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FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN TIVLAND OF BENUE STATE, 2009-2025

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ABSTRACT

Since 2009, Tivland of Benue State has been besieged and beleaguered by violent farmer-herder conflict. This catastrophe has not only bedeviled Tivland but also jeopardized and paralysed sustainable socio-economic development in the area and beyond. The general objective of is to identify the nature and causes of farmer-herder conflict from 2009 to 2025, with a view to establishing its consequences on the socio-economic development of Tivland. The study is qualitative in nature. The general study population covers the whole of Tivland with a population of 2,945,994 in 2006 (NPC, 2006; NBS, 2006). The main population is drawn from four major LGAs: Guma, Gwer-West, Logo, and Makurdi. Purposive sampling was used to select and interviewed 80 respondents across the four local LGAs. A survey research design was employed and data generated from both primary and secondary sources. Using the Ecoviolence Theory, the study argues that contestation for land-based resources of pasture and water by the nomadic Fulani pastoralists for their herds which often lead to destruction of agricultural land and crops as well as water sources belonging to the sedentary Tiv farmers are responsible for the incessant violent conflicts between these two ethnic groups. Natural factors of environmental limitations such as desertification, population explosion, and climate change, as well as artificial factors including proliferation of small arms and light weapons, inadequate government attention to agricultural issues, ethnic rivalry and mutual suspicion, the rise of Islamisation, extortion of money from the Fulani herders by some traditional rulers, cattle rustling by criminal elements among the Tiv and Fulani ethnic groups, have combined to exacerbate the conflicts. In spite of the various interventions by government, non-governmental organisations and individuals to manage/resolve the conflicts, they became vicious, widespread and bloody. These clashes have not only undermined peace and security but also, seriously damaged agricultural practices (the mainstream of the Benue State economy) and its associated activities. The consequence of this is in the slowdown of socio-economic development faced by the Benue State in general and Tivland in particular, there by aggravating poverty. The creation of a stabilised ranch system promises to induce pastoralists to abandon a transhumant life-style in favour of becoming sedentary livestock producers. Ranching is a more promising compromise in the interest of peaceful co-existance in the context of constitutional citizenship. Prioritizing justice, strengthening security measures to curb the influx of illegal arms and ammunition and unauthorised foreigners into the country, routinely scrutinizing the roles of traditional and community leaders in land matters, addressing the environmental driving factors of the conflict, and improving water supply for farmers and herders will also help to make the difference.

Keywords: Farmer-Herder Conflict, Socio-Economic Development, Eco violence, Tivland, Benue State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Violent conflicts, particularly farmer-herder conflicts have, for a very long time, been a common feature of economic relations in Tivland and elsewhere in Africa with dire consequences on socio-economic

development. The violent conflict between Tiv farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Tivland from 2009-2025 is of research interest because of its historic, unique and distinctive nature and character and the time of its occurrence. It is historic because it is the first most deadly violence between the Tiv farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Benue State since its creation on February 13, 1976 (Aliogo, 2009). It is unique because, unlike previous skirmishes, this conflict witnessed the use of highly sophisticated weaponry. Its causes are vehemently disputed by the parties.

Again, the conflict occurred at the time of Boko Haram insurgency, which drew international attention peace, security and good governance in Nigeria. The alleged use of mercenaries from within and outside Nigeria is a manifestation of failure in national security safeguards under successive Nigerian Presidents beginning from Goodluck Jonathan, Muhammadu Buhari, and Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Most worrisome is its rapid escalation from Gwer-West to Guma, Ukum, Logo, Katsina-Ala, Gwer-East, Makurdi, Kwande and Buruku - areas earlier known for peaceful inter-ethnic co-existence. It is characterised by acrimony, animosity and hatred, misgiving and mutual suspicion.

Though farmer-herder conflict is old (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009), bloody clashes became widespread and recurrent since 2009. Before this, the problem was mainly prevalent in the Guinea, Sahel and Sudan zones, where cattle rearing was predominant. Shrinking pasture and water in the dry season in the Sahel compelled nomadic Fulani herders to move southward to coastal zones where the rainy season is longer. According to Tonah (2005), the Sahelian drought of the 1970s and 1980s forced large numbers of Fulani herdsmen to migrate into humid forest zones of Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Cote D'Ivoire and Senegal (De Bruijn & Van Dijk, 2003; Tonah, 2005). This migration created violent conflicts with sedentary farmers.

The Tiv-Fulani conflicts in Tivland are classified as local, endemic and low-intensity conflicts resulting from clashes over pasture and water, desertification, climate change and population growth, but embedded in ethnic, religious and political factors. Dispute over land ownership and utilisation has precipitated attacks, counter-attacks and warfare among ethnic groups and between indigenous agriculturists and Fulani pastoralists, traditionally referred to as Bororoen or Fulbe (Zirra & Garba, 2006; Jibo, 2014). Dispute over land ownership and or utilisation in particular, had precipitated attacks, counter-attacks and even warfare among ethnic groups and their contiguous neighbours or between indigenous agriculturists and Fulani pastoralists or herdsmen or „settlers" traditionally referred to as *Bororoen* or *Fulbe* (Zirra & Garba, 2006; Jibo, 2014).

In contrast to the past, contemporary Fulani herdsmen are openly seen moving with dangerous arms. In the 1980s, as Wegh (2016, p.5) recalls, herdsmen had only water-cans, small knives and a shepherd rod, and were nicknamed 'agbide gbough' for flogging cows. Today they move with arms and ferment troubles. In its November 2015 report, the Institute for Economics and Peace labelled Fulani herdsmen as the fourth deadliest terror organisation in the world after Boko Haram, ISIS and Al-Shabab (Bola and Tar, 2021).

Socio-economic development is achievable only in an atmosphere of sustainable peace and security. Conflict is therefore negatively related to development. Keebine (2005) argues conflict and socio-economic development are negatively correlated. Fearon & Laitin (2003) observed per capita income and conflict are significantly and negatively correlated.

The study asks: What is the connection between farmer-herder conflict and socio-economic development in Tivland? Are ethnic divisions potential triggers? Does this rule out economic motives? The study argues conflict is principally caused by unhealthy competition over scarce economic resources, but in developing countries including Nigeria, most conflicts are driven by ethnic

motives and organised along ethnic lines.

Problem Statement/Justification

Tivland, once known for peaceful inter-ethnic relations, has become notorious for violent intra and inter-group conflicts since 2009. Tiv farmers and Fulani herders previously lived relatively peacefully (Jibo, 2014). Fulani came with light weaponry in dry season, settled, and returned home in rainy season. Disputes were settled amicably by traditional rulers. The carrying of light weapons such as sword, spear, stick, small knives by the Fulani herders were for self-defence against wild animals.

