Full Length Research

Communal Clashes/Conflicts: Bane of Achieving Food Production and Security among Farming Households in South-East, Nigeria.

[1]Chikaire, J.U., [2]Orusha, J.O., [2]Irebuisi, D.C., [2]Amanze, P.C. and [2]Asonye, N.C.

[1]Department of Agricultural Extension, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.
[2]Department of Agricultural Science Education, Alvan Ikoku College of Education Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author's Email : futo.edu.ng@gmail.com

Achieving food security is a global goal and concern. Efforts have been made by various governments, organizations and individuals to achieve this but met with little success even though the best of technologies are available. This paper brings to mind a salient but neglected area against achieving global food security – COMMUNAL CONFLICTS. This study therefore investigates the effects of communal conflicts on achieving food security in Southeast, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this research were; to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, to examine the causes of communal conflict in the area, to ascertain the effects of communal conflicts on food production, and to suggest strategies for communal conflict management. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents affected by communal conflicts in Southeast, Nigeria. Data were collected with the aid of a questionnaire and analyzed using percentages and mean. The findings revealed that the mean age of the farmers was 43years. Majority of the farmers (58%) were males. The result indicated that land dispute, Ezeship tussle (traditional ruler), counter claims to lands, poverty, unemployment etc were the causes of communal conflicts. The effects on food production and security included loss of lives, increased hunger, farmland abandonment, labour migration, poor yield, malnutrition, poor savings, displacement of people, increase in transportation costs, increased prices of produce and others. This study therefore recommends among others equitable distribution of land, demarcation of boundary, employment opportunities, public education/enlightenment to reduce the adverse effects of communal conflicts.

Keywords: Food security, communal conflicts, farming households, Southeast, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian historical landscape is dotted with cases of conflict and violence which in the early sixties climaxed into Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970. Protracted agitation for resource governance, inequality in the distribution of national wealth, ethnic chauvinism, economic and political deprivations, tribalism and favouritism are factors identified as the immediate causes of these crises. Added to these were the fear of domination and marginalization of the minority, by the dominant ethnic groups (Ikurekong et al., 2012). The foundation of the present stage of conflict in Nigeria could be said to be the offshoot of the civil war. The discovery and exploration of oil has further accentuated conflict and violence in Nigeria. It is however, widely believed by the people that the majority of the violent conflicts in the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta are rooted in oil, and that the conflicts are no less than people's reactions to the policies, laws and politics of the state towards oil exploration, production, transportation and storage (Ikurekong et al., 2012).

Communal conflicts (which is also known as armed conflicts) have become common phenomena in Africa today. These conflicts mostly ethnic in nature have posed a great concern to all spheres of human

endeavour. Communal violence has the propensity to directly and indirectly influence the socio-economic activities among communities in the warring camps. Osinubi and Osinubi (2006) assert that in countries of traditional stability, communal conflict is becoming an increasing factor. In Kenya, communal tensions related to multiparty elections resulting to 1,500 deaths between the late 1991 and late 1993. Additional deaths had occurred in connection with the elections in 1997 including the post-election recriminations against non-government voting areas in early January 1998. South Africa lost 14,000 people due to racial and communal violence which was part of the transition to majority rune between 1990 and 1994. Several other conflicts which have affected Africans are prominent. In Sudan civil conflict stretching back to four decades has pitted the Arab-Muslim North against the non-Arab Christian and animist south. The most current phase which began in 1993 resulted in the deaths of about one million people either directly or indirectly due to the war or starvation caused by the violence. Often in such conflict food deprivation is used as an instrument of the war. Because of the government control of the media and drawn out nature of the conflict, it is mostly forgotten by western society. More dramatic events occurred in Rwanda where Hutus staged a slaughter of Tutsis culminating to an estimated 300,000 deaths in the first half of 1994 and an additional 20,000 in the refugee camps of neighbouring countries where a total of 1.7 million people fled.

