

CLIMATE CHANGE AND PASTORAL CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE BELT AND SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA: IMPLICATION ON HUMAN RESOURCE OF THE REGIONS

Solomon Ogbonna ABUGU and Chinwe Obiora ONUBA

Department of Human Resource Management, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.

ABSTRACT: *This paper examined the relationship between climate change and pastoral conflicts as well as their effects on human resource of both the middle belt and south eastern Nigeria. It is ex-post-factor in nature and thus relied heavily on literature with qualitative data and descriptive method of analysis. The study revealed that the pastoralists migrate due largely to extreme and unfavourable weather conditions occasioned by climate change. In the main, Deprivation, frustration and aggression theory was employed to anchor the study. The paper noted that the strength of a nation lies in her resources; however, pastoral conflicts occasioned by climate change has had a far reaching negative consequences on resources of these regions, ranging from waste to absolute destruction and depletion of both human and material resources. The paper recommended that active and sincere government intervention through the establishment of Grazing corridors or ranches in the regions, funding of research and development and establishment of regulatory frame work will help stem the tide.*

KEYWORDS: Climate Change, Conflicts, Human Resources, Middle Belt, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

There have been clashes between Fulani herdsmen and the aborigines in several parts of Nigeria for over three decades. The clashes are occasioned by the destruction of agricultural farms of the aborigines by the cattle of the Fulani's. Naturally Fulani's by their nature are migrants who leave their traditional abode in search of greener pasture for their flocks. The migration is caused by the absence of good and veritable land for their flock to feed on. For instance, the rate of desertification and deforestation in the Sahara desert is at an alarming rate and Nigeria is part of the countries of the Sahel region that experiences drought, desertification and deforestation. These triadic challenges mentioned above forced the Fulani's who occupy the area to migrate down south for greener pasture for their cattle to graze. In the course of entering the shores of the southern and middle-belt regions of the country, their cattle cause great damage to farm land, resulting to conflicts and confrontation with the indigenes

Boko (2007) noted that the intensity of the drought in the Sahel region calls for worry and urgent attention. It must be recalled that the Sahel and the Sahara desert stretches across over fifteen countries from North, west and central Africa and these areas is home for pastoralists, farmers, fishermen, traders etc. The Fulani's in Nigeria occupies some part of the drought stricken areas of the Sahel and to escape from the ravaging effect of the drought as well as to save their cattle from dying, they migrate down south and some areas of middle belt like

Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi etc. In the main, the migration of these herdsmen has caused more harm than good in all these areas.

Between the year 2000 and 2015, there has been reported cases of conflicts and confrontation between the Fulani's and the indigenes of the areas they migrated to. The media (print and electronics) is awash with reported cases of clashes between the Fulani's from the North and the inhabitants of the Plateau, Kogi and Benue in the middle belt region of the country and some parts of the Eastern region.

The Sun Newspaper of June 30th, 2014 reported of clashes between the Fulani's and the Agatu people of Benue state and the clashes left several people dead. In the eastern parts of the country, like, Uzouwani, Ezeagu, Umuahia to mention a few, such clashes has not gone unnoticed.

In 2013, the press media reported that the Fulani's killed 2 people in Uzouwani local government of Enugu State, 1 in Ezeagu and caused great damage to crops in Umuahia, Abia State. The case of Benue State is pathetic as the Fulani's has become an army of occupation to the inhabitants of the areas.

Essentially, the main cause for the migration has been the change in climate occasioned by the absence of adequate rainfall, poor grazing land for their animals and lack of coping mechanism by the Fulani herdsmen.

Essentially, in all these development, government has to find a lasting solution to the frequent clashes between the herdsmen and their neighbours. Though the Nigerian constitution of 1999 as amended allows every citizen to conduct his/her business in any part of the country as desired, the clause does not state that Fulani herdsmen should destroy the lives and properties of others.

