



## CONFLICT EXPERIENCES OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Conflict has been regarded as one of the major constraints to agricultural production in Nigeria. Farmers and cattle herdsmen conflict is one of the major conflicts that is predominant and it affect rural households in Nasarawa State. This study was therefore designed to identify the conflict experiences of farmers and how it affect farmers in the State.*

*Data used for this study were obtained from a total of 179 households through a three-stage sampling technique. The first stage was the purposive selection of 10 crisis prone local government areas. Second stage was the selection of one village each from each crises prone local government areas. The third stage was random selection of 25 households. Major tools of analysis for this study included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis.*

*Majority of the rural households have agriculture as their major source of income (96.09%). All the rural households have experienced conflict at one point in time during the time frame of the study. Farmer/herdsmen conflict was experienced by 94.41% of the households. Ethnoreligious was experienced by 36.31% of the respondent while communal clashes was experienced by 3.35% of the respondent thereby revealing that the mostly experienced conflict is the farmer/herdsmen conflict which occurred on an average of 3 times over a period of five years.*

*It is therefore recommended that farmers should be trained and supported on the use of improved varieties to increase yield without increasing the size of land so as to avoid negative effects of conflict on agricultural production. Besides, there is the need for herdsmen to adopt better ways of livestock management.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Conflict, Experiences, and Rural Households*

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Agriculture is an important sector in West Africa where it contributes up to 23% of the labour force. In Nigeria, agriculture is a key sector in the economy accounting for between 60-70% of the labour force and contributing between 30-40% of the GDP. Nigeria is a country with great potentials for agricultural production. Being a major element and component of national development, a vibrant agricultural sector has the potentials to build a prosperous economy and provide for the basic needs of the population through ensuring the supply of raw materials for the industrial sector as well as providing gainful employment for the teeming population (Ajetomobi, *et.al.*, 2010).

Nigeria's major problems of food and agricultural production include poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, use of manual farm tools, lack of food storage facilities, lack of scientific and technological knowhow, lack of good leadership and non-colonialism, industrialization and privatisation, global warming and insecurity due to conflict. Conflict situation including ethnic, religious, herder-farmer, communal, and indigene/settler which threatens farmers' sustainable livelihood have become brazen characteristics of Nigeria.

Conflict has been one of the major problems confronting agriculture in Nigeria. The inability to make Nigeria a global power house in food through agriculture can be well related to conflict. Most conflicts, and especially the internal conflicts that have now become the dominant model of mass violence, mainly affect rural areas and their populations. They disrupt food production through physical destruction and plundering of crops and livestock, harvests and food reserves; they prevent and discourage farming; they interrupt the lines of transportation through which food exchanges, and even humanitarian relief, take place; they destroy farm capital, conscript young and able-bodied males, taking them away from farm work and suppress income earning occupations. While livelihood is a process by which people make a living through specific capabilities, assets and activities (Ellis, 2000), the impact of conflicts on livelihood often lasts long after the violence has subsided, because assets have been destroyed, people killed or maimed, populations displaced, the environment damaged, and health, education and social



services shattered; still more awesome are the landmines which litter agricultural land, kill and cripple people and deter them from farming for years -even decades- after all violence has ceased (World Food Summit – WFS, 2006).

Nigeria in the last four years has witnessed a dramatic increase in conflict across all the geopolitical zones of the country. The concomitant effect of the conflict which is a recurring disaster has been the distortion of the development prospect of the country. While it has been consuming human beings and properties like a tsunami disaster across the country, the North exhibited a high incidence of the conflicts than any other region in the country and has rendered the region highly unstable for effective farming (Olusola, 2004). Nassarawa in particular has experienced considerable episodes of agricultural and natural resources related clashes. Since the beginnings of the 1990s, clashes between farmers and pastoralists especially in rural areas where the dwellers are predominantly small scale farmers have become issues of particular concern in the state (Blench, 2004). The causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts are often not farfetched. However, there appears to be no consensus among both groups on the causes of their mutual conflict. According to de Haan (2002), while farmers cite destruction of crops by cattle and other property by the pastoralists as the main direct causes for conflicts cited, burning of rangelands and fadama as well as blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are major direct reasons cited by the pastoralists.

