

## **Influence of Community Leadership in Curbing Farmers Herdsmen Conflicts for Food Security in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigates the influence of community leadership in curbing farmers' herdsmen conflicts for food security in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted. Three objectives were drawn for the study, these were translated to three research questions and two hypotheses formulated for this study. The population for the study is 154 community leaders which were selected using Stratified and random sampling technique from 22 communities in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire. The data collected were summarised and analysed using descriptive statistics, (mean, standard deviation) and chi-square respectively. The results show that destruction of crops, competition over farm land used and cattle rustling are forms of farmer herdsmen conflict in the area. Also facilitation of dialogue and negotiating settlement were some of the measures adopted by the community leaders in herdsmen farmers' conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in the study area. Community leaders actually participated in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers but the community leaders are incapacitated in some areas such as invitation of the two parties to meetings separately, enforcement of anti-grazing laws in areas of conflict, formulation of a joint monitoring group or a total ban of herdsmen. The problems encountered are the envisaged nature of the Fulani herdsmen. It was therefore recommended that since the measures adopted in conflict resolution yielded no result, the community leaders adopt other strategies such as joint monitoring group between the herdsmen and crop farmers to ascertain the source of the conflict, community leaders assisting the government in the establishment of ranches in areas of conflicts and back it with anti-open grazing laws of the state that no cattle should be found beyond their ranches and invite both parties in a meeting separately before the joint meetings to enable them speak up.*

**Keywords:** *Community leadership, curbing farmer herdsmen conflict & food security.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Every individual has a dwelling place and that place is where he or she lives and is referred to as a community. According to Longman Dictionary (2007), a community is a social unit (a group of living things) with commonality such as norms, religion, values, customs, or identity. Communities may share a sense of place situated in a given geographical area (e.g. a country, village, town, or neighbourhood) or in virtual space through communication platforms. And for any community to function effectively there must be a leader to pilot the affair of the people. Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent (Northouse, 2007). Community leadership is a term widely used to describe the important role that councils can play in the local communities of a society as elected bodies. In essence community leadership is about sharing vision, ambition for an area and in partnership with citizens and other agencies. It all about having a direction and providing services that make a difference to people's lives (Randle and Hatter, 2010).

The importance of community leadership focuses on bringing partners together, engaging with citizens and creating a vision for their communities. But in a community that is constantly threatened with herdsmen farmers' conflict, there is a need for the leaders to rise to the challenge in order to resolve the crises. The hitherto peaceful relationship between farmers and herdsmen across various parts of Benue and Nigeria as a whole is degenerating to a carnage level, leading to loss of lives and properties. All these have been linked to the farmer-herdsmen conflict (Olaniyan et al., 2015; Olayoku, 2014; Okeke, 2014). According to Mwanfupe (2015), farmer-herdsmen conflicts are equally prevalent in Cameroon, Tanzania, Sudan and Kenya. Narrating the incidence of the conflicts in Tanzania, he notes that Policy deficiencies and contradictions on land tenure,

inadequate capacity of the local institutions in settling such conflicts, violent nature of approach used to resolve and manage the conflicts – using police, corruption and politics of the belly, lack of coordination in settling the herdsmen and the village has further make the issues worse. Unless security of tenure on land used by smallholders (both farmers and herdsmen) is restored, the conflicts between them will continue.