Instructively, climate change is a global phenomenon which is not peculiar to Africa and Nigeria alone. The difference between the western world and Africa is that they possess the resources and adaptation strategy to deal with the challenge while Africans and Nigeria in particular does not. McCarty (2009) noted that the lesser the rainfall, the more severe the drought and the more intensification for scarce resources in the future. According to the author, recent observations on resource depletion across Africa, has shown that, climate change is capable of causing communal conflict and wars. While this observation was made years back, the reality in the Middle-belt and South Eastern region of the country shows that communal clash still live with them.

The Tell edition of June 2001 titled, war immanent in Benue between Fulani herdsmen and the inhabitants chronicled the degree of preparation made by the Fulani's and those they met in the area. A place like Jos, also in the middle belt has not known peace for over a decade now. The case of Benue and Jos remains worrisome in the sense that the Fulani's are more sophisticated with arms and ammunition and easily displace the owners of the land and occupy there. The government inability to deploy adequate security and other resources to stem the scourge of the clashes to checkmate the ravaging effects of the climate change has not helped matter. Had there been adequate rainfall in the north east and west, the Fulani herdsmen may have remained in their traditional abode than migrating to other areas for their cattle to graze.

While migration from rural – urban areas is not peculiar to Africa and Nigeria alone, the case of the Fulani herdsmen has become a worrisome dimension to Nigeria as a corporate entity. In

the main, migration of the Fulani herdsmen to other areas of the country has caused the country billions of Naira. For instance, lack of basic services, for the pastoralists such as grazing land, clean water, security, schools, hospitals and livestock, markets are responsible for these conflicts.

The report of International panel on climate change (IPCC) and other regional bodies stated that climate change represents a major threat to sustainable growth and development in Africa and Nigeria is not an exception. The poor economic status and widespread poverty in Africa, Nigeria inclusive and lack of adaptive capacity makes Nigeria and the rest of Africa to be vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. In Nigeria, the pastures are threatened by demographic pressure and land tenure system. The Eastern part of the country experiences land tenure system and cannot compromise on that. The resultant effect of these threats includes the impoverishment of biological diversity, rapid deterioration of plant cover and depletion of water resources through the destruction of hydrographic basins and aquifer formations. In the light of the negative effects of climate change in Nigeria and the frequent clashes caused by the migration of the herdsmen to some areas of the country, government should as a matter of urgency deploy resources to tame the crises. Cattle ranching are the best approach and method to adopt to avoid these clashes.

Climate Change, Resources Depletion and Pastoral Migration

As noted hitherto, climate change has had a damaging effect to the lives and properties on the people living in some part of the country. For instance, climate change has contributed to massive migration of Fulani herdsmen to the two regions. The change in climate such as depletion in the ozone layer have led to heat wave, dryness of the rivers and lack of pastures for cattle to graze amongst others and have made life uncomfortable for the people. The relative lack of adequate rainfall has made the land to dry, leading to inadequate pastures for the cattle and thus made the people to migrate to safe areas of the Eastern and middle-belt region.

Eguru (2012), observed that the declining fertility of soil will affect agriculture, which is the major employer of labour in the Sahel region of Africa. He noted that the negative effect of climate change is not static. For instance, cereal production is expected to decline in some areas by up to 50% while others is between 25 – 50%. However, World Bank in their observation indicates that with the wide scale anticipated declines in the drought prone region of Africa, food production may not be adequate to meet the deficient requirements. Also, World Bank reported that between 2010 and 2011 alone pastoralists in the region lost over (2) two million of herds of cattle. Even the climate change prevailing in the region may be attributed to the loss of (1) one million chickens through Bird flu in some parts of Northern and South-west Nigeria this year alone, as reported in the media.