In Africa, which has most of its population residing in rural areas, communal violence or conflicts has serious implication of access and availability of food, since agriculture is the main preoccupation of rural population. The production of crops and rearing of livestock is the main economic activity of the people. Therefore communal conflicts have serious implication on food system. Often warring communities or parties tactically resort to manipulation over access to food and livestock. Thus, food insecurity has become an effect of communal conflict (Messer, et al.,2004).

Communal conflict is correlated to food security and under most circumstances depresses production and income from cash crops and livestock. This reduction in production and income has serious implication on food security with the capacity to reduce coping capacity of those depending on food resources for their livelihood. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (2004) communal violence costs Africa over $120 billion worth of agricultural production during the last third of the 20th century, given the importance of agricultural livelihood to overall economic wellbeing, especially in conflict prone areas of Africa. Not only has communal conflicts limit production of food, it has the propensity to deny people access to food and availability of food supply. According to the Food Research Policy

Institute (2004) most conflicts and post conflict zones in sub-Saharan Africa are home to substantial numbers of food insecure people. In most cases, population in need of food only account, for small percentage of the total food insecure people. Hence, African countries are zones of high chronic food insecurity.

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, shares the sentiment of harbouring varied magnitudes of conflicts, since the emergence of democracy in 1999, preventing citizens from enjoying its dividends in real terms. Albert (2001) enunciated that since Nigeria transited from military dictatorship to multiparty democracy on 29 May, 1999, the country has been bedeviled by various forms of violent social conflicts. Thousands of people lost their lives, were maimed or displaced from their communities as a result of these problems. While some of the conflicts had their roots in the past historical circumstances of the concerned communities, some others were "manufactured" by the elites, seeking to stretch the liberty inherent in the new democratic process in Nigeria to a breaking, if not absurd point.

The manifestations of electoral conflict, ethnic conflict, religious conflict, herder-farmer conflict, communal conflict and indigene/settler conflict have become brazen characteristics of the democratic development in Nigeria. Of all these conflicts, communal conflict has manifested itself as the most pandemic issue next to ethno-religious conflict in the democratic era in the country. Olusola (2004) posited that Nigeria in the last four years (and even till date) has witnessed a dramatic increase in communal violence. Communal conflict exists in all the geopolitical zones of the country. There is no part of the country that is spared from its ugly deficiencies. The concomitant effect of communal conflict has been the distortion of the development prospect of the country. That is, both human and material resources have been adversely affected to the extent that is resulted in systemic deficiencies in Nigeria. In Northern part of the country, communal conflict is a recurring disaster. It has been consuming human beings and properties like a tsunami disaster. In this democratic period, the North exhibited a high incidence of communal conflicts than any other region in the country. For instance in States such as Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Bauchi, Adamawa, Kaduna, Taraba etc. communal conflict has rendered these places highly unstable for effective social engagements. The properties destroyed, those killed and humanitarian problems induced has affected the socio-economic and political activities of these states, and generally the country.

In the Southwest there were violent communal conflicts at Sagamu, Lagos, Ife -Modakeke, etc. In the South-East, the Umuleri-Aguleri conflicts were most noticeable. The communal and oil-induced conflicts in

the Niger Delta also increased in scope and intensity (Best, 2009). However, a research conducted by Elaigwu (2005) confirms that some states in the Northern Nigeria have experienced one or more ethno-religious conflicts except Kogi and Zamfara States. These conflicts have adversely affected the country's development and security.

