

ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN FARMER-PASTORALIST CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF A RURAL COMMUNITY IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY - NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Farmer-pastoralist conflict in Nigeria is a serious cause of concern for the nation's security, requiring various approaches and methods to get a lasting resolution. This paper investigated the roles of stakeholders in farmer-pastoralist conflict prevention and resolution in the context of a rural community in a developing country like Nigeria. Data was collected using key informant interviews with 45 stakeholders and were subjected to a stakeholder analysis. Results of the study revealed that most of the primary and external stakeholders lacked the power to enforce their roles. Additionally, the high interests of the primary stakeholders in conflict prevention and resolution could be due to them being the primary victims in these types of conflicts. On the contrary, some important secondary stakeholders had low interest in preventing and or resolving farmer-pastoralist conflicts despite their high powers. The paper recommended that sensitisation on state grazing laws, community customs, and ethical guidelines related to land use, livestock management, conflict management, and conflict resolution for stakeholders with low levels of interests should be fostered realistically, as it could help enhance awareness and facilitate adjudicating over conflict issues for speedy resolution and management in the study area.

Keywords: Farmer-pastoralist, conflict, stakeholder analysis, roles, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

A common feature of livelihood systems around the world is the inter-connectivity by locations, ethnicities and their dependence on natural resources. As societies become increasingly connected, they are confronted with challenges that demand creativity and innovation. In some cases, such challenges inevitably engender conflicts as individuals seek to live their lives and interact in society. Such is the dynamics presented in farmers-pastoralists' communities across Nigeria. In the past, farmers and cattle pastoralists have coexisted inter-dependently, sharing common resources for farming and grazing with a manageable level of tolerance and accommodation (Madi *et al.*, 2021). Unfortunately, this appreciable level of peaceful relationship has gradually transformed from that of cooperation, to competition and now, to conflict (Twumasi *et al.*, 2021). Recent years have witnessed an emergence and escalations of farmer-pastoralist conflicts (F-PCs) which together with its management have become one of the challenges facing the country's security landscape today (Igwe, 2020), especially because these conflicts have in some cases escalated into serious humanitarian crisis situations.

Although, the causes of conflicts are multifaceted and interconnected, research have narrowed the reasons for F-PCs to two categories of causes. While most studies on F-PCs have generally held an assumption of a causal link between natural resource scarcity and F-PC (Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2009; Moritz, 2010; Bukari, 2017; Madi *et*

al., 2021), other studies, however, perceive the conflicts as a social phenomenon underpinned by the embedded ecological, economic, political, and social interactions of the everyday realities of their environments (Bukari, 2016; Moritz, 2010). Across the different strands of thought, there is a consensus that climate change has reinforced these F-PCs, especially in the context of increasing migration, commercialisation, commodification and individualisation of land and water resources (Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2012; Moritz, 2010).

As a natural and inevitable phenomenon in life (Twumasi *et al.*, 2021), conflicts cannot be eradicated completely. The most concerning aspects are their disaster outcomes which are characterised by physical losses (homes/farms destructions, casualties), economic losses (income/resources/yield), and socio-psychological effects (emotional exhaustion) (Adisa, 2012). Their culminations of which include weakening a community's social structure, a heightened level of insecurity, stunted economic development (Igwe, 2020) stalling development effort, and threatening food security. Hence, various stakeholders in Nigeria have been seeking, designing and adopting approaches/methods to resolve/manage these F-PCs. Unfortunately, their efforts have not gained significant lasting successes so far as evidenced by the frequent F-PCs across the country which resulted in 60,000 fatalities between 2001 and 2023 (Omogbolagun, 2023) and 2800 fatalities in Benue State in two years (Ogwuche, 2024).

There is a wide range of methods and instruments that constitute conflict management (Fogg, 1985). For simplicity, Twumasi (2021) suggested two broad categories: violent (force, coercion) and non-violent (negotiation, and mediation). In any case, successful outcomes involve careful coordination and cooperation among the various stakeholders concerned. These are defined as the individuals or groups with vested interests in the outcome of a particular situation (Chiloane, 2023). With regards to F-PC cases, these stakeholders can vary widely, including governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local community leaders, religious leaders, law enforcement agents and individuals. Therefore, stakeholder engagement involves identifying, communicating with, and applying these parties for their recognition as crucial catalysts in achieving peace and solutions in conflict situations (Chiloane, 2023).

Conflicts are almost inevitable due to the dependence of individuals on common resources for their livelihoods and survival. In such cases, it is almost impossible to satisfy all stakeholders at all times, especially considering that these natural resources may be scarce and limited. The rationale for stakeholder involvement is to explore available opportunities for conflict management/resolution. Therefore, ways are needed with the hope that stakeholders can cooperate and agree to some level of reconciliation/resolution. Considering the devastating effects of conflicts, it is necessary to identify stakeholders: the people, groups or organisations that should be involved in meeting and agreeing to reasonable proposals without undermining the rights of any individuals/groups/communities. In this process, identifying stakeholders, understanding their involvement in these activities, understanding their existing relationship dynamics and exploring the possibilities for cooperation, could foster the process of management and/or resolutions.