In Nigeria, Nzeh (2015) asserts that before the present farmers-herdsmen conflict assumed a dangerous dimension; the relationship between them had been a cordial and symbiotic one. He further opine that, upon herdsmen entry into Nigeria via the Nigeria/Cameroon border in search of pasture, the herdsmen settled in Borno/Adamawa where they found pasture and they had a peaceful symbiotic relationship with the farmers which was beneficial to both groups. He further asserted that the sufficiency of land for both farmers and herdsmen, given the subsistence nature of farming and the few numbers of cows that the herdsmen breed then, made them to co-exist peacefully, void of unhealthy competition over scarce resources. This same cordiality had usually played out between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria until recently (Goke, 2018). If this relationship most continue the role of community leadership should not be over look as it will definitely affect food production in Benue State. Attempts by the federal government to curb the incessant farmers herdsmen conflict/crisis appear to be futile as food production continue to decline due to the fear of herdsmen attack as farmer no longer walk freely to their farms to cultivate their crops (Aliyu, Ikedinma & Akinwande, 2018). According to Cambridge English Dictionary conflict is an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles. Where such conflict occurs, the consequences are loss of lives, scarcity in food production which may lead to hunger.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO 2008,). Hence this definition is based on availability, access and utilization, underlined by stability ( Brussow et al, 2017). These four components have to be accomplished to maintain or achieve food security. Moreover, food security can be looked at on different levels such as global, national and household food security.

The resultant food crisis and insecurity is evident in the heavy presence of scavengers during ceremonial parties by both young and old to scout for food in a bit to fight hunger (Ojo, 2009). In the same vein, FAO in Oyedokun & Lawal (2017) remarks that Nigeria is currently struggling with the problem of food insecurity and sustainable agriculture which is evident in its inability to feed its citizenry on a land mass that is about 80% arable. Therefore, farmer's herdsmen conflict should not be allowed to escalate further because the impacts will be on food and animal products because of the grave loss of animals, crops and valuable properties (Ikezue and Ezeah 2017). It is on this note Adisa and Adekunle (2010) opined that conflict is detrimental to rural livelihoods, food security, and social co-existence. As a mean of curbing food insecurity in Benue State, governor Samuel Ortom enacted an anti-open grazing prohibition, Ranches Law in 2017 in order to resolved the conflict between farmer's and herdsmen. The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of community leadership in curbing farmer's herdsmen conflict for food security in Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the: Measures adopted by community leadership in herdsmen farmers' conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity, participation of community leaders in conflict resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers and constraints of community leadership toward herdsmen farmers' conflicts resolution in curbing food security.

### **Statement of problem**

The incessant herdsmen farmers' conflict in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon, most especially in the Northern part of the country. However, what it is relatively new is the rate of conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Benue state middle belt region of Nigeria. Although, in the past decades, across Nigeria most especially in the middle belt part of the country, the Fulani settler and their families were accepted and permitted into the host communities due to the cordial relationship between the sedentary farmers and herders (Osaghae & Suberu, in Anastasia 2018; Genyi, 2014). Following the recent increase in the conflict, the relationship between both groups seems to have deteriorated. This may be due to scarcity of grass land as population continue to increase with competition over the limited land available. While the Fulani herdsmen maintained that they are free to move around the country because of freedom of movement, the farmers see this movement most especially when such movement is into their farmlands as invasion and infringement on their communal and personal properties. If there have to be an end to this menace to prevent food insecurity therefore, there have to be a mean to resolving the conflicts between the two parties for peace to resign. It on this note that the researchers are poised to undertake the study on influence of community leadership in curbing farmer's herdsmen conflict for food security in Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the study**

The following objectives guided the study:-

1. Ascertain forms of Farmers herdsmen Conflict occurring in communities in Makurdi, Benue State.

2. Identify the measures adopted by community leadership in herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi Benue State.
3. determine the level of participation of community leaders in conflict resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers in Makurdi Benue State
4. Identify constraintsof community leadership toward herdsmen farmers’ conflictsresolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi, Benue State.

**Research questions**

1. What are the forms of farmers herdsmen conflict occurring in communities in Makurdi, Benue State?
2. What are measures adopted by community leadership in herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi Benue State?
3. What is the level of community leaders’ participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and Crop farmers in Makurdi Benue State?
4. What are the constraints of community leaders toward herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in makurdi Benue State?

**Hypothes**

1. Measures adopted by community leadership in herdsmen/farmers’ conflicts resolution has no significant influence in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi Benue State.
2. The level of community leaders’ participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and Crop farmers has no significant influence on curbing food insecurity in Makurdi Benue State.