### Statement of the Problems

Three-quarters of the world's poor and hungry are located in rural areas (USAID, 2005). Agricultural production in Nigeria is not sufficient for our need as a country; the people depend directly and indirectly on agriculture and agriculture-related activities for their livelihood. However, with rapid population increase and limited land area, available land per individual shrinks continuously. As such, access to land resources decreases for the rural dwellers. This may therefore be responsible for resource based conflicts especially over rights of access to land and land use which have been increasing in frequency and intensity (Yamano and Deininger, 2005).

Conflicts cause serious dislocations, suspend or destroy income opportunities, create food insecurity, damage the environment, and frequently result in the loss of lives and property. Poor households who dominate small scale agricultural production bear the heaviest burdens of land-related conflicts for the simple reason that their daily needs and livelihoods are directly tied to their property rights. Conflicts have not only heightened the level of insecurity, but have also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the food crisis in Nigeria and other affected countries due to loss of farmer lives, animals, crops and valuable properties (Cotula, Toulmin and Hesse, 2004). Nigeria has also recently experienced severe episodes of internal conflict, which have negatively influenced agricultural productivity and investment (Kimenyi et al., 2014).

Fasona and Omojola (2005) found that conflicts over agricultural land use between farmers and herdsmen accounted for 35 percent of all reported crises. Another study of 27 communities in North Central Nigeria showed that over 40% of the households surveyed had experienced agricultural land related conflicts (Kneeing and Fiki, 2004).

### Justification for the Study

Conflicts can result in a variety of undesirable social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts ranging from minor to significant, short term to long term, and micro to macro in scale (Leif, 2007). These impacts can include negative effects on individuals as a consequence of stress and anxiety; breakdown in communities; additional demands on government services; increased and costly demands on rural industries, degradation of the local environment, which can have flow-on effects for communities and businesses; and loss of culture and identity within communities.

In an attempt to increase food production in Nigeria, every effort should be made to assess the contribution of conflict to reduction in agricultural production. Therefore, effect of the conflict relating to the major rampaging agricultural problem is the point of focus of this study. Thus, the relevance will actively reflect the effect of the conflict on rural livelihood of small scale farmers. This will relatively interpose a remark into a conversational issue in various disciplinary levels and among other researchers for sustainable development.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Area

This study was carried out in Nasarawa State. The state is situated in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Otherwise referred to as north-central Nigeria, the Middle Belt consists of Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Niger, Kogi, Taraba, Adamawa, Kwara, Abuja (Federal Capital Territory- FCT), and to some extent Southern Kaduna (Ayih, 2003). This geographical sphere coincides virtually, but not identically, with what is known as the North-Central zone in the contemporary Nigerian Federation. Nasarawa State was created on October 1st, 1996. It was severed from the old Plateau State. Nasarawa State is composed of thirteen (13) Local Government Areas. Its capital is Lafia, a fast-urbanizing town along the Northern Benue valley. Spread across these Local Government Areas are a number of chiefdoms and emirates. Nasarawa State is a home to an amalgam of ethnic nationalities. Prominent among these are the Eggon, Hausa-Fulani, Tiv, Jukun, Gbagyi, Egbura, Doma, Alago, Milgili, Kambari/Kanuri, and so on. There is also a pronounced presence of settlers (non-natives) from the different parts of the country in the state. Nasarawa State lies within the Savanna grassland region of central Nigeria (Ayih, 2003).



The predominant vegetation of the state is undulating grassland with sparse forests along the Tire river valleys. The topography of the state is largely low lying but for the high lands around Mada hills and NasarawaEggon mountains, which hosts NasarawaEggon, Akwanga and Wamba Local Government Areas. Agriculture is traditionally the main occupation of the people of Nasarawa State. Important food crops grown in the state include yam, maize, guinea corn, rice, sugarcane, beans, soya beans, groundnuts, and assorted fruits and vegetables. The state is also a harbour of important solid minerals, namely granite, limestone, salt and sundry precious stones. Fishing and herding are also flourishing agricultural activities in the state. Demographically, Nasarawa State is characterized by a mean but 'prodigiously' increasing population. According to the 2006 census, the state has a total population of 1,863,275 people, making it the smallest in the North-central geopolitical zone. It is, however, estimated that the population of the state has since geometrically increased to the figure of 2.6million people at present (Adogi, 2013).