Since 2000, Fulani herdsmen settling in Tivland are openly seen with AK47, pump action, assault guns, used in violent conflicts. Tivland became a theatre of armed clashes. Clashes in 1999 in Konshisha and 2004 in Guma became constant. They resurfaced in May 2009 in Guma and metamorphosed into quasi-terrorist attacks spreading to Ukum, Logo, Katsina-Ala, Gwer-East, Gwer-West, Makurdi, Kwande, Tarka and Buruku. They are associated with brutal killings, intimidation, arson, fear and pain.

Unlike already existing Fulani in Nigeria, activities of displaced migratory Fulanis from war zones of Mali, Libya, Egypt and Chad were, at best, off farmers/herders' rules of engagement, at worst totally ignorant (Mamkaa, 2018). Alleged use of mercenaries from Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Burkina-Faso and Northern Mali introduces an external dimension.

The research seeks to identify causes, establish impact on socio-economic development, and establish factors to mitigate dynamics over access to land-based resources.

Objectives of the Study

General objective: To identify the causes of conflict between Tiv farmers and Fulani herdsmen with a view to establishing its consequences on socio-economic development of Tivland.

Specific Objectives:

1. Identify the parties, their roles and interests in the conflict.
2. Establish the causes of violent conflicts between Tiv farmers and Fulani herdsmen from 2009- 2025.
3. Examine interventions to resolve the farmer-herder conflict in Tivland and beyond.
4. Identify the socio-economic consequences of the conflict on Tiv and Fulani.
5. Recommend possible policy solutions to the conflict.

Research Questions of the Study

i. Who are the parties in the conflict and what role did they play in it?
ii. What are the causes of the conflict between Tiv farmers and Fulani herdsmen?
iii. What interventions have been made to resolve the conflict?
iv. What are the socio-economic consequences of the conflict?
v. What policy solutions can resolve the conflict?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section reviews scholarly literature on farmer-herder conflict and socio-economic development, organised into conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and empirical studies.

Conceptual Framework

The basic requirement for debating any social phenomenon is to first and foremost understand the actual thing being talked about" (Chafe, 1994). The need, therefore, arise to understand the following key concepts under study:

Conceptualising Farmer-Herder Conflict: An Economic or an Ethnic Problem?

Some scholars maintain farmer-herder conflict is a resource conflict, not inter-ethnic clash (Shettima & Tar, 2008). Others insist it is an ethnic problem (Kum, 1983; Richards, 2005; Tonah, 2006; Olaniyan, 2015). Others argue clashes in North Central Nigeria, though rooted in land-based resources, have

been highly organised along ethno-religious lines (Alubo, 2008; Jibo, 2014; Genyi, 2014). Agyemang (2017, p.14) notes: Contrary to the submissions of Tonah (2005) that "farmers-Fulani herdsmen conflicts in Ghana have elements of ethnicity; herder-farmer conflict in Agogo also in Ghana is entirely an environmental resource conflict."

Those who subscribe to shrinking resources argue herders and farmers make livelihoods within same geographical, political and socio-cultural conditions characterised by resource scarcity. Haritz (2010, p.138) counters:

If patterns of herder-farmer conflict could be entirely explained by structural factors, we would expect all conflicts in the same stressful context to display not only similar causes, but also similar levels of engagement and violence and similar outcomes.

Kum (1983) argues Wum Conflict in Aghem, Cameroon transformed from economic to ethnic because of continuous farm destruction, delay in settlement, and farmers losing cases and being uncompensated. Olaniyan (2015) re-affirmed Tonah (2006) that farmer-herder conflicts involve elements of ethnicity. Richards (2005, p.14) postulates: "Burkina-Faso may well be at the brink of ethnic violence along the occupational boundary of farming and herding." Examples include 1989 Senegal-Mauritania border clash that transformed into ethnic conflict with multiple deaths, and January 2007 bloody clash in Burkina-Faso.

The study therefore conceptualises farmer-herder conflict as complex, multi-dimensional and hydra-headed, principally driven by environmental resources but not immune to ethnic and religious differences. Though fundamentally caused by desertification, climate change, shrinking pasture and water and degradation, it has ethnic, political and religious undercurrents (Mamkaa, 2018). Ethnic divisions are broadly defined to include racial, linguistic and religious differences. Ray & Esteban (2017) conclude conflicts in post-colonial Africa, although not immune to class, have been organised along ethnic divides.

Farmer-Herder Conflict in Tivland, Benue State: A Multi-Facet Conflict

Farmers and herders have long coexisted in symbiotic relationships. According to Abomtse (2017, p.1): The war raging between ethnic groups, most especially the Fulani/Tiv and Agatu in Benue, Fulani/Tiv in Nasarawa and Taraba States, Fulani/Berom in Plateau State... is a multi-facet war, presumably sparked off, and fuelled by environmental, cultural, political and poisonous greed for land acquisition wearing the toga of terrorism. This agrees with Moritz (2010, p.1) that "in some cases, herder-farmer conflict articulated with other ethnic, political and religious conflicts." Fulani of Nigeria are probably the only ethnic group in Africa with no distinctive territory; found in every country in Sudan zone from Senegal to Upper Nile (Ikime, 2004; Hagher, 2013). During the conflict, herdsmen employed sentiment and identity by organising kith and kin from Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Mali and Senegal to unleash terror on farmers accused of stealing and killing cattle (Abomtse, 2013).

The Concept of Socio-economic Development

Socio-economic development consists of social development and economic development. Socio-economics is the social science that studies how economic activity affects social process (Becker, 1974; Eatwell, Milgate and Newman, 1989). It is multidisciplinary, using Sociology, Economics, History, and Psychology. NEPAD (2003) argues development should teach people to fish rather than give them fish. It connotes continuous improvement in well-being and standard of living, meeting basic needs: quality education, affordable healthcare, decent housing, safe drinking water, clean environment, sanitation. Key objectives of socio-economic development as enunciated by NEPAD (2003):

- Promote self-reliance and build capacity through skill acquisition, loans
- Encourage broad-based participation

- Strengthen development-driven policies
  - Ensure access to education, food, shelter, clothing, protection, sanitation, finance, markets, ICT, arable land especially for rural poor
- Provide gender equality
  - Increase range of social and economic choices, liberating people from bondage, dependence and ignorance

Todaro and Smith (2011, p.20) identify three core values: sustenance - ability to meet basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, safety, health); self-esteem - feeling of worthiness when systems promote respect, dignity, self-determination; and freedom from servility - ability to freely choose alternatives, emancipation from alienating material conditions. Socio-economic development is therefore process of improved material conditions, concerted sustained action promoting social well-being, standard of living and economic wealth. It aims at increasing availability of basic life-sustaining goods and services. It is measured by GDP, life expectancy, literacy, employment, plus dignity, freedom of association, personal safety, and participation in civil society.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Homer-Dixon's Eco-violence Theory (Homer-Dixon, 1999), which links environmental resource scarcity to violent conflicts. Supported by Collier and Hoeffler (1998), Homer-Dixon and Blitt (1998), Gleditsch (2001), de Soysa (2002), Bakut (2014), Genyi (2014). The Eco-violence Theory has two major strands:

- Shrinking Resource Pie: resource scarcity fuels conflict by aggravating strained social relations
- Honey Pot: abundance, not scarcity, spawns' conflict.