**II. Methodology**

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. According to Osuala (2005) Descriptive survey design gives the accurate assessment of characteristic of the whole population of people. The target population was twenty two (22) communities which were selected from the list of villages in the LGA using simple random sampling technique. From each of the selected communities, stratified sampling was used to isolate the community leaders from the rest of the population. Seven respondents were selected from each of the communities using simple random sampling technique. The total sample size was made up of 154. Data collected was collated and analysed using mean and standard deviation in all the twenty two (22) communities in Makurdi, Benue State. Participation index was used which was measured on a scale of 1-4 by requesting respondents to indicate their participation in conflict resolution strategies. This was measured on a 4 point rating scale of High, Middle, Low, and Zero as well as Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed, Strongly Disagreed and scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1 were assigned respectively.

A questionnaire titled Influence of Communities Leadership in Curbing Farmers Herdsmen Conflict for Food Security (ICLICFHCFFS) was administered. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section A was design to give information about the respondents while Section B dealt with the influence of community leadership in curbing farmers herdsmen conflict was design to answer research question one to three and the benchmark was given as 2.5. To ensure the validity of the instrument were given to two experts in agricultural Education and one expert in measurement and evaluation. The experts were required to check the appropriateness of the items in terms of clarity of language, coverage, relevance and suitability. The opinion and suggestion of the experts led to the emergence of the final instruments which were used for the study. The reliability of the instruments was determined through pilot study conducted in five communities that were not part of the study area. Therefore, the reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha procedure and the value were 0.81. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was considered well enough for the study. The questionnaire was administered by the help of two research assistants. The instruments were return 100%. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and Chi- Square respectively.

**III. Results**

The results are presented according to the research questions that guided the study.

**Research Question one: What are the forms of farmers herdsmen conflict occurring in communities in Makurdi, Benue State?**

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the forms of farmers herdsmen conflict in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi, Benue State.

S/N	Forms of farmers herdsmen conflict occurring in communities in Makurdi, Benue State?	Mean	SD	Decision
Q1	What are the forms of farmers herdsmen conflict occurring in communities in Makurdi, Benue State?			

1	Destruction of crops	3.05	1.20	Agree
2	Cattle rustling	2.84	1.08	Agree
3	Banditry	3.70	1.70	Agree
4	Cattle theft	2.32	.968	Disagree
5	Competition over land used	3.01	1.41	Agree

Table 1 items 1,2,3 and 5 score above the bench mark of 2.50 upward. This means that Destruction of crops,Cattle rustling, Banditry and Competition over land used are the forms of farmer herdsmen conflict except for item 4 whose scores are below the cut point of 2.50.

**Research Question two: What are the measures adopted by community leadership in herdsmen farmers conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi, Benue State?**

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the measures adopted by community leadership in herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi, Benue State.

S/N	Measures adopted by community leadership in herdsmen farmers conflicts resolution	Mean	SD	Decision
Q2	What are the measures adopted by community leaders in herdsmen farmers conflicts resolution in curbing food security in Makurdi, Benue State?			
1	Use of village committee	3.19	1.103	Agree
2	Facilitation of dialogue	2.99	.871	Agree
3	Negotiating settlement	2.87	.995	Agree
4	Fostering agreement	2.94	.912	Agree
5	Use of law enforcement agency	3.34	1.005	Agree

From table 2, items 1 to 5 had a mean score above the required point of 2.50 and above. This implies that allmeasures on the table were adopted by the community leadership in herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi, Benue State.

**Research Question Three: What is the level of community leader’s participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers in Markurdi Benue State?**

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation of community leaders responses on the level of community leaders participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers in Markurdi Benue State.