Contributing to the debate on climate change, resource control and other issues, Leed (2006) noted that the negative impact of climate change which has increased his fears that environmental degradation and demographic pressures would displace millions of people in the Sahel region and it will lead to huge social upheaval. The continuous crisis between Fulani herdsmen and their neighbours in the Middle-Belt and South-Eastern region since 2000 to date can be attributed to the factors mentioned above. In fact, it is as a result of worsening climate condition in the Sahel region that has made demographic migrations to the middle-belt and south-Eastern region inevitable. In conclusion therefore, one can unequivocally that climate change has had negative effect on resources available such as, water, food production, social amenities and general wellbeing of the people of Nigeria.

The Pastoral Migration and Grazing Conflict between Fulani Herdsmen and Local Farmers in Middle-Belt and Eastern Nigeria

Crisis associated with pastoral migration and grazing conflict between Fulani herdsmen and local farmers has been reported more in the Benue-Plateau area than the eastern region of Nigeria. Between 2000 AD and 2015, No month passes without skirmishes being reported between Fulani herdsmen and the indigenous people of Benue and plateau State. The crisis has been located in the fact that the Fulani herdsmen having invaded the area unleash their cattle's on the farms of the Tiv and this leads to loss of agricultural product. For instance, vanguard edition of 7th April, 2015, p. 7, reported that suspected Fulani herdsmen killed 28 people, injured many in Benue, sacked (3) three villages in Governor elect, Ortoms home town. The sun edition of the same 27th April 2015 p.8, reported that suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked Benue community; Adeke, Mbadiwan, in Gurua district of the local government, killed several people and injured many. According to the paper, the attack left the community in ruins. The most significant areas affected in the continuous attack over a decade are, Benue and Plateau States.

In the Eastern part of Nigeria, some form of crisis has been reported in areas like, Enugu State, Anambra and Abia States. In Enugu State in 2009, suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked Ezeagu communities in the state and kill at least two women in their farm. The sun edition of June 6, 2009, p 5, reported that the women killed in the farm reacted against the grazing of the Fulani cattle's in their farm. The herdsmen got enraged and in the end, the two women were killed. The resultant of this killing led to the expulsion of the entire Fulani herdsmen from the area. In Anambra State especially in the Anambra east, the activities of Fulani herdsmen have also been reported in the media. For instance, in the Aguleri/Umuleri axis, Fulani herdsmen have been banned from entering the area since 2012. This area is known for high agricultural engagement and food production like rice, yam and others are grown in high quantity. The damage caused by Fulani herdsmen also led to their expulsion from places like Umuahia and Isuochi precisely as they have all witnessed orgy of violence and crisis of greater magnitude caused by the Fulani herdsmen. Both Aguleri and Unuleri axis in Anambra State; Uzouwani and Ezeagu in Enugu State have not tolerated the incursion of the Fulani herdsmen in their area. Though the herdsmen still exist in Uzouwani area, the same cannot be said of Ezeagu.

In Benue, Plateau, and even Nasarawa states, government appears to be hamstrung on what to do to the recurrent crisis in the areas. In the case of the middle belts earlier mentioned, politics has added another dimension in the entire crisis.

Instructively, climate change has led to forced migration, impacts negatively on security of lives and property, resources for life sustenance and general well being of the people. The migration to these areas causes explosion in population which in turn has multiple negative effects on the resources and infrastructures of the area.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework for this study is adopted from the Dougherty and Pfaitzgraff (1971) theory of deprivation, frustration and aggression. The theory was initially adopted by Mac Dougherty in (1937). The theory is anchored on the premise that aggression is always a function of frustration and the occurrences of aggressive behaviour always presuppose the existence of frustration. According to Dougherty and Pfentzgraff (1971) Aggression is defined as an action with the intent to harm and can be physical and non-physical.

The central theme of the theory is that scarcity is the product of insufficient supply (impact of climate population explosion) or unequal distribution of resource as a result of deprivation which ultimately leads to aggression. (Miller 2009) operating from this assumption, conflicts do not occur; rather there must be a reason for such conflict. For instance, depletion of natural resource can lead to competition for scarce resources and this competition can also lead to deprivation of the weak and vulnerable access to these resources.