This study adopts Shrinking Resource Pie. Main arguments:

- Environmental scarcity (cropland, water, forest, and fish) can trigger conflicts. Scarcity or shrinking of these resources as a result of mis-use, over-use, or degradation under certain circumstances will trigger off conflicts.
- Scarcity types: supply-induced, demand-induced, structural (Onuoha, 2010)
- Population growth, climate change, resource degradation contributes to conflicts

For this study, the relevance of the Eco-violence theoretical postulations is that, Nigeria is agrarian, heterogeneous. Middle Belt (Jibo, 2005) is home to ethnic minorities considered indigenous, while Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri are considered migrant settlers. Tivland is suited for sedentary agriculture - yam, cassava, groundnut, potato, rice, guinea-corn, maize, beniseed, millet, soyabeans. Rainy season April-October is essential.

Climate change, desertification, deforestation forced nomadic Fulani from Mali, Niger, Chad, Cameroon to migrate to Nigeria. In Lake Chad area, population growth and environmental trends shrank land, crops, pastures, water, forcing herders to move with wet and dry seasons (Genyi, 2014, p.1). Tivland "attracts the nomads due to available water and foliage on the bank of Rivers Benue and Niger" (Genyi, 2014, p.1), leading to clashes.

"Decreases in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and unequal resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups of cropland, water, forests, and fish..." (Homer-Dixon, 1999, p.30).

Critique: The study supports Camilleri & Falk's (1992) critique that Eco-violence theory is too particularistic, focusing mainly on developing countries.

Empirical Studies

Literature is replete with studies that have been conducted on the impact of Farmer- Herder Conflict on socio-economic development in Nigeria. Some of these related studies are empirically reviewed in this section.

Adelakun, Adurogbangba, and Akinbile (2015) - Socioeconomic Effects of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict on Agricultural Extension Service Delivery in Oyo State,

Nigeria

This study generated its data from primary and secondary sources. Multi-stage sampling, 60 crop farmers and 60 herders, interview schedules, descriptive and inferential statistics were adopted. Findings: about 71% of farmers lost farm products and suffered huge economic losses. Pastoralists used emotion-oriented coping strategies such as charms and vengeance; farmers used problem-oriented strategies. It was also discovered that crop farmers were the worst hit. The study recommended special security task force and three-tier herders-crop farmers‟ conflict management committee.

Okoro, Peter John (2018) - Herdsmen/Farmers Conflict and Socio-economic Development in Nigeria

This research, which is qualitative in nature, examined the prevalence of herdsmen/farmers conflicts and its effects on socio-economic development in Nigeria. The study has adopted qualitative approach to data analysis which relied on secondary sources. It anchored on frustration-aggression theory and dialectical materialism. Findings: loss of lives, displacement, distrust, destruction of properties, food insecurity, unemployment. Recommended state governments designate grazing fields and make herdsmen pay tax to state.

Ekuerhare, Sylvia Efe (2024) - Effects of Farmer's-Herder's Conflict on the Nigerian Economy

This study explored the impact of the conflict between farmers and herders on the Nigerian economy. Secondary data, seven publications, content and thematic analysis was employed. Findings: detrimental impact due to loss of lives and properties, decline in farm income and productivity, poverty and food shortage-related inflation, risk of national and food insecurity. Recommended federal and state governments consult peace and conflict resolution experts.

Nnam, B.O.G. et al. (2025) - Violent Herder-Farmer Conflicts and Human Security in Nigeria: A focus on Food Security

Ex post facto design, secondary media sources, content analysis. Findings: threatened human security, particularly food security. Scarcity of land, frustrations, displacement, and destruction of lives, farmlands, crops and cattle were responsible for escalation of the conflict. Recommended regular town hall meetings, modern irrigation, and improved pastures.

Azeez et al. (2025) - Empirical Evaluation of Farmer-Herders' Conflict in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State of Nigeria

The study used multistage sampling, 120 arable crop farmers, structured questionnaires. Findings: poor communication 84.4% ranked first cause, crop destruction 67.5% second, cattle theft 53.1% third. The study also revealed that these conflicts resulted in detrimental effects such as loss of lives and destruction of property. Management strategies: negotiation 83.1%, mediation 3.2%, sanctioning 3.3%. Despite these, conflicts persist.

John, Emmanuel Onyekachi and Eluwa, Friday Ndubuisi (2025) - Socio-economic Consequences of Farmers and Herders Conflict in Benue State

This study employed mixed methods, questionnaires, interviews, FGDs. Findings: loss of livelihoods 80%, displacement 75%, and decreased agricultural productivity 70%. Causes: competition for land, grazing routes, cattle rustling, ethnic/cultural differences, climate change, environmental degradation. The study recommended comprehensive peace-building, government support, agricultural support, security measures.

Empirical Gaps

None of reviewed studies examined government impunity and bad governance led by poor leadership which breeds deprivation, alienation, frustration and aggression, particularly youths in forefront of causing conflicts. Studies on frustration-aggression

dwelled on frustration among conflicting parties due to farm destruction and rustling, not frustration from governing elite. Some failed to use suitable theoretical framework. None suggested ranching as promising compromise as in countries with large cattle herds.

This study seeks to fill gaps by examining government impunity and bad governance, applying suitable theory, and suggesting lasting solution - ranching.

Research Methodology

This study adopted descriptive researcg design, specifically, survey design. The design was chosen to identify, examine, and explain the frequency and changing patterns of farmer-herder conflicts in Tivland and across Benue State.