S/N	Community leaders participation in conflict resolution	Mean	SD	Decision
Q3	What is the level of community leaders participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers in Markurdi Benue State?			
1	Enquiry on causes and how to resolve the crisis from both sides	3.20	1.081	High
2	Invitation of the two parties to meetings separately	2.32	.968	Low
3	Joint meeting of the two parties involved to facilitate dialogue	3.02	.828	High
4	Enforcing the anti-open grazing laws in area of conflicts	1.64	.976	Low
5	Involvement of law enforcement agency	2.70	.879	High
6	Sanction of defaulters	3.41	.919	High
7	Provision of protective measures	2.71	.928	High
8	Formulation of a joint monitoring group	2.31	.805	Low
9	Identification of herdsmen leaders	3.36	.982	Low
10	Total ban of herdsmen	2.27	.880	Low
11	Use of local knowledge to deal with the situation	3.38	.964	High

Table 3 shows that under the heading community leaders participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers, out of 11 items, only 4 items score below the cut-up point of 2.50 ( 2, 4, 8 and 10). The rest 7 items scored 2.50 above. This implies that the rate of community leadership participation in resolving herdsmen farmer’s conflicts is high. But the response of other items shows that community leaders are incapacitated in some area. such as invitation of the two parties to meetings separately, Creation of grazing zones in area of conflicts, formulation of a joint monitoring group to identify who is totally at fault or a total ban of herdsmen.

**Research Question Four: What are the constraints of community leaders toward herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi Benue State?**

**Table 4:** Mean and Standard Deviation the constraints of community leaders toward herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi Benue State.

S/N	Constraints of community leaders toward herdsmen farmers conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity	Mean	SD	Decision
Q4	What are the constraints of community leaders toward herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in Makurdi Benue State?			
1	Lack of commitment and poor accountability on the part of community leader	3.38	.937	Agree
2	Lack of institutional support by government	1.62	.985	Disagree
3	Evasive nature of Fulani	3.62	.688	Agree
4	Inadequate finance	1.34	.820	Disagree
5	Lack of respect for community leaders	1.73	.945	Disagree
6	Lack of protective measure to counter hostile parties	1.74	1.077	Disagree
7	Language barrier	2.01	1.123	Disagree
8	Declining influence of traditional rulers	2.47	.894	Disagree
9	Lack of cooperation among crops farmers	1.47	.818	Disagree

The result in table 4 shows that there are only two constraints of community leaders toward herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution as seen in items (1 and 3). The rest items 2, (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9) are not constraints of community leaders toward herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food security in Makurdi Benue State.

**Hypothesis One:**

Measures adopted by community leaders in herdsmen/farmers’ conflicts resolution has no significant influence on curbing food security in Makurdi Benue State.

**Table 5: Chi-Square Test of the Influence of Measures Adopted by Community Leadership in Herdsmen/Farmers’ Conflicts Resolution on Curbing Food Security in Makurdi Benue State**

	Df	$\chi^2\alpha$	Sig.	Alpha Level	Remark
Pearson Chi-square	19	251.27	0.028	0.05	S, R
Number of Valid Cases	154				

Df = degree of freedom,  $\chi^2\alpha$  = chi-square calculated, Sig. = P-value;  $P < .05$ , S = Significance, R= rejected Table 6 shows a chi-square value of 251.27 under the df of 19, which gives a P-value of 0.028, which is less than the  $\alpha$ -value of 0.05. This implies that the test is significant. This indicates that measures adopted by community leaders in herdsmen/farmers’ conflicts resolution has positive significant influence on curbing food security in Makurdi Benue State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Hypothesis Two:**

The Level of community leaders’ participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and Crop farmers has no significant influence on curbing food security in Makurdi Benue State.