Nasarawa State lies in a geographical or ecological belt characterized by sparse habitation. In effect, the state's population density is low and dispersed. This characteristic makes the state favourable to grazing and other agricultural activities. The vast arable land and relatively thin population which used to be a dominant attribute of the state, made struggle for farmland virtually unknown in the past. This advantage, however, has been overtaken in the recent years by the trend of massive agrarian migration into the state, which has resulted in stiff competition for the increasingly scarce land resources, leading to confrontations and violent conflicts (Ayih, 2003).

Nassarawa state is divided into three Zones. This classification is in consonance with agro-ecological and cultural characteristics of the areas. The zones comprise the following: Zone A: Karu, Keffi, Kokona, Nassarawa and Toto LGAs; Zone B: Akwanga, Nassarawa, Egon and Wamba LGAs; Zone C: Awe, Doma, Kaena, Lafia and Obi LGAs. The map of Nassarawa State is as shown in Figure 1.

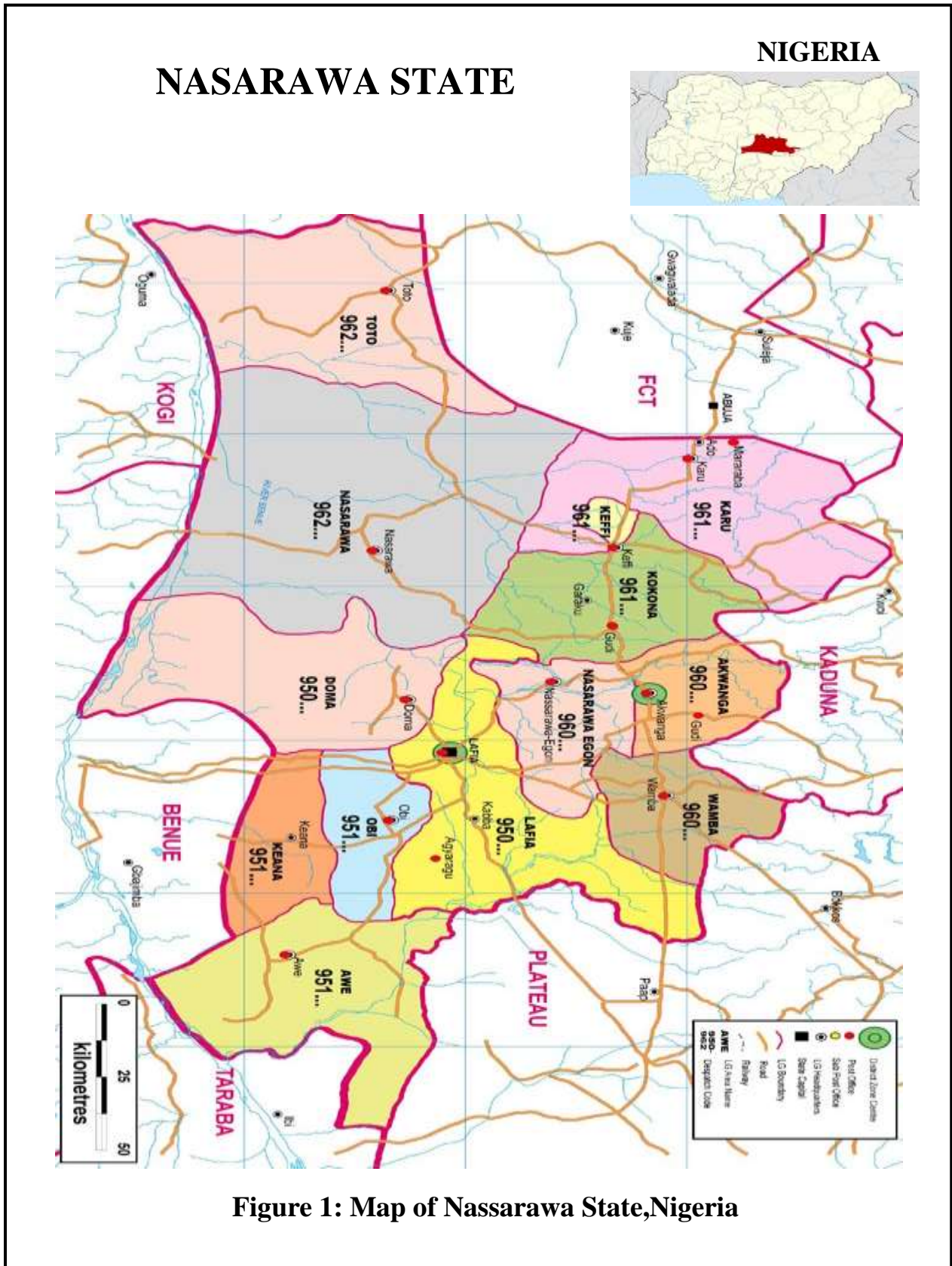


Figure 1: Map of Nassarawa State,Nigeria

**Sampling Technique**

A three-stage simple random sampling technique was employed for this study. The first stage was purposive selection of crisis prone local government areas. Second stage was purposive selection of 1 village each from each crises prone local government and the third stage was random selection of 25 households. A total of 250 rural households were selected for this study out of which responses from only 179 household was valid for the analysis of this study.

**Method of Data Collection**

Data used for this study were collected over a period of two months. This ranges between March 2016 and April 2016. This enabled the researcher obtain information on the vulnerability of rural households to conflict. The main data for this study were generated through primary sources. This was obtained through the use of a structured questionnaire (Appendix 1) administered by trained enumerators. Data relating to the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the rural households, effect of conflict on agricultural production, income, and food expenditure consumption was obtained.

**Analytical Techniques**

Descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendencies, which comprise mean, mode, standard deviation, frequency distribution and percentages, was used to describe the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the rural households in the study area. Other tool employed for the study was Correlation analysis,