On the issue of frustration, it means that one's access to reinforce is being thwarted by another or possibly by particular circumstances and that one's reaction to this thwarting is that of annoyance. Miller argued that frustration is both a necessary and sufficient condition for aggression which can lead to serious conflict. Frustration instigates aggression against targets that are to some degree related to that source. In the same vein, climate induced scarcity is the main source of frustration and which may be misdirected by the aggressor on the wrong target. This misdirection of aggression against the wrong target may be counterproductive. In other words the innocent people are more vulnerable to the effects of aggressive behaviour when it is misdirected.

In his contribution, Wolf (2001) noted that war over scarce natural resources is neither strategic nor rational. The mechanism assumed to govern the posited sustenance of instigated forces following frustration should equally affect the sustenance after. A practical deduction from this notion is that, the pastoralists are frustrated due to weather events. The realities starring the pastoralists in the face forced them to migrate and as they migrate, series of challenges are encountered which in turn brings frustration. On a final note, Gilick (2009) noted that natural resource conflict is as old as man. He however sees conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or to eliminate their arrivals.

Theoretical application

Violent transgressions occur because of the accumulation of residual instigatory effects of frustration. The aggressive behaviour of the pastoralists is traceable to the resource depletion or scarcity which in the long-run affects their economic wellbeing. If a herdsman loses his flock to drought and water scarcity, he may be frustrated because of the loss of livelihood. From this reality, he may be aggressive and since, he cannot channel it to the natural causes, he may in the long-run channel it to any person or group that obstructs his migration to a safe area.

Again, conflict usually occurs when the pastoralists tramples and feeds upon the crops of the farmers or agricultural products and other essential facilities in the regions. No rational being or farmer can stand idle and watch his means of livelihood being destroyed by herdsman cattle. As a result of this reality conflict and confrontation is bound to occur. The main thrust of the conflict is the loss of the means of livelihood. As has been noted earlier, within the middle-belt region (Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa states and the South-east, crisis caused by the Fulani intrusion in to their land has remained unresolved.

The Effects of Pastoral Conflict on the Human Resource of the Middle Belt and South Eastern Regions.

Beyond doubt, Nigeria is sumptuously endowed with abundant human resources and by far the largest population in Africa in excess of 150million by the year 2010. As Pepelais observed,

As a resource, people are available as factors of production for economic combination with other resources in productive activity. As consumers, the goal of economic development is to maximize the realization of their desire and aspirations. Thus, any analysis must consider the human element in both its role as producer and consumer

No nation, Organization or Institutional setting can exist without the impact of human resource. Irrespective of the introduction of modern equipment and other technological outfit, human resource plays pivotal role in the development, operation and management of an organization. In the same vein, no economy can sustain or endure the vagaries of modern realities without the impact of human resource. Human resource therefore is at the center of all forms of activities in organization and economy of a nation.

In the light of the above, it is pertinent to note that both the migrant pastoralist and the indigenes all constitute human resources of the nation and both contribute individually or collectively to national development. While the migrant pastoralists are carrying their cattle to graze in the regions, the owners of the land, essentially the farmers are heavily affected as the herdsmen cattle's destroys crops, farm land and other agricultural products which often results to conflicts and confrontation.

Between the year 2000 and 2015, no month passes without report of conflict between the pastoralists and the indigenes of the regions. From Plateau to Nasarawa, Benue, Taraba, Enugu, Anambra, Abia, Imo state, the media is awash with reports of conflicts between the duo and the conflicts often results in the death of pastoralists themselves, many farmers and their families and sometimes the entire host communities as observed in Benue and Plateau states.

Daily Sun of the 20th may 2015, reported that 38 people were killed in Benue, Taraba, by Fulani herdsmen. This captured the ugly scenario going on in the regions. Since 2000 till date, hundreds of people (Farmers and their Families and even the pastoralists) have lost their lives in conflicts arising from the grazing by the herdsmen cattle.