Communal conflicts involve groups with permanent or semi-permanent armed militias but do not involve the government. However, it can escalate to include government forces. Hendrix and Salehyan (2010) insist that communal conflicts are common in the Sahel, the zone of transition between the Saharan desert and Savanna. In spite of the preponderance of conflict in rural communities as cited by Ikurekong (2012), there is still a knowledge gap regarding conflict and resource development. Mentions are only made on the potential effect on human life and properties with little or no empirical information on resources development (Akpaeti, 2005). In an attempt to improve our understanding and fill this gap of knowledge, the study will attempt to answer questions related to the socio-economic characteristics of conflict and non-conflict groups; identify the major causes of conflict; explore the effect of conflict on resource development and suggest strategies to enhance resource development in the study area. Researchers have done plenty work on communal conflicts abound but there exist none on the topic in the study area proper. There is therefore, knowledge gap which the results of this research paper tend to close. The broad objective was to determine the effects of communal conflicts on food production. The specific objectives were to:

1. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.
2. Examine the perceived causes of communal clashes in the area.
3. Ascertain the effects of communal clashes on food production
4.   Suggest strategies for communal conflict management in southeast.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in South-east agricultural zone. The South-East zone of Nigeria lies between latitude $4^0 20^1$ and $7^0 25N$ and longitudes $5^0 25^1$ and $8^0 51^1E$ covering a land area of about 109,524 sq km, which represents about 11.86 % of the total area of Nigeria (Ekong, 2010). This area lies on mainly plains under 200m above sea level. It is bounded on the South by bight of Bonny, on the East by the Republic of Cameroun,, on the West by River Niger and on the North by Benue State. The zone has a population of 18.92 million or 21.48 % of the total population of Nigeria in

2015 projected from 2006 census figure (FSON, 2014). About 60 – 70 % of the inhabitants reside in rural areas and with a population density of about 173 person per square kilometer, making it one of the most densely populated agricultural zones in Nigeria. The climate of the South-East zone is typically equatorial. It is influenced by the East line, namely the tropical continental and tropical maritime air masses. There are two distinct climate seasons the rainy and dry seasons. The rainy seasons starts from March/April and ends in October/November and dry season lasts till March of the following year. Crop farming is the dominant activities, while fish farming is the primary occupation of the river-rine areas. A multi- stage and random sampling procedures were applied in selection of sample for this study. In the first stage of the sampling procedure, 60% of the states that constitute Southeastern Nigeria were randomly selected. This process yielded selection of Abia, Anambra and Imo states. The second stage involved selection of local governments with cases of communal conflicts. In Abia, Umunneochi area was selected, Anambra East was selected from Anambra state, while Ohaji area was selected from Imo state. The third stage involved selection of communities from each of the local government areas were conflicts occurred. These were Lokpanta from Abia, Umuleri/Aguleri from Anambra and Awarra from Imo state. The fourth stage comprised selection of the affected individuals/households from the list obtained from the community heads. The list contained a total of 1,500 farm families and 10% of this population was proportionately selected to give a total sample size of 150 respondents. The study employed two sources of data collection and they include primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were collected through the use of a well-structured questionnaire, whereas the secondary sources include textbooks, past projects, internet, journals, literature related to study etc.

Simple descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, frequency distribution were used to analyze objectives 1 and 4. Objective 2 was achieved on a 4 point likert- type rating scale of strongly agree (SA=4), agree (A=3), disagree (D=2) and strongly disagree (SD=1). Mean value of 2.50 was obtained by adding the 4 point scale and then dividing by 4. All items with mean values of 2.50 and above were accepted as having effect (positive effect) while any mean score less than 2.50 was considered as negative effect.

The mean score was obtained by the formula

$$\overline{X} = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where,
$\overline{X}$= mean score
X= score
F = frequency
N = number of observation

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Semi-Urban Famers

Construct	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
21-30	12	8.0
31 – 40	48	32.0
41- 50	69	46.0
51 -60	13	8.7
61 and above	8	5.3
Sex		
Male	87	58.0
Female	63	42.0
Education		
No formal education	3	2.0
Primary	35	23.3
Secondary	106	70.6
Tertiary	6	4.0
Marital status		
Single	15	10.0
Married	126	84.0
Widow	7	4.7
Divorced	2	1.3
Farm Size		
0.25-3	110	73.3
3.5-5	27	18.0
5.5-7	9	6.0
7 and above	4	2.6
Household Size		
1-3	58	38.7
4-6	72	48.0
7-9	13	8.6
10 and above	7	4.7
Farming Experience (years)		
1-10	9	6.0
11 -20	32	21.3
21 and above	109	72.6
Organization Membership		
Yes	145	96.6
No	5	3.3