The study was conducted in Tivland, Benue State, Nigeria. Tivland comprises the 14 Local Government Areas predominantly inhabited by the Tiv people, namely: Buruku, Gboko, Guma, Gwer East, Gwer West, Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Tarka, Ukum, Ushongo, and Vandeikya. Benue State has a population of 4,291,244 in 2006 (NPC, 2006), made up of Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo, Abakpa, Jukun, Ufia, Nyifon, Hausa-Fulani. Tiv occupy 14 of 23 LGAs, projected population 3,271,622 in 2006 (Tyubee, 2006) and 6.5 million in 2017 (Damilola, 2017). Only four LGAs were purposively selected namely: Guma, Gwer-West, Logo, and Makurdi, an area selected because of the frequency and intensity of farmer-herder conflicts arising from competition over land and water resources between farming and herding communities. Cumulatively, the four local government areas have a total number of 42 council wards with an estimated population of 783,445 as at 2006. Fulani exact population cannot be ascertained due to transhumance. Study ensured 20 Fulani herdsmen who carried out pastoral activities for more than five years and/or involved/affected were among the interviewees.

Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were obtained through personal interviews with eighty (80) interwiewees, purposively selected for their direct knowledge of the conflict. The interviewees comprised farmers, herders, traditional rulers, security personnel, and other relevant stakeholders. Votes and proceedings of the Benue State House of Assembly and the National Assembly were also examined to ensure legislative responses and reactions to the conflict. Secondary data were drawn from textbooks, journals articles, newspapers, and government reports.

Data were analysed qualitatively using analytical and critical thinking methods. This approached enabled the study to link theory with empirical evidence, align findings with the research objectives and questions, and provide an in-depth understanding of the causes, dynamics, and consequences/implications of the conflict.

Ethical Considerations

Given the imperativeness of ethical considerations in conducting research involving human beings, this study has adhered strictly to ethical guidelines: Informed consent obtained, purpose explained, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, respect for rights and dignity.

Farmer-Herder Conflict: Nature, Causes and Consequences for Socio-Economic Development in Tivland

The hallmark of the discussion in this part of the work centred on the nature, remote and immediate causes, characteristics, and effects of the violent conflict between Tiv farmers and Fulani herders on the socio-economic development in Tivland and beyond.

Nature of the Conflict

The farmer-herder conflict in Tivland is land-based resource conflict with ethnic as well as jihadist undercurrents. It is very complex, dynamic, vicious, involving many actors with different interests. The following parties have been identified:

The Farmers: They are the principal actors in the conflict. They are made up of

two groups namely: Tiv indigenes and settlers (Idoma, Igede, Igbo, Yoruba traders/civil servants who own farmlands by lease/purchase). Both groups are united as farmers/landowners to resist destruction of farm crops in the area under study. They produce yam, cassava, maize, beans, tomatoes, water-yam, groundnut, and soyabeans. The farmers alue land and crops, ready to sacrifice lives protecting them. Organisations include All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), Youth Organisations, Market Women Associations, Motorcycle Hirers Associations, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) - Ijir Igbayima, interview, 16/7/2026, Naka.

The Fulani Herdsmen: They are also one of the main parties in the conflict. There are two types of herdsmen: Settlers, permanently staying in bush in Tivland, allowed by chiefs to graze on the land, many of them speak Tiv. The category of Fulani is the Foreign nomadic: from Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Ghana, Tuaregs from Mali, Fulbe from Burkina-Faso, Wolof from Senegal, tagged "foreign herdsmen" (Abomtse, 2013, p.6). They normally migrate in dry season, hardly speak local dialect, and do not understand rules of engagement.

The life of a Fulani herdsman revolves around cattle. He starts rearing at 5-6 years, wakes 5:30am, works sunrise to sunset, no holidays, no mosque/church (Kaave, 2014; Ayande, 2016). Study maintains traditional Fulani herdsman is jihadist per excellence because "the Fulani were the first group of people in West Africa to be converted to Islam through jihads or holy wars" (Anter, 2013, p.2). Alleged to carry AK47 (Goddy I. Ikerave, interview, 02/7/2026, Makurdi). Believe Tivland/Benue Valley is land flowing with milk and honey promised by Allah.

The cattle Owners: They are influential town/bush Fulanis or other people who own cattle in Tivland or beyond. They are one of the principal actors/parties in the conflict who have employed herdsmen. They include former/serving Governors, Chiefs and Emirs, retired/serving senior military/police officers, ministers, commissioners, legislators, LG chairmen, Permanent Secretaries, top civil servants - Msuega Yaikyo, interview, 03/7/2026, Makurdi. Operate under Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), supported by Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore (MAKH) and Gan Allah Fulani Development Association (GAFDAN). Accused of supplying AK47, pump actions, bullets and sponsoring attacks (Kaave, 2014; Ikerave, interview, 02/7/2026; Akinsuyi et al., 2018).

The Traditional Rulers: They are the graded chiefs in Tivland. They include Tax- collectors (*Ator-akpande*), Kindred heads (*Mbatarev*), District heads (*Utyo Mbayorov*), Uter, and the Tiv paramount ruler (*Tor Tiv*). Some kindred/district heads enter agreements, lease lands to Fulani for fixed period. Farmers allege some chiefs support Fulani, have cattle tended for them, and receive bribes - Nyiga Gogo & Terseer Tyondon, interview, 02/7/2026, Merkyer.

The Security Personnel: They are security and law enforcement agents whose primary responsibility is to maintain peace, law and order in all parts of Nigeria. They include the Police, army, navy, air force, civil defence; they have played roles in escalation/de-escalation of the conflict. Interviewees confirm absence of military/paramilitary during 16/3/2016 attack in Logo, Guma, and Gwer-West until 2 days after for Logo/Gwer-West and 1 day after for Guma. A holistic analysis of the responses of all the research interviewees shows that security forces did not take proactive actions expected of them by the public to halt the farmer-herder conflicts in Tivland- no early warning, no rapid response, no apprehension/prosecution, no redress. Accused of taking sides with herdsmen (Andrew Ayande, interview, 03/7/2026, Makurdi) - refuted by Fulani.

Criminals/Cattle Rustlers: They are abhorrent and undesirable elements of both Tiv and Fulani who engage in cattle theft. Fulani criminals steal masters' cows, sell personally or hand to Tiv counterparts. The

Tiv criminal gangs - 'militants' or armed robbers - engage in cattle rustling (Mamkaa, 2018). Interviewers have accused both gangsters of conspiracy, rustling, murder, arson, robbery, illegal possession of firearms.

Causes of the Conflict

From available literature, personal interviews and participatory obervation, the farmer- herder conflict in Tivland is caused by remote and immediate/contemporary factors as highlighted below. Whereas, remote causes stretch back centuries/decades; contemporary causes show deterioration/triggers.

Mutual Suspicion and Fear of Domination

Suspicion/fear of domination, exploitation, and marginalisation trigger conflicts. According to IPCR (2003, p.18), "repeated conflicts and unchecked tensions have resulted in the accumulation of resentment between groups. This in turn has produced folklore of conflict and the stereo-typing of individual groups by their opponents." Fulani see Tiv as war mongers, expansionist; Tiv see Fulani as easily provoked, arrogant, notorious jihadists, jealous of land resources. Jukun see Tiv as arrogantly proud, expansionist; Tiv see Jukun as warlords, ingrates, jealous of political influence (Avav & Myegba, 1992; Jibo, 1993; Hagher, 2002).