**Table 6: Chi-Square Test of the Influence of The rate of community leaders’ participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and Crop farmers on Curbing Food Security in Makurdi Benue State.**

	Df	$\chi^2\alpha$	Sig.	Alpha Level	Remark
Pearson Chi-square	13	442.34	0.002	0.05	S, R
Number of Valid Cases	154				

Df = degree of freedom,  $\chi^2\alpha$  = chi-square calculated, Sig. = P-value;  $P < .05$ , S = Significance, R= rejected Table 6 shows a chi-square value of 442.34 under the df of 13, which gives a P-value of 0.002, which is less than the  $\alpha$ -value of 0.05. This implies that the test is significant. This indicates that the rate of community leaders’ participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and Crop farmers has positive significant influence on curbing food security in Makurdi Benue State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**IV. Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal that Destruction of crops, cattle rustling, banditry and competition over land used are the forms of farmer herdsmen conflict in the study area. This is in corroboration with the findings of Nformi et al, (2014); Abdulsalam, Dagona and Pate (2015) who noted that land related matter is the major cause of farmers-herdsmen conflicts and until the issue is address the crisis will continue.

Also several measures were adopted by the community leaders in herdsmen farmers’ conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in the study area and all the measures adopted ware good. Therefore, the ability of the community leaders resolving the conflict lies in the hands of the two parties. The measures adopted

by the community leaders in management of conflict supports the findings of Adekunle and Adisa (2010) who said that peace cannot be guaranteed if the two parties are not ready to come together and cooperate with government and the community leaders in ensuring that peace is return to the trouble areas. Conflicts affect food production, food quality, supply and economic wellbeing of the people which in turn affect the economic development of the state and the country at large (Olaniyan et al, 2015).

From table 2, The community leaders participation in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers are really encouraging but in other way round the community leaders are incapacitated in some areas such as invitation of the two parties to meetings separately, creation of grazing zones in areas of conflict, formulation of a joint monitoring group to identify who is really at fault or a total ban of herdsmen. Okeke (2014) maintained that the community leadership failing to support the approach of the government toward establishing grazing Reserves would further exacerbate the conflict between herders and farmers as this will lead to the dispossession of farmers and landowners from their land. It is important for the community leaders to invite the two parties separately to a meeting or form a joint monitoring group to know who the cause of the conflict is. There have been cases whereby cattle rustlers were apprehended and paraded and they turn out to be members of both the Fulani herdsmen and the host farming communities in the Northern part of Nigeria (Higazi, 2016). Therefore, one cannot discard the probability of having members of the community conspiring with those in or against the Fulani community to rustle cattle.

Finally, table 3 reveals that the community leaders have little constrain items of herdsmen farmers' conflict resolution which include: lack of commitment and poor accountability on the part of community leaders and evasive nature of Fulani herdsmen. This implies that in a situation where the Fulani herdsmen are not willing to answer questions directly when confronted made it difficult for the conflict to be resolved. Adisa & Adekunle in Aliyu et al (2018) added that unresolved conflict in the face of prevailing disproportionate increase in food production to the growing population, farmers-herdsmen conflicts have further compounded food insecurity because many farmers are abandoning their farm for fear of being maimed or killed. In the process, many of them move to urban centers in search of alternative means of livelihood thereby reducing the rate of food production.

## V. Conclusion

It was revealed that completion over land used; cattle rustling destruction of crops are forms of farmer herdsmen conflict. Some of the measures adopted by the community leaders in herdsmen farmers' conflicts resolution in curbing food insecurity in the study area include: dialogue, negotiating settlement and fostering agreement. Community leaders' actually participated in conflicts resolution between herdsmen and crop farmers but the community leaders are incapacitated in some areas such as invitation of the two parties to meetings separately, enforcement of state anti-open grazing laws and establishment of ranches in areas of conflict, formulation of a joint monitoring group or a total ban of herdsmen. The problems encountered are the envisaged nature of the Fulani herdsmen.

## VI. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Since the measures adopted in conflict resolution yielded no result, the community leaders should adopt other strategies such as joint monitoring group between the herdsmen and crop farmers to ascertain the source of the conflict.
2. The community should assist in the establishment of ranches in areas of conflicts and back it with the state anti-open grazing laws that no cattle should be found beyond their ranches.
3. The community leaders should invite both parties in a meeting separately before the joint meetings to enable them speak up.

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