$X_i$  is the vector of socioeconomic characteristics

Where:

- $X_1$  = Total household income
- $X_2$  = household size (number)
- $X_3$  = age of household head (years)
- $X_4$  = Education level of household head
- $d_1$  = Place of Agric as source of income
- $d_2$  = Sex of the household head

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected during the field survey of the study.

**SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL HOUSEHOLD**

This section presents the socioeconomic characteristics that express information such as religion, education, sex, age, marital status, farming as source of income, access to credit facility and the conflict experiences of farmers. These characteristics may in one way or the other influence vulnerability of rural household to conflict. Distribution of the socioeconomic characteristics of the rural households is as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Socioeconomic characteristics of rural household (n-179)**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
<b>Age</b>			
Less than 40	8	4.47	60.23
40 – 49	28	15.64	
50 – 59	45	25.14	
60 and above	98	54.74	
Min 30			
Max 90			
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	90	50.28	
Female	89	49.72	
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married	170	94.97	
Single	4	2.23	
Widow	3	1.68	
Widower	2	1.12	
<b>Education Level</b>			
No Formal Education	11	6.15	
Primary Education	49	27.37	
Secondary Education	78	43.58	
Tertiary Education	41	22.91	

**Other sources of Income**

## Other Sources of Income

Trading	50	27.93
Labour hiring	26	14.53
No other Source	103	57.54
Total	179	100

**Agric. as Major Source of Income**

## Major Source of Income

Yes	172	96.09
No	7	3.91
Total	179	100

Majority of the respondents have Agriculture as their major source of income (96.09%) in the study area. This shows that majority of the respondents have farming as their primary occupation. This could be because farming is the leading occupation of the people of Nassarawa State. It can be deduced that most of the population are highly vulnerable to conflict since farming is their major source of income and conflict has been of negative impact on agricultural production. On the other hand, some (42.46%) of the respondents are involved in other secondary occupation, which has assisted them to diversify their economy and may likely make them less vulnerable to conflict.