The 'Indigene/Settler' Phenomenon

Indigeneship is explosive in Nigeria (Jibo, 2005; Alubo, 2008). In Nasarawa South, recognition of Tiv as emigrants by Alago, Kanuri, Hausa/Fulani caused conflicts. In Plateau, indigene/settler produced war between Hausa-Fulani and Taroh in Langtang North/South (Jibo, 2005, p.35).

In Tivland, Tiv insist Fulani are settlers, cannot enjoy full rights, especially free land ownership. All land is inherited and owned collectively by Tiv, by clans, kindreds, families. Rivers, streams, ponds are community-owned. No settler can claim land without purchase and transfer. According to Andrew Ayande (interview, 03/7/2026, Makurdi), "Even indigenes have limited movements, they cannot trespass on someone's land let alone of settlers. The Fulani can't enter our farmlands without our permission." Saleh Bayeri (MACBAN) argued Fulani are constitutionally empowered to move and graze anywhere. Ango Abdullahi (Gondyi, 2016, p.7) maintained:

I see what is happening today as a new dimension to political and ethnic cleansing... The Herdsman is a Nigerian, his rights must be exercised as a Nigerian, he has free movement... he cannot be denied access to any part of the country."

This study argues these statements undermine laws prohibiting free movement of animals and trespass, and can instigate conflict. They suggest support by highly placed personalities pushing hidden agenda of occupation/domination. Ukase (2014, p.11): dimension with sophisticated weapons is pointer that agenda with definite mission was being advanced.

Saror (2014, p.11) maintains that:

The problem we are having is well beyond that of the Tivs killing Fulani cows and on the other hand, the Fulanis visiting mayhem on the Tivs in retaliation. How much then is the cost of a cow compared to the price of an AK-47? This problem... has to do with the activities of a sinister group out to annihilate the Tiv people with the sole aim of grabbing land...

Relatedly, Jibo (2014, p.189) postulaes:

As herdsmen, the Fulani have had clashes with peasant farmers... In these clashes, the primary trigger of conflict is when their cattle eat the crops of the peasant farmer and they are challenged, or when their cattle are attacked or stolen. In several of such situations, the Fulani herdsmen become unreasonable and, rather than seek a negotiated settlement... they attack and wound the peasant, or kill him. Land dispute is leading cause of violent conflicts in Tivland (Jibo, 2005, p.37). Best (2006, p.48): "land ownership is also a statement about which group was the first to arrive and permanently settle in a place, and therefore, an 'indigene' or a 'native' and who arrived

later and is as such a 'settler.'"

Population Dynamics

The Tiv are one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria whose population is fast growing. With an estimated population of 800,000 in the 1946 Census, the number has risen to 3,271, 622 in 2006, and over 4 million as reviewed in 2012 (NPC, 2006). Jibo (2014, p.197) asserts that Tiv population has increased steadily since the 1946 census... Today, the Tiv in Benue State (not to mention those in Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau and Cross Rivers States, and elsewhere in the world) occupy fourteen local government areas out of the twenty-three which make up Benue State. Similarly, the Fulani, who live in 21 countries in Africa, constitute about 9% of Nigeria's population (Oligbinde, 2017), projected about 7 million with 2.8% growth (Iro, 1994; Anter, 2011). According to Genyi (2014), given population growth, areas grazed by the Fulani have been taken over by farmers, and the remains of what constitute grazing routes do not permit strayed movements of cattle, which always results in the destruction of crops and farmlands. Gabriel Suswam (interview, Mamkaa, 2018) argues:

Explosion in terms of Nigeria population is one of the major factors responsible for incessant clashes between Tiv farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Benue State. As early as 1960s and 1970s, there were areas designated as grazing areas and the country's population was approximately 56 million… In 2015, officially, Nigeria has a population of 160 million, and unofficially, over 200 million. Against this growing population, the areas designated as grazing areas and routes were taken over by the owners and became farmlands. Attempts by the Fulani herders to graze on those areas that they used to graze un-encumbered were vehemently resisted by the people who own these areas, a development which sparked off the recent Tiv farmers-Fulani herdsmen crisis (Mamkaa, 2018). The National Population Commission (NCP), NPC put Nigeria's population at 198 million (Oyewamide & Oguntuase, 2018), predicted third most populated by 2050 (WPPR, 2018). Tiv dispersed settlement to guarantee cultivable land reduced grazing space. Fulani vehement resistance to modernisation produced armed conflicts over pasture and water.

Ecological/Environmental Challenges

Desert encroachment, deforestation, water shortage, population growth induce movement, triggering conflicts (Iro, 1994; Homer-Dixon, 1999; Genyi, 2014). Lake Chad dried up over 50% in last 20 years (Blench, 2004). Rivers in North-East/North-West lost water due to drought. Scarcity in North during dry season and movement southwards reinforced ecological scarcity and unhealthy competition. Construction of roads, irrigation dams reduced grazing space.

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs)

By 2011, 640 million small arms worldwide; 100 million in Africa, 30 million in Sub- Saharan Africa, 8 million in West Africa, 59% in civilian hands (Oji and Okeke, 2014; Nte, 2011). Nigeria accounts for 70% of illicit SALWs in West Africa (Igwe, 2016). Arab Spring, Libyan upheavals after death of Muammar al-Gaddafi in 2012 exacerbated proliferation. Fighters and sophisticated arms found way into Nigeria, employed in insurgencies. SALWs easy to conceal, cheap, lethal (UNDP, 2008). Suswam;s interview (Mamkaa, 2018), identified displaced Fulanis from North African crises who did not respect rules of engagement - meet elders, demand place, graze without destroying crops.

Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III (Olokor and Olugbemi, 2016, p.10) postulates: All those so-called Fulani herdsmen, moving with guns, causing violence, fighting with farmers are not Nigerians. These are foreigners coming to Nigeria to cause a breach of the peace... They are therefore terrorists and should be treated as such... The Nigerian herdsmen are very peace-loving and law abiding... some bad eggs had infiltrated the Nigerian herdsmen.

Goddy Ikerave (interview, 2/7/2016, Makurdi) submits that since 2009, herders launching attacks heavily armed with AK47, General Purpose Machine Guns, Rocket-Propelled Grenades. Suggests attacks systematically planned. HRH Daniel Abomtse, Ter Nagi II (interview, 15/8/2016): The Fulani herders will attack any farmer who attempts to push them out of his/her farmland. These reprisals could occur several hours or days after initial encounters and at odd hours... Attacks are often launched when farmers are on their farms, or when residents are observing a funeral... The attack was a routine professional operation.