Field survey, 2015

$$\overline{X} = \frac{SA + A + D + SD}{4} = \frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4}$$

$$= \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

$$= \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

Also objective 3 was achieved on a 4 point likert-type rating scale of very serious (VS=4), serious (S=3), less serious (LS=2) and not serious (NS=1). This was computed thus:

$$\overline{X} = \frac{VS + S + LS + NS}{4} = \frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4}$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 shows that 8% were between 21-30years, 32% were between 31-40years, 8.7% were between 51-

Table 2: Causes of Communal Conflicts

Perceived causes	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
Land dispute	129(86)	21(14)	0(0)	0(0)	3.86	SA
Ezeship tussle	99(66)	48(32)	3(2)	0(0)	3.64	SA
Farmer/pastoralist land use	38(25.3)	89(59.3)	21(14)	2(1.3)	3.09	SA
Religious differences	27(18)	52(34.7)	58(38.7)	13(8.6)	2.62	SA
Market ownership/relocation	37(24.7)	47(31.3)	58(38.7)	895.3)	2.75	SA
Economic deprivation	54(36)	46(30.7)	47(31.3)	3(20	3.01	SA
Poverty	67(44.7)	72(48)	8(5.3)	3(2)	3.35	SA
Unemployment	59(39.3)	83(55.3)	7(4.7)	1(0.7)	3.33	SA
Marginalization and exploitation of people	53(35.3)	70(46.7)	25(16.7)	2(1.3)	3.16	SA
Bush burning	28(18.7)	36(24)	67(44.7)	19(12.6)	2.49	D
Illegal tree felling	45(30)	75(50)	25(16.7)	5(3.3)	3.07	SA
Civil disturbances	40(26.6)	70(46.7)	33(22)	7(4.7)	2.95	SA
Forest encroachment	50(33.3)	83(55.3)	14(9.3)	3(2)	3.20	SA
Contested litigation	54(36)	51(34)	40(26.6)	5(3.3)	3.03	SA
Counter claims to lands	82(54.7)	56(37.3)	9(6)	3(2)	3.47	SA
Resource inequality	29(19.3)	45(30)	56(37.3)	20(13.3)	2.47	D

Field Survey Data, 2015.Mean > 2.50 =Strongly agree (SA) Mean < 2.50 = Disagree (D)

60years while 5.3% were between 61years and above. The remaining 46% were between 41-50years which implies that the majority of the farmers were within the age bracket taken to be relatively young and are receptive to innovations. The mean age was 43years. It was seen that 42% were females while 58% were males. The high percentage involvement of men could be explained by the dictates of prevailing culture. Men have numerous rights, responsibilities and privileges. They own land, pass same to their heirs and have opportunities of using it for collateral. The table showed also that 4.67% were widowed, 1.33% were divorced, 10% were single while 84% were married men and women. This means that the farmers in Southeast were more of married men and women, therefore, youths should be mobilized to do so. From the table, 2% had no formal education, 23.3% attained primary education, 70.6% attained secondary education while 4% attained tertiary education. This implies that most farmers visited were literates. This has implication for benefits of modern education in terms of production, processing and marketing method. On family size, 4.7% have a household size of 10-12 members, 8.6% had 7-9 members, 38.7% had between 1-3 members while 48% had between 4-6 members. The mean household size is 6. The household size is adequate as it entails father, mother and biological children and or maids. Large household size could entail converting investable fund to consumptive fund. The table also showed that 6% have

been into farming for between 1-10years, 21.3% have been into farming for 11-20years, while majority (72.6%) have been into farming for 21 and above. The mean years of farming experience was 11.3years. This implies that adequate years of farming enables a farmer to take resounding farm decision, have deeper knowledge of the topic under study and helps in technology utilization. He/she is equipped with knowledge and can always compare technologies while making reference to past practices. Table 1 showed also that 73.3% had between 0.25-3 hectares of farmland, 18% had 3.5-5 hectares, 6% had 5.5-7 hectares, while 2.6% had a whooping 7.5 hectares of land and more. This implies inequality in distribution of landed resources. Finally, 96.6 % belonged to social organization, while 3.3% did not belong to any organization.