Located in north-central Nigeria, Jigawa State has been experiencing its own fair share of F-PCs with cases dominating media outlets' headlines over the years (The New Humanitarian, 2008; Channels Television, 2020; Premium Times, 2021; Daily Trust, 2022). These conflicts are usually seasonal in nature as they occur in the onset of the rainy season during which the *Fulani* pastoralists migrate in search for pasture. The start of their migration from the dryer north coincides with the commencement of the rainy season in the southern part of the country and neighbouring country of Cameroon, and they return to the northern part at the onset of its rainy season (Mustapha & Usman, 2021). Areas in the state where these conflicts are frequent include communities around international borders and government designated international cattle routes

(Mustapha & Usman, 2021). While available literature is replete with F-PC studies focusing on various aspects such as their causes (Joseph, 2023) and their consequences (Mustapha & Usman, 2021; Madi *et al.* 2021), this study addresses the gap in research by highlighting the roles of various stakeholders in a F-PCs. With a focus on Jigawa State, Nigeria, the objective of this study was to identify and understand the different individuals, groups, organisations, or entities that are involved in or affected by the occasional F-PCs. It mapped out their roles, interests and power dynamics, providing insights into how they may influence F-PCs and their resolutions.

Conflict Transformation Theory

This study adopts the 'Conflict Transformation Theory' (CTT), which is based on the concept of initiatives introduced by local actors as key stakeholders in driving sustainable peace in communities. In the individual, structural, relational, and cultural domains, peace-building is a long-term process of systemic transformation from conflict to peace (Lederach, 1997). The "middle out" approach, which divides a conflict society into three pyramidal categories of actors as top leadership, middle level leadership, and grassroots, is based on the idea of local owned peace-building (Pattenholz, 2015). Together, these groups gather resources for promoting peace (Lederach, 1997). Lederach (1997) emphasised the potential of grassroots and middle level leadership in building and maintaining peace for an extended length of time. Ultimately, reconciliation and the significance of mending damaged relationships are established by the CTT (Paffenholz, 2015). In the context of this paper, the CTT provides a useful guide in understanding local actions initiated to prevent and manage conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in Jigawa State. It highlights the crucial role of local stakeholders in initiating and sustaining peace-building initiatives to prevent conflict recurrence in future.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Jigawa state, situated in the north-western part of Nigeria and is located between latitudes 10° 57' N and 13° 03' N, longitudes 8° 08' E and 10° 37' E. It has a land area of about 22,210km² (2.2 million hectares). Average annual rainfall is about 700mm and a mean annual temperature of about 25°C. Using an annual growth rate of 2.75%, the population of the State in 2022 was projected at 7,499,100 (City Population, 2024). Most parts of the state lies within the Sudan vegetation zone with the climate ranging between arid and semi arid. The state is considered to be agrarian as more than 90 percent of the working adults are engaged in agriculture as a means of livelihood. Jigawa State is blessed with large expanse of agricultural land, rivers and flood plains,

suitable for crops, livestock and fish production. The main rivers are Hadejia, Kafin Hausa and Iggi with several tributaries feeding extensive marshlands in the north-eastern part of the state. The combination of vast fertile land and water resources provides a favourable environment for crop and livestock production, including millet, rice, wheat, sorrel, sesame, cattle, sheep and goat. Hence, the economy of the state is largely characterised by informal agriculture-based economic activity. Over 80% of the population is engaged in farming at various scales and livestock rearing, however, pastoralism is unique to the *Fulanis* who are usually settled in the hinterlands. Languages commonly spoken in the state are *Hausa*, *Fulfulde*, and *Kanuri*. F-PCs in the state are concentrated around the resource-endowed locations like the fertile flood plains, river valleys and other water points which involve the right to ownership and access (Ajuwon, 2004). This explains why the conflicts are spread across almost the entire part of the state with popular conflict affected Local Government Areas (LGAs) being Miga, Jahun, Birnin Kudu (southern), Ringim,

Garki, Maigatari (northern), Kaugama, Guri (eastern).

Pastoralists are individuals whose major source of livelihood is livestock herding and are important contributors to food production and food security in Nigeria. In this study, these pastoralists are categorised into two: Sedentary pastoralists who are resident almost permanently in specific locations and migratory pastoralists who do not have permanent locations nor possess assets like land, houses and bicycles and so are frequently in transit with their livestock in search of pasture for their livelihood.