There were allegations of chemical weapons in Anyiin and Ayilamo, Logo, March 2014 (Joseph Anawah, in Mamkaa, 2018) and in Gwer-West (Francis Nyibiam, interview, 15/8/2026). Jibo (2014, p.199) submits "it is, therefore, no surprise that the herdsmen had a field day killing the Tiv and Idoma (Agatu) in Benue State since 2010, and especially in 2014. The use of sophisticated weapons by mercenaries left all they attacked at their mercy."

This study argues preponderance of SALWs suggests weak national security architecture due to bad governance. Under Jonathan, security worsened, emergency rule in Adamawa, Borno, Yobe in 2013, Chibok abduction 14 April 2014 (HRW, 2014). Under Buhari, there were more herdsmen clashes and kidnappings than under Jonathan (Ibukun & Olurounbi, 2018), but Boko Haram less disturbing. Buhari conducted Operation Ayem Akpatuma (Operation Cat Race) 15 Feb-31 March 2018 in Benue and North-Central, disarmed militia, arrested some, yet killings continued.

Inadequate Government Attention to Agricultural Issues

The lackadaisical attitudes of government towards modernisation of agriculture and development of its systematically planned programmes and policies is a key accelerator in the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and Tiv farmers in Tivland and Nigeria in general. Simply put, government neglected/modernisation of agriculture is responsible for incessant farmer- herderconflicts. Some argue Fulani neglected/marginalised (IRO, 1994) despite contributions (Abbas, 2011). Study debunks: Hausa-Fulani rose to political dominance since 19th century. Anter (2013, p.2): "Beginning as early as the 17th and 18th centuries, but mainly in the 19th century, Fulas and others took control of various states in West Africa." Efforts like 1965 Grazing Reserve Law were too insignificant, too late, and fruitless (Genyi, 2014).

Rise of Islamisation and Perception of its Dominance

Fulani predominantly Muslim (Genyi, 2014, p.5), attacks on predominantly Christian communities in Benue, Southern Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Taraba, Kogi raise concerns. Use of Muslim settler outposts like Wase, Yelwa-Shendam, Mangu, Nasarawa communities by fighters is religiously suspicious. Perception of Islamising Nigeria/Benue explained counter-attacks by Tiv youths/vigilantes in Makurdi and Guma in April/May 2014. Mwankwo (2016, pp.3 & 5) agrees with this line of argument when he asserts that, "Religious intolerance between herdsmen and their host has the potential of escalating this crisis. Today, many Muslim and Christian leaders interpret their respective actions with suspicion." From the foregoing, it is clear that destruction of farms/water/houses is more proximate explanation, but rise of Islamisation and perception cannot be ruled out.

Trespass on Farmlands by Fulani Cattle

One of the primary causes of the conflicts is the trespassing on farmlands by cattle which involves two things: cramping of the soil making hoe cultivation extremely difficult; and destruction of the crops and farm produce (Genyi, 2014). Crops yam, cassava, maize widely consumed as herbage. Once Fulani forced way to settle, they secure grazing with arms, reduce farming, and take over land. Interviewees Nyiga Gogo (2/7/2016, Merkyen), Terseer Tyondon

(2/7/2026, Uvir), Emmanuel Nyambo (2/7/2026, Uvir) lamented loss of farms. Farmers fled to camps at Daudu, St. Mary's Church North Bank, and Community Secondary School Makurdi.

Damage of Water Sources

Rural inhabitants rely on streams, rivers, ponds. Cattle contaminate through consumption and excretion. Nyitamen Nyam Doo (29/7/2026, Anyiin): herdsmen intentionally allow cattle to contaminate drinkable water from wells, and when farmer challenges, they kill him, family, and community. Cause of 2014 mayhem at Tse-Tor Kucha, Mbagber, Logo. Doowuese Shimaga (16/7/2026): "Ijor i wan-a Agaigbe (a well named after Miss Agaigbe) is undrinkable due to cattle excreta."

Cattle Rustling by Fulani/Tiv Criminal Elements

When cattle attacked/rustled, herdsmen become uncontrollable, attack innocent farmers rather than seek legal recovery. Suswam (interview, Maitama, Abuja, in Mamkaa, 2018):

...In the on-going Tiv-Fulani conflict, criminal elements of both sides conspired together to attract benefits to themselves. Criminal elements among Fulanis will go and rustle cows and give an impression that it was the Tiv who were rustling those cows... Similarly, criminals among Tiv were also involved in the rustling and selling of cattle to enable them buy drugs and arms..."

Madi Shettima (interview, 22/7/2026, Makurdi) corroborated Suswam"s arguments that criminal elements of both ethnic groups were involved in cattle rustling for personal aggrandizements:

Guma April 2013 and Agatu May 2013 attacks resulted from rustling by criminals of both parties. In Guma, criminal Fulanis rustled over 260 cows, conspired with Tiv counterparts to shift some to Gombe and south through Nasarawa. Government blamed for not responding on time and not publicising real rustlers.

Interestingly, Sultan of Sokoto (Hagher, 2012, p.11): Fulani attached to cattle, can kill to defend cattle, easily provoked, courageous fighters, do not easily forgive adversaries.

The Negative Roles of the Nigerian Army and Local Vigilante Groups

This crisis in part persists because of illicit operations by unscrupulous soldiers and vigilantes, especially in Guma (Genyi, 2014; Anza Gida, interview, 6/8/2026). Mnyam Matthew (interview, 3/8/2026, Makurdi) alleged Fulani liaised with soldiers of 72 Battalion to unleash terror. Azungwe Agbom (interview, 5/8/2016, North-Bank) accused soldiers of conspiring to raid Mbagwen, Guma, 21 April 2011, death of 23 farmers, razing 63 villages. Anza Gida: soldiers collected five Dane guns from Tiv farmers while allowing Fulanis AK47. Unenjime Amula (6/8/2026): soldiers in uniform stood nearby watching while Fulani burned houses at Tse-Iyol. Kwaghgba Alyebo (8/8/2026): soldiers asked him to produce heavy weapons while fleeing raid. Similar role recorded at Vaase, Ukum, 7 July 2016.

Extortion of Money from the Fulani Herders by Traditional Rulers

Chiefs collect money for permission to settle/graze. Herdsmen interpret as payment for right to pasture regardless of crops, defend it when accused. One kindred head, Uleke Bee (1/8/2026), described as fundamental cause. In 2014, Fulani counter-attack at Agasha in response to killings of five herdsmen was based on rulers receiving money for right to graze which for Fulani tantamount to land ownership (Genyi, 2014).