Causes of Communal Conflicts

Table 2 shows the various causes of communal conflicts in the study area. The major causes are: land dispute with mean 3.86, Ezeship tussle with mean 3.64 and counter claims to lands with mean 3.47 respectively. This is in line with Oboh and Hyande (2006) and Varvar (2000). Others are: poverty with mean 3.35, unemployment with mean 3.33, forest encroachment with mean 3.20, marginalization and exploitation of people with mean 3.16, farmer/pastoralist land use with

Table 3: Effects of Communal Conflicts on Food Production

Effects on Food Production	VS	S	LS	NS	Mean	Remark
Hunger	106(70.7)	32(21.3)	11(7.3)	1(0.7)	3.62	VS
Food insecurity	90(60)	52(34.7)	5(3.3)	3(2)	3.53	VS
Displacement of people	92(61.3)	47(31.3)	6(40	5(3.3)	3.51	VS
Famine	79(52.7)	57(38)	12(8)	2(1.3)	3.42	VS
Destruction of agricultural produce	67(44.7)	70(46.7)	12(8)	1(0.7)	3.35	VS
Reduction in labour for farming	52(34.7)	82(54.7)	14(9.3)	2(1.3)	3.23	VS
Reduction in farm income	60(40)	76(50.7)	12(8)	2(1.3)	3.29	VS
Reduction in farm yield	84956)	57(38)	3(2)	6(4)	3.46	VS
Kidnapping	86(57.3)	49(2.7)	11(7.3)	4(2.7)	3.45	VS
Migration of labour	48(32)	69(46)	17(11.3)	16(10.7)	2.99	VS
Abandonment of farmland	72(48)	63(42)	12(8)	3(2)	3.36	VS
Destruction of stored produce	59(39.3)	57(38)	20(13.3)	14(9.3)	3.07	VS

Field Survey Data, 2015. Mean > 2.50 = Very serious(VS) Mean < 2.50 = Not serious

mean 3.09, illegal tree felling with mean 3.07, contested litigation with mean 3.03, economic deprivation with mean 3.01, civil disturbances with mean 2.95, market ownership/relocation with mean 2.75, and religious differences with mean 2.62. Bush burning with mean 2.49 and resource inequality with mean 2.47 were not agreed as the causes of communal conflicts in the study area.

Effects of Communal Conflicts on **Food production**

Table 3 shows the effects of communal conflicts on marketing/distribution in the study area. The major effects are increase in transportation costs with mean 3.65, decrease in agricultural output with mean 3.51 and increased prices of produce with mean 3.48 respectively. Others are: death/kidnapping of salesmen with mean 3.40, low supply of products with mean 3.34, delays vehicular movement with mean 3.33, reduction in the amount of goods supplied to market with mean 3.31, reduction in profit earned with mean 3.30, limitation of farmers in their market participation with mean 3.29, enormous drop in the amount of animals slaughtered with mean 3.28, delay in supply to market with mean 3.22, fear of attack with mean 3.19, disruption of agricultural extension activities/work with mean 3.15, disruption of credit opportunities with mean 3.07, reduction in the amount of crops distributed with mean 3.02, reduction in consumers demand with mean 2.93 and spoilage of produce with mean 2.83. This implies