A four stage purposive sampling approach was employed to target areas with prevalence of F-PCs in each stage of the sampling procedure. First was a selection of three out of the four administrative zones of Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) in the state. This was narrowed to one LGA from each of the three selected ADP zones out of which a further three villages were selected as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of sampled locations

SN	Zone	LGA	Village/Homestead
1	I - Birnin Kudu	Jahun	Harbotsuwa Buduma Yankunam
2	II - Gumel	Ringim	Malamawar yandutse Zangon kanya Auramo
3	III - Hadejia	Guri	Adiyani Gagiya Majanguwa
Total	3	3	9

Source: Jigawa Agricultural and Rural Development Authority, 2018 (JARDA)

In the final stage, 45 leaders/staff representing stakeholders were selected randomly from a

prepared sample frame established from a reconnaissance survey as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample size of stakeholders in F-PCs in Jigawa state

SN	Stakeholders	Estimated number of stakeholders	Sample size	Proportion (%)
1	Religious leaders	40	6	13.33
2	Traditional leaders	30	6	13.33
3	Law enforcement agents	38	9	20.00
4	State and L.G. officials	25	5	11.11
5	Extension agents	10	4	8.89
6	Officials of pastoralists associations	15	10	22.22
7	Officials of farmers association	9	5	11.11
Total		158	45	100.00

Source: Preliminary survey, 2018

Qualitative primary data were sourced using key informant interviews (KIIs) to identify the roles of the stakeholders in conflict prevention/resolution in 2018.

Stakeholder analysis (Bruce, 2014) was used in this study. It is a tool for identifying the needs and concerns of different stakeholders. It involves identification of a project's key stakeholders, an assessment of their interests and the ways in which these interests affect the project and its viability. Stakeholder analysis is a process of systematically gathering and analysing qualitative information to determine whose interests should be considered when developing and/or implementing a policy or program (Bruce, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The obtained information on stakeholders was analysed to determine their clusters based on different levels of interest and levels of power over the crisis.

Types of stakeholders

Following Bruce's (2014) categorisation, three types of stakeholders were identified as presented in Table 3: -

1. Primary Stakeholders: - These are individuals, groups and institutions ultimately affected by decisions and actions regarding certain project management, use, development and conservation. These include intended beneficiaries or those negatively affected – i.e. winners and losers. Examples are farmers and pastoralists.
2. Secondary Stakeholders: - Are intermediaries in the design and implementation of a certain management framework, programme or project. They can be sub-divided into funding, administrative, implementation and advocacy institutions and can also be more simply sub-divided into governmental, NGO and private sector institutions.
3. External Stakeholder: - They include those with other vested interests. Examples are politicians and traditional leaders.

Table 3: Stakeholders' roles and their perceived levels of interest in F-PC in Jigawa state

Stakeholders	Level of interest in preventing/resolving conflicts	Level of power in preventing/resolving conflict	Roles/Capacities	Nature of interest
Secondary State (S) and Local Government (L) officials (G)	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● L.G report potential conflict situations to S.G through their cabinets for immediate action. ● Assists farmers and pastoralist leaders in setting of conflict prevention committees. 	2 (-)
Extension agents	High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prevent conflict through creation of awareness among farmers and pastoralist to live in peace with one another. 	1 (+)
Police	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timely response to resolve conflicts. ● Sets up farmers - pastoralists' conflict prevention and resolution committees which consist of representative of the farmers and pastoralist leaders & traditional leaders of the study area. ● The established committees report anticipated conflict situations to the police for immediate actions to be taken. 	2 (-)

Stakeholders		Level of interest in preventing/resolving conflicts	Level of power in preventing/resolving conflict	Roles/Capacities	Nature of interest
Civil corps	defence	High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Control conflicts ● Provides necessities for residents in times of arrival of migratory pastoralists in the LGAs of the study. ● They assist in the maintenance of peace and order and in the protection and rescuing of victims during periods of emergency. ● Provide necessary warnings for communities on arrivals of migratory pastoralists in the L.G.As of the study. ● Aids in restoring and maintaining order in distressed areas. 	1(+)
Vigilante		Low	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sometimes get involved in pastoralists' confrontations given that they are members of the farming communities. 	2(-)
Area court judges		Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have constitutional power to punish offenders. ● Preside over conflict cases. ● Pass judgements such as compensatory payments for cattle encroached farmlands. 	2(-)
Primary Officials of farmers associations		High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating awareness among their members to live in peace with the pastoralists. ● Warn members avoid encroaching designated cattle routes, watering points and grazing fields during farming activities. ● Possess low power in preventing/resolving conflict in the study area because they lack legal support. 	1 (+)
Officials of pastoralist associations (MACBAN)		High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warn their members to obey rules and regulations guiding their grazing activities. ● Set conflict prevention committee among the sedentary and migratory pastoralists. 	1 (+)

