40; *Vanguard*; April 26.
- Mark, R. W. & Synder, R. C. (1971). The analysis of social conflict: Towards an overview and synthesis; Smith; C. G (ed), *Conflict resolution: Contribution of the behavioural sciences*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame.
- Mercy Group (2015) The Economic Costs of Conflict and the Benefits of Peace: Effects of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt on State, Sector, and National Economies; UK Aid.
- Mohammad, R. A. (2018) Tabanni, other Sokoto Communities Reeling from Deadly Banditry; Daily Trust; Saturday, July 28
- Moore, C. A. (1994) Greenest city in the world! *International Wildlife*, 24, Pp. 38-43
- Murphy, R. C. (1992) Responsible coastal management for the State of Nayarit, Mexico. *Calypso Log*, 4, 6 Chesapeake, VA: The Cousteau Society, Inc
- Musa, S. D.; Shabu, T. & Igbawua, M. I. (2014) Resource use Conflict

- between Farmers and Fulani Herdsmen in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria; *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)* December; XX(X&X):XX–XX.
- Ndahi, M (2015) The number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria is growing, quickly.
- Ngigi G. N (2015) Traumatic Experiences of Children and Resettlement Set up Among Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya, *Research Journal of Sociology*, 3 (8) September.
- Obasi, T (2018) Plateau killings: IDPs plead with NECO to re-conduct SSCE, BECE; *Africanparrot*; July 19.
- Ogundamisi K (2015) Exploitation of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria; *Opinion Nigeria*; July 12.
- Olaniyi, M. (2017) Nigeria loses N2.3 trillion annually to farmer-pastoralist conflict-Research; *Daily Trust*; April, 14.
- Oluyemi-Kusa, D. (2010) *The African refugee phenomenon*; Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited
- Onuoha, F.C. (nd) Climate change, population surge and resource overuse in the Lake Chad area Implications for human security in the north-east zone of Nigeria
- Owolabi, F (2018) No food, no school-how herdsmen shattered the lives of Benue children, *The Cable*, February 2
- Ozor, C. (2016) Fulani herdsmen invade Enugu community kill two, 19 missing- Nsukka *Vanguard*; February 14.
- Percival, V. & Homer-Dixon, T. F. (1998) Environmental scarcity and violent conflict: The case of South Africa; *Journal of Peace Research* 35 (3).
- Rifkin, J. (1994) *The End of Work*. New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons.
- Ruttan, V. W. (1991) Sustainable growth in agricultural production: poverty, policy and science. Unpublished paper prepared for International Food Policy Research Institute Seminar on Agricultural Sustainability, Growth, and Poverty Alleviation, Feldafing, Germany, Sept. 23-27
- Suhrke, A. (1996) Environmental change, migration and conflict: A lethal feedback dynamic? Crocker, C.; Hampson, F. & Aall P. (eds.) *Managing global chaos II*; Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Suleiman, M. (1999), *Ecology, Politics and Violent Conflict*, Zed Books, London (A Development and Peace Foundation Book in Cooperation with Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA).
- Tsa, G. (2014) Benue: Blood, more Blood, *the Sun Newspaper*, March 8, 2014
- Ubanna, S. and Wada, T. N. (2013) Cover story Herdsmen: Nigeria Killing Squad 2006-2013 *The Source Magazine*, December 10th.

- Umeagbalasi, E. (2016) 4000 unarmed Nigerians murdered in 10 months by state, non-state agents; The leadership of International Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law (Intersociety): Monday, 14 March.
- UNICEF (1996) State of the World's Children; Adolescence: an Age of Opportunity; <http://www.unicef.org/sowc1996>
- United Nations (2008) The Impact of Armed Conflict on Child Development
- Utsaha, A.P.B; Ugbah, S. D and Ugbah, S. E (2007) The Dynamics of Conflict Management in West Africa: The Case of Violent Conflict among the Tiv People of the Middle Belt of Nigeria. A Paper Presented at the Allied Academic Conference in Carlifonia USA, Jecksonville