In the same vein, other resources worth millions of naira had been lost and thus increasing aggressive poverty in the affected regions. Considering the number of people killed by these conflicts and confrontation, it becomes glaring that the human resource that engaged in economic activity in the nation have been depleted, can no longer engage in their usual economic activities and thereby reducing the productive and consumerist strength of the nation. More so, the presence of Fulani herdsmen in the affected areas creates climates of fear as they possess sophisticated arms and ammunitions with which they use to unleash terror on the people of the regions and other perceived enemies.

CONCLUSION

This study examined climate change and pastoral conflict in Middle Belt and Eastern region of Nigeria. Essentially, the paper argued that climate change which resulted in loss of resources in the far North forced the migration of the herdsmen to other region and thus, is the cause of conflict and confrontation between the indigenes and Fulani herdsmen. The paper adopted deprivation, frustration theory to link or associate the conflict to the study areas.

The pastoralists are frustrated over lack of resources and grazing land for their flocks as well as the death of the flocks. It is the frustration that forced them to migrate to other areas. The

resultant invasion of the lands of their hosts often causes the conflicts and confrontation resulting to loss of human and material resources as well as crippling of economic activities in the areas. The study is ex-post-facto and relied heavily on qualitative method of data collection and used descriptive analysis.

The paper argued that though climate change cannot be wished away, government sincere intervention through effective regulatory policy, establishment of ranch or grazing corridors funding of research will stem the tide. For the pastoralists, there should be regulative framework put in place by government to put a stop to the recurring decimal of conflict on the affected areas. In fact, government should designate some areas for grazing by the pastoralists so as not to encroach on the farms of their hosts. Grazing corridors or ranches are one of the best global practices and will reduce the crisis to the barest minimal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Biercenil N (2006) *Governing the commons: The Evolution of institution for collective action* Cambridge University press New York.
- Dougherty J. E and Pfaitzgraft R. I. (1971) *Contending Theories of International Relations*. New York. J. B Lippincott.
- Ikeagwu N. W. (1998) *insurgence in the Sahel Region of Africa*. Tell magazine vol. 8. No 15 December.
- Meehl. O. Y. (2007) *Fresh water resources and international security*. Paris International Security Press.
- Miller K. N. (2009). *The New Economy of Water, the risks and benefits of Globalization and privatization of fresh water*. Oakland. McDord Press.
- Leed K. T. (2006). *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice. Integration and Application*. Manchester University Press.
- Lindth U. (2008). *Understanding conflict in using conflict theory*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Pepelais, Adamantois et al.(1964) *Economic Development: Analysis and Case Studies*. New York, Harper and Roy Publishers

Unpublished works

- Wolf B. K (2001). *Water wars and water reality: Conflicts and cooperation along international water ways* (PHD) thesis Department of Geography, University of Alabama.
- Kerlinger D. Y (1986). *Environmental scarcity and violent conflict*. Report. Report of the population and sustainable Development project. American Association for the Advancement of science and University of Toronto, Washington. D.C.
- Idama, O. S.(2015). *Climate Change and Pastoral Conflict in Benue State, Nigeria (1999-2013)*. A Seminar presented to the Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Magazines

- Gilick T. N (2009). *Water and Conflict*. Fresh water resources and international security. International time vol. 17 No 23 April.
- IPCC 2007: *Fourth Assessment Report*. Intergovernmental panel on climate change secretariat. Geneva, Switzerland.

Newspapers

Okoye Thomas (2014) “Fulani herdsmen clash with the Agatu in Benue, several people dead”,
The Sun Newspaper (30th June), p. 13.

Oshanaike Sasoyin (2015) “Suspected Fulani herdsmen killed several people in the hometown
of Governor elect: Ortom in Benue”, vanguard (7th April), p. 7 & 15.