Stakeholders	Level of interest in preventing/resolving conflicts	Level of power in preventing/resolving conflict	Roles/Capacities	Nature of interest
Crop farmers	Low	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They commonly adopt negotiation approach in conflict resolutions ● Avoid encroaching designated cattle routes, watering points and grazing fields. 	
Sedentary pastoralists	High		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prevent their livestock from trespassing farmlands and also ● Prevent their livestock from consuming harvested produce stored in farmlands. 	1 (+)
Migratory pastoralists	Low	Low		2 (-)
External Traditional leaders	High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warn farmers against encroaching designated cattle routes, watering points and grazing fields during farming activities. ● They appoint representatives of farmers and pastoralists to mediate and agree on rules that promote harmonious co-existence. 	1(+)
Religious leaders	High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preach to their communities on the importance of peaceful co-existence. ● Advocate for reporting any pastoralist related incidents to nearest authority, rather than take laws into their own hands. 	1(+)

Source: Field Survey Data, 2018

Key: 1(+) represents positive interest and 2(-) represents negative interest.

Stakeholders' roles and their perceived levels of interests in conflict prevention and resolution in the study area

It is important to understand two terms used in Table 3. Power, which measures the degree of ability of stakeholders to help or to impact the situation and interest, which measures their degree of support or opposition to conflict prevention/resolution efforts and goals. It can be seen from the table that the stakeholders are aware of their unique roles but some of them lack the power to enforce their roles. This is peculiar to the primary and the external stakeholders. However, it is not surprising that most of them have high interest in conflict prevention/resolution because they are usually the primary victims in these conflicts.

Unfortunately, most of the secondary stakeholders had low interest in preventing/resolving F-PCs despite their high powers. This attitude could influence the frequency of F-PCs in the study area since these types of stakeholders are responsible for delivering protection and justice to primary stakeholders. Their negative interest despite possessing high power is a catalyst for conflict because the primary stakeholders could easily violate the rules and regulations governing farming and grazing activities established by the secondary stakeholders, thereby inciting conflicts.

Stakeholders with high power but low interest means that although they have the capacity to affect conflict resolution processes and management

outcomes, their low interests in conflict prevention/resolution efforts are a cause of concern. This implies that such stakeholders may be a source of significant risk, thus, will require careful monitoring and management. Among these stakeholders are traditional leaders with questionable characters. For example, it was alleged that they sometimes sell parts of pastoralists' designated watering points and grazing fields to crop farmers for farming activities like irrigation, and as well as accept bribes from pastoralists, which consequently create conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in the study area.

Ideally, stakeholders that exhibit high levels of interests as well as possess high power are most desirable but unfortunately these were lacking in this study. Such stakeholders have the advantage of aligning with the goal of resolution and prevention efforts and so are critical to achieving them. They are the primary audience and should include both the immediate decision makers and opinion leaders i.e., the people whose opinion matters. On the other hand, stakeholders with high interest but low power, or vice-versa, should be kept informed about developments in prevention/resolution efforts. Ideally, they should be supporters of the efforts to achieve the goals of conflict prevention/resolution.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a complex issue challenging the security in agricultural communities across Nigeria, F-PCs have been on the rise in recent years with no lasting solution in sight. In Jigawa State, some of these cases had escalated to violent levels with reported casualties. Thus, a continuous engagement of stakeholders seems to be an effective way to manage such crisis situations. By applying a stakeholder analysis, the study identified multiple stakeholders with varying levels of power and interests. The empirical contribution of this paper is that it provides a realistic perspective of the diversity of stakeholders, highlighting the important roles they play in their efforts towards F-PC prevention and resolution which could help foster better coexistence in the study area. Although stakeholder have their individual roles, their interactions in a multi-stakeholder initiative process of decision-making, early warnings of potential conflicts, advocacy, enforcement of rules and punishment of offenders could enable a more harmonious system as well as a key to better address conflicts in the study area. To promote their efforts and strengthen their roles towards more peaceful conditions, some recommendations were proffered. Firstly, sensitisation on state grazing laws, community customs, and ethical guidelines related to land use, livestock management, conflict management, and conflict resolution for stakeholders with low levels of interests such as state and local government

officials, police, vigilante and crop farmers and migratory pastoralists should be fostered realistically, as it could help enhance awareness and facilitate adjudicating over conflict issues for speedy resolution and management in the study area. Secondly, stakeholders with low power such as extension agents should be trained on the use of technology and provided with mobile phones or community radios to provide early warning systems for potential conflicts by disseminating information about seasonal movements, or potential resource shortage locations so as to avoid confrontations. Thirdly, stakeholders with low levels of power such as extension agents, civil defence corps and traditional leaders should be empowered by law enforcement agencies by recognising and formalising their roles as legitimate authorities, ensure that their decisions are backed by law, or provide them with the authority to engage in informal dispute resolution with the possibility of legal enforcement of outcomes.

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