Access to credit eases the financial constraints faced by the rural household. Availability of credit is expected to reduce the level of vulnerability of rural household to conflict. 30.73% of the respondents have access to credit while 69.27% did not. It is therefore possible that the majority of the rural households are more vulnerable to conflict situation. To some extent the age of the rural household heads determines the ability to work and in turn the output. This variable is included to determine the vulnerability of the household to conflict through the output. Households with young household heads whose ages range between 30 – 59 constitute 45.25% of the respondents are likely to cope better during crisis because they are still agile and capable of coping in situation of crisis and becomes less vulnerable, while the aged 60 and above which have 54.75% of the respondents becomes more vulnerable and cope less during crisis. The result of the findings shows that male and female gender engage in farming in the rural household and all have to deal with conflict situation. However, the number of female (49.72%) and the male (50.38%).

Majority of the respondents are married (94.97). This likely implies that the respondents have family labour to assist in farming activities and thereby increases output and makes them less vulnerable to conflict. 2.23% of the respondents were singles and 1.68% was widows and 1.12% widower.

**CONFLICT EXPERIENCES OF FARMERS****Table 3: Types and no of times conflict experienced**

Conflicts experienced	Frequency	Percentage
<b>a. Types of conflict</b>		
Farmer/herdsmen	169	94.41
Ethno-religious	65	36.31
Communal	6	3.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>a. Types of conflict experience</b>		
i. Farmers/herdsmen		
Less or equal to 2	76	42.46
3 to 4	86	48.05
Above 4	5	2.8
Not applicable	12	6.7
Total	179	100
ii. Ethnoreligious		
Less or equal to 2	43	24.02



3 to 4	21	11.73
Above 4	12	6.7
Not applicable	114	63.69
iii.    Communal		3.35
Less or equal to 2	4	2.23
3 to 4	2	1.12
3	173	96.65
<b>b. Personal Suffering</b>		
Death of Children	20	11.17
Destruction of housing facilities	18	10.26
Discontinuation of Education	14	7.82
Inadequate Food to eat	50	27.93
Livestock Death and Losses	8	4.47
Postharvest losses	20	11.17
Sickness and Diseases	24	13.41
Loss of Land and Properties	25	13.97
Total	179	100

As shown in Table 3, the most prevalent of the conflict is the farmers/herdsmen which was experienced by 94.41% Further analysis reveals that rural households who experienced farmer/herdsmen have it on the average of 3 times. The study further revealed that while ethno-religious conflict was experienced by 36.31% of the respondents, communal clashes was experienced by 3.35% of the respondent.

All the respondents have experienced conflict in one way or the other which likely suggest that all the respondents may be vulnerable to conflict. The conflict experiences of the household include the Farmers/herdsmen, Communal, Ethnoreligious and Political crisis. The more conflict experienced by rural household the higher the vulnerability. However this has led to some personal suffering of farmers which include: loss of lives and properties, death of children, postharvest losses, discontinuation of education of the children, sickness and diseases and inadequate food to eat.

## CONCLUSION

Conflict has adverse effect on the rural household in the country. Conflict is a major challenge in agricultural production in Nasarawa State. In view of the agricultural dependent economy of the rural household in the state, conflict has negative implication on agriculture. All the respondents have not only experienced conflict but have been undergone diverse personal sufferings due to conflict. They have come up with some coping strategies; most of the strategies used by the farmers can only be effective for a short period of time, some of which cannot effectively reduce the effect of the conflict. Descriptive evidences indicate that all the rural households experienced conflict at one point over a specified period of four years ranging between 2011 and 2015.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

The government and the rural household should be provided with adequate basic amenities like water, good road and electricity.

Better way of livestock management which may include the use of grazing reserve and more awareness on stock route should be created.

Farmers should form association and campaign to draw the attention of government and stakeholder to the impact of conflict on agricultural production. Anything done to develop the environment will equally help build up their production and reduces their impact of conflict on agricultural production.

Finally, adequate security is paramount in crisis zones where there is a lot of farmers and herdsmen which most times engage in clashes like Nasarawa State. However this is the responsibility of both the community leaders' household and the government.

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