that, due to communal conflicts, there has been increase in transportation costs which makes people not been able to transport their produce to market for sale. It also increases prices of produce which makes people not been able to have enough food for consumption to meet their dietary needs. Products/goods are supplied in small quantity to markets as well as disruption of agricultural extension activities/work. Conflicts tend to affect food security by creating food shortages, which disrupt both upstream input markets and downstream output markets, thus deterring food production, commercialization and stock management. Depending on the location of the fights in a country, crops cannot be planted, weeded or harvested, decreasing dramatically the levels of agricultural production. In conflict situations, food producing regions experience seizing or destroying of food stocks, livestock and other assets, interrupting marketed supplies of food not only in these regions but also in neighboring regions. These predatory activities diminish food availability and food access directly, because both militias and regular armies in the field tend to subsist by extorting the unarmed populations for food and any other productive resources. Any food that the militias and armies cannot use immediately in the contested areas will be destroyed to prevent their adversaries from accessing it. Bearing these risks in mind, the farming populations tend to flee, decline or stop farming. Agriculture may be reduced to subsistence and survival production by farmers who manage to stay, because there is no incentive to invest deeply in production. Recruitment of young male men into militias

Table 4: Suggestions to reduce communal conflicts

Suggestions	*Frequency	Percentage
Demarcation of boundary	119	79.3.
Respect for traditional authority	129	86.0
Obedience to court rules and orders	123	82.0
Employment opportunities	135	90.0
Public education/enlightenment	138	92.0
Obedience to tenancy regulations	107	71.3
Equitable distribution of land to all	145	96.6

Field Survey Data, 2015 *Multiple responses

and thousands of battle-related deaths not only will reduce family income but also take away labor from agriculture. It may become more difficult for small farmers to rely on cash crops such as cocoa and coffee as their income sources due to either desertion of belongings in the face of threatening rebels or prevention from transporting the commodities to local markets.

Conflict destroys land, water, biological, and social resources for food production. Thirty million people in more than 60 countries were displaced or had their livelihoods destroyed by conflict every year in the 1990s (WFP 2004). FAO (2002) has estimated losses of almost $52 billion in agricultural output through conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1970 to 1997, a figure equivalent to 75 percent of all official development assistance received by the conflict-affected countries. Estimated losses for all developing countries averaged $4.3 billion per year – enough to have raised the food intake of 330 million undernourished people to minimum required levels.

One of the most direct effects of conflict on food security is the displacement of people. In 2001, there were more than 12 million refugees, 25 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and an unknown number of people trapped in combat zones (FAO 2002). Most of these need temporary food assistance until they can return to their homes or find new livelihoods. Contributing to meeting the food needs of refugees places an additional burden on recipient communities where food security is already marginal leading to sometimes acute food shortages. Refugees fleeing fighting in northern Chad upset markets in western Darfur during the drought years 1983-85, transforming that food shortage into a famine (Messer et al. 1998).

Reducing Impacts of Communal Conflicts on Food Production,.

On communal conflicts reduction, table 4 shows a list of 7 possible strategies to employ. Equitable distribution of land to all with 96.6% response ranks highest. It is followed by public education/enlightenment

with 92% response and employment opportunities with 90% response. Others were respect for traditional authority (86%), obedience to court rules and orders (82%), boundary demarcation (79.3%), and obedience to tenancy regulations (71.3%).

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that communal conflict has both direct and indirect consequences on food production, marketing and distribution. It has been found to cause hunger, food insecurity, displacement of people, reduction in farm yield, kidnapping etc on food production while on marketing/distribution, it led to increase in transportation costs, decrease in agricultural output, increased prices of produce, death/kidnapping of salesmen, low supply of products etc.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on all that were discovered in this work, the following recommendations were made.
i. Government should enforce laws on land and provide employment opportunities.
ii. There should be equitable distribution of land, status, and responsibilities among all ethnic communities and introduction of equity (fairness) and justice in all spheres of human endeavour.
iii. Various social and traditional institutions in communities should encourage their members on attitudinal change in their mind set and proper orientation towards others. This can be achieved through proper education and enlightenment on the origins, nature and its effects.

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