Implications For Socio-Economic Development

The farmer-herder conflicts have numerous implications for socio-economic development in Tivland and beyond as highlighted below.

Disruption of Peace and Stability

From 2009 to first quarter 2015, people in Guma, Gwer-West, Logo, Makurdi, Ukum, Katsina- Ala, Agatu and more recently, Tarka and Buruku LGAs became unstable, fled

helter-skelter, productivity affected, fear/tension, farmers hardly went to farms, traders to markets. Uleke Bee (interview, 1/8/2026, Daudu): before 2010 harvested averagely 3000 tubers of yam annually, in last five years (2012-2016) harvested only 530 tubers due to fear of attack.

Loss of lives and Property

It is difficult to estimate the actual loss. Between 2010 and 15 June 2015, 984 Tiv peasants killed (Jime, 2026). Over 45 orchestrated attacks from 1999 lasting nearly 17 years claimed over 1012 deaths, 1004 civilians including women/children, 8 security personnel, unspecified injured and IDPs. Houses, hospitals, drugs, schools, churches burnt. Mbagwen 21 April 2011 attack destroyed property.

Fulani interviewees (Jumai Yahaya, Hadiza Hassan & Asebe Yahaya, 22/7/2026, Abinsi) lamented loss of over 360 cows to Tiv militia along Abinsi-Gbajimba road. Garus Gololo (23/7/2026, North-Bank): Fulani lost over 37 people, 8,472 cows, 104 sheep from 2009-2016. Tyopine Ayaga (16/7/2026, Agagbe): lost 13 thatch houses, 4 zinc houses, 6 motorcycles, 10,650 yam tubers, cassava farm over six hectares, 47 bags dry cassava, 13 bags maize, 7 goats, farm implements, certificates burnt.

This study established that Tiv lost more lives/property than Fulani because latter often moved to safety before launching attacks.

Economic Decline

Markets, banks, financial institutions, motor parks closed. In Mbawar, Logo, since 2013 invasion, Igbo traders relocated to Anyiin, Ugba, Kente, Zaki-Biam, Wukari. Deserted villages may not attract investments. Inhabitants fled Daudu, Gbajimba, Agasha, Ukpiam (Guma), Naka, Aondoana, Agagbe (Gwer-West), North-Bank Cattle Market (Makurdi), Igbongum, Vaase, Gbeji Markets (Ukum). Dooga Kanshio (30/7/2026, Iorza): persistent attacks led to closure of market, cannot provide food or pay school fees. Aliyu Mustapha (21/7/2026, North-Bank): Fulani suppliers live in perpetual fear, crippling cattle business.

Inflation

Prices of foodstuff soared due to disruption in production/supply. Aliyu Mustapha (27/7/2026): before conflict middle-size cow N40, 000-N50, 000, during conflict N80, 000-N90,
000. Herders relocated to Awe, Doma, and Keana, dared not bring herds to Makurdi.
Impact on other Sectors

Commercial motor vehicle/motorcycle (Okada) operators scared to ply roads, evacuation of farm produce difficult. Iorhemen Gege (29/7/2026, Sev-Av): Okada business collapsed because Chairman Mtomga Tyohembe and six members killed. Drivers on Abinsi-Agasha-Kwatan Sule- Anyiin and Wukari-Jandeikyura-Sondi-Vaase-Gbeji-Kente-Anyiin roads complained passengers and/or goods declined.

Markets ceased to function for 11 years in some locations. Milling, grain sale, food vendoring (major income for women) disappeared. Thrift/savings schemes collapsed. Mathais Tyoyue (14/8/2026, Gyado Villa): clashes plus economic meltdown paralysed activities, closure of Makurdi Youth Empowerment Thrift and Loans Co-operative Society. Ortindi Boniface (27/7/2026, First Bank Makurdi): during peace, bank received up to 40 Ghana-must-go bags of money from traders on typical day; count drastically reduced during conflict.

Displacement of People

IDPs forcibly abandoned ancestral homes/farms during planting season. Ayati (2013, pp.viii-ix) argues that “the crisis had come to them as a surprise. Many had never imagined that they could ever be uprooted... Some families had lived for over one hundred and fifty years... They were the third generation and so knew no other home...”

Socially, IDPs suffer deprivations; lose dignity, family values threatened. Tiv

hate begging but displaced may be compelled to beg (Jibo, 2014, p.187). Sexual harassment, rape of female farmers especially, the unmarried ones were very humiliating. Mrs Mkurem Igbawua died after being raped by unidentified Fulani man - mother Tabitha Suemo, interview, on 15/7/2016, Baa. Uvishigh E. Bernard (1/8/2026, Daudu): unwanted pregnancies evidence of threat to dignity.

Economically, assets diverted from productive to military, rehabilitative, humanitarian (Hagher, 2002; 2012). IOM/NEMA (2016): Nov-Dec 2015, 85,393 IDPs in Benue, ranked fourth
behind Yobe 131,203, Adamawa 136,010, Borno 1,434,144. Duru (2016): over 100,000 displaced,
12,000 families affected as of 14 April 2016.

Life in camps tough: open defecation, criminals infiltrating to steal relief materials, children falling sick - Ishowua Ortwar (6/8/2026, UBE Naka). Ayati (2013, p.xiii) argues: “Life at Agasha camp was tough... The families had fled hurriedly, leaving behind all they had toiled and made in their entire life to now stay in a camp as dependents on government rations. It was humiliating...”

Threat to Food Security

Farm crops destroyed, farming suspended. Jibo (2014, p.186) argues that LGAs inhabited by Tiv peasants who produce much foodstuffs consumed by Nigerians, hence "foodbasket" acronym. Once rural community attacked, agriculture affected. According to Nyitamen Nyam Doo (29/7/2026, Anyiin), Anyiin, commercial nerve-centre of Logo and Sankera, experienced meltdown. Wholesale/retail sluggish, small businesses destroyed since 2011, food sufficiency dipped. Similarly, Phoebe Ngunan Adaaku (14/8/2016, Rice Mills, Makurdi) postulates that acute shortage of rice for milling. Olam Agro Milling Company gets 60% raw materials from Guma/Gwer-West. Communities raided, producers became consumers. Tin of rice sold for N3, 500 now N8, 005, price unstable N7, 000-N7, 500 for CEPI/OC.

Vandalisation and damage of public Utilities

Hospitals, clinics, electrical installations, water works, roads vandalised. Makurdi-Lafia- Abuja highway damaged at Igyungu Adze, 30/6/2011. Theresa Mpase (16/7/2026, Agagbe): well at Baa contaminated due to corpses dumped by herdsmen. Clinics at Ahumbe and Chenge, Mbagwen, raided and razed. Teachers' quarters, LGEA destroyed April 2011. Schools shut down: RCM Primary School Uhembe (Guma), RCM Primary School Ibume (Makurdi), LGEA Primary School Igyoron, LGEA Primary School Tse-tsule (Guma) closed permanently - Bernard Bawa (13/8/2026), Titus Nyior (8/8/2026).

Rape, sexual assault, armed robbery, theft, arson, assassination increased since 2009. Mary Dagba (02/7/2026, Gbajimba): Fulani mercenaries/soldiers beat, raped, verbally abused women with ethnic slur. Police constable Jumai Hassan (22/7/2026, Abintse):
The farmer-herder conflict in Tivland had resulted to increase in crimes, indisciplines and immoralities. For instance, between 2011 and May 2016, our police station at Abimtse has received 2 cases of sexual assaults, 6 cases of armed robberies and cattle rustlings involving 302 herds, 2 cases of mischief by fire, 23 reports of trespass to land and/or chattel. During this period, we made 18 arrests and detained 16 suspects... Ten suspects were charged to court, while six were discharged...
The conflict also led to gross violation of Fundamental Human Rights.

Disruption of Family Life

Strong family bonding disrupted. Extended family provided safety net, but widows/widowers in new environments without breadwinners, parents killed, children feed themselves. Wives wooed by host members, some divorced husbands and married new ones - Adeekpe Nyamikume (15/7/2026, Naka); Agbum Asemave

(15/8/2026, Ukpiam).

Distraction of Government and Political Leadership

The conflict distorted government policies/programmes. Benue and affected LGs compelled to cater for IDPs. Budget resources for roads, schools, clinics diverted to feed IDPs (Jibo, 2014; Adi Solomon, 1/8/2026, Daudu). Terlanga Dondo (16/7/2026, Nagi): Suswam gave relief materials and money for rehabilitation of damaged school; resources would have built new schools. Federal level: 28 April 2016, six-member ad-hoc committee of House of Representatives set up to investigate Fulani attacks.

Psycho-Cultural Implications

Trauma breeds hostility, paranoid perceptions, schizophrenia, aggression, phobia, grief, panic, despair, hopelessness, humiliation. Kuzenda Iorapuu (02/7/2026, Gbajimba), raped by two suspected herdsmen at Ingyoron: "I have experienced physical assault and grievous body hurt. I have also suffered severe psychological trauma which I cannot forget throughout my life-time." Disturbingly, children see violence as normal, may become socio-cultural liability. Jibo (2014): paranoid schizophrenia - inability to link thought, emotion, behaviour, withdrawal from reality.

By and large, the conflict chased away peace/security, destroyed lives/property, created livelihood crisis. Fulani also suffered: loss of lives, cattle attacked/killed/rustled, difficulty selling cattle in Tivland, livelihood threatened. Food shortage/starvation spectre was another negative effect.

Interventions To Resolve the Conflict

Various individuals, successive government regimes, and non-governmental organisations have adopted different responses and conflict management strategies aimed at rsolving the conflict; however, these effotrs have yielded little or no positive effects, as the conflicts persists. The Federal Government of Nigeria under different successive government administrations proposed grazing reserves, cattle colonies, routes, and designated grazing areas. Benue Governors- Akume, Suswam, Ortom, and Alia made efforts with varying degrees. Akume (1999-2007) was reactive, little felt probably because of low occurrence of the conflict; Suswam (2007-2015) was proactive as several peace committees set up had useful interactions with the Tor Tiv, Emir of Gombe, and Sultan of Sokoto; Ortom (2015-2023) was boy reactive and proactive - Amnesty, Open Grazing Law 2017; but his administration failed to resolve the conflict as allegations of cows thefts and confiscations by hoodlooms and Livestock Guards respectively were widely reported by the interviewees. Alia‟s tenure (2023-2026) reflects strong rhetorical commitment and incremental action, but limited enforcement capacity and unmet expectations on security and IDP return.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has established that since 2009, the violent farmer-herder conflict in Tivland has escalated from competition over pasture and water into a vicious, widespread, bloody and destructive conflict that has undermined peace, crippled agriculture, slowed socio-economic development and aggravated poverty. Anchored on the Ecoviolence Theory, the study found that the conflict is driven by shrinking land-based resources, worsened by desertification, climate change, population explosion, proliferation of arms, ethnic rivalry, poor governance and criminal activities on both sides.

Despite interventions by government, NGOs and individuals, the conflict has persisted. Lasting peace therefore requires more than ad-hoc measures- it demands a fundamental change in pastoral production and governance hence the following recommendations are made:

Creation of a Stabilised Ranch System

Government should establish a stabilized ranching system to induce pastoralists to abandon the transhumant lifestyle in favour of becoming sedentary livestock producers. Countries with large herds solved clashes through ranches: India 219 million, Brazil 170 million, China 106 million, USA 96 million, Argentina 50 million (Kaave, 2014). Ranch is secured tract for grazing/rearing cattle, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys. Benefits: modernisation of animal husbandry, job/investment opportunities, manage environmental impact, prevent/control diseases, enhance high/healthier breeds for local/export, promote international best practices in dairy/beef, prevent destruction of farms, rivers, streams, ponds, wells, prevent clashes.

Strengthening of Security Measures

Security measures should be strengthened to curb the influx of illegal arms and ammunition and unauthorized foreigners/conflict-induced migrating herdsmen into the country. This includes better border control and effective policing of conflict-prone communities in Tivland.

Prioritizing Justice

Justice must be prioritized in the handling of farmer-herder conflicts. Fair and impartial handling of disputes, compensation, and prosecution of offenders on both sides is necessary to rebuild trust and prevent reprisal attacks.

Routinely Scrutinizing the Roles of Traditional and Community Leaders in Land Matters

The roles of ttraditional and community leaders in land allocation, grazing arrrangements, and dispute settlement should be routinely scrutinized, to check extortion, bias, and other practices thar exacerbate the conflict.

Addressing the Environmental Driving-Factorsof the Conflict

Government and relevant stakeholders should address the underlying environmental drivers of the conflict, particularly, desertification, land degradation, and population pressure. This should include afforestation, land restoration, climate adaptation programmmes, and sustainable land-use planning to reduce competition over shrinking pasture and farmland.

Improving Water Supply for Farmers and Herders

Government at all levels should urgently improve water supply for farming and grazing communities through the provision of boreholes, dams, irrigation facilities, and water points for livestock. Adequate and accessible water supply will reduce the struggle over rivers, streams, and other water sources, which is a major trigger of farmer-herder conflict in Tivland.

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