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# HERDSMEN/FARMERS CRISES IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN RESOLVING CRISES

Beetseh Kwaghga

*University of Agriculture Makurdi, beetsekwaghga@gmail.com*

Dzever Samuel Tion

*Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi, samuel\_tion@yahoo.com*

Terwase Victoria M

*Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi, Victoriaterwase3@gmail.com*

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**HERDSMEN/FARMERS CRISES IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN  
RESOLVING CRISES  
BY  
BEETSEH, KWAGHGA**

Library Department University of Agriculture Makurdi

PMB 2373 Benue State - Nigeria

[beetsekwaghga@gmail.com](mailto:beetsekwaghga@gmail.com)

0703334998

**Samuel Dzever Tion**

Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library

Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi

[Samuel\\_tion@yahoo.com](mailto:Samuel_tion@yahoo.com)

And

**Victoria M. Terwase**

Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library

Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi

[Victoriaterwase3@gmail.com](mailto:Victoriaterwase3@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

*The violent crises between Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers in Nigeria do not constitute an alien phenomenon in Nigeria; it is a phenomenon that has been in existence for decades which have resulted in the extensive loss of lives and property. The constant crises have threatened the security of the State, reduced its economic productivity, and deepened food crisis in Nigeria. While there have been several clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and the farming communities for more than two decades, the escalation reached another level in 2014 with the Fulani herdsmen killing 1,229 people in comparison with 63 deaths in 2013. With more than 500 deaths by July 2016 and January 2018 more than 73 persons were given mass burial in Benue State alone. The crises have been commonly credited to Fulani herdsmen expanding from the traditional grazing routes into the agricultural land which in turn always results into crises over access to pasture. The escalation of the crisis has made many Nigerians and international observers including the United States to consider Fulani herdsmen as the second most dangerous group in Nigeria after Boko-Haram group. Therefore, there is a need for the critical*

*assessment of the underlying factors responsible for the escalation of crises between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers to untangle the various important but crises narratives that have been used in explaining the reason behind the recent escalation of the crises. The paper seeks to explore ways of resolving crises through information dissemination by librarians. The paper finally recommended that government should adopt the modern way of cattle rearing which is ranching.*

**Key words:** *crisis, farmers, herdsmen, resolution and Librarians*

## **Introduction**

Over the last decade, reporting of farmer-herder violence has increased exponentially. The largest spike in reporting, occurring between 2013 and 2018, may be as a result of an increased number of incidents, increased awareness on the issue, or both. It may likewise be attributed to the 20145 presidential elections and the increased Boko Haram activity during this period. In any case, the increasing number of articles covering this issue signifies the growing urgency of this crisis (Blench, 2010).

The prevalence of crisis in the country has become a major concern for the well meaning Nigerians considering the impact on the peace, security as well as the economy of the nation. Destruction of lives and properties has almost become an everyday affair. These happenings have created a fearful atmosphere that discourages investors both domestic and foreign. By and large the economy of the nation is threatened.

Herder-Farmers crisis in Nigeria occurs as a result of land scarcity; there exists a growing scarcity of arable land and water sources that are equally essential to sustain crop cultivation and cattle herds. This is further exacerbated by the growing population of farmers, herders and their herds, increasing scarcity of arable land due to droughts, impending desertification of the sahel-savannah, land degradation, and cultural differences among ethnic groups that predominantly farm or graze cattle(Fiki & Lee,2005).

Many Nigerians however attributed the violence to ethnic incompatibility. Nigerians have become accustomed to headlines that read, “Fulani herdsmen attack farmers here and there in Nigeria e.g (Guma and Logo) and 120 persons were killed. As Nigerians, we are also familiar with reports of incessant “crises between the majority Muslim north and Christian south.” Although these narratives are not completely false, as evidenced by the fact that a majority of clashes occur in most part the states, Plateau, Taraba, Ekiti, Ebonyi and Benue, they are oversimplified narratives of deeper issues, such as increased insecurity following the emergence of Boko Haram, increased access to arms and automatic weapons, and also the exploitation of farmer-herder violence by Boko Haram terrorists (Blench & Dendo, 2003 and Rashid, 2012).

Ifidon & Ahiauzu 2005 see resolution as a collaborative problem-solving, a cooperative taking together process that leads to choosing a plan of action that both of you can feel good about. There are undoubtedly serious security issues challenging the peace and national security of the nation. Security is crucial to a nation’s sustainable development. Production and industrial activities can only thrive in an enabling environment. Challenging issues currently facing the country include: Political Violence, Extremism (Boko Haram) or insurgency, Communal violence, kidnapping, the Niger Delta, Maritime insecurity among others. If these issues are considered critically, irreconcilable differences and struggle between individuals and groups over access to power, opportunities and privileges that go with it are not farfetched. Ramos, ( 20007) provides a broad definition of the term conflict resolution, to embrace conflict management and social control. This involves the principles, methods and skills that are employed to prevent, reduce, or resolve crisis. Thus, Crisis resolution includes post conflict activities such as reconciliation, reinsertion, reintegration, and rehabilitation of ex-combatants and war-affected persons, plus the design and implementation of early warning systems.

Libraries are social institution of the community. A library is a place where all walks of life may be present; a place where people can gather to meet new people, discuss books read or articles discovered even get together with others is a valuable component of successful community life and increase people's confidence and self-esteem. According to Ugboma (2006) library is a place where community-building connections are happening. Library provides the opportunities for people to interact and connect with others and foster a sense of belonging to a community. People may go to the library looking mainly for information, but they find each other and discuss current events in the community. The roles of librarians are crucial in this era of fading service personnel. They provide help and ensure the library functions effectively; they are also a part of the community who utilizes available resources within the four walls and outside in the whole world in meeting the information needs of the community. Librarians know their communities firsthand, and are often the first to recognize a pressing local need, owing to their interaction on a daily basis with patrons from all walks of life. They are in the best position not only to bring local issues to municipal governments and social agencies, but also to partner with local governments and agencies to address the needs of a community.

## **Background**

For a few years, there has been a raging battle between Fulani herdsmen and farmers of Nigeria's middle states of Benue, Jos and Taraba. This conflict if left to mutate can discourage tourists from visiting the different amazing destinations situated in this region. Benue State is regarded as the food basket of the nation. It is an agrarian state because of the fertile soil and this makes agriculture very important for their livelihood and survival, and has inevitably attracted Fulani herdsmen to Benue and other states. So, the farmers through the wanton ravaging of their

lands as it destroy of their source of livelihood. At the end, it becomes a battle for survive (Akinkuolie, 2018, Blench, 1984).

Fulani herdsmen are popular for being cattle rearers which makes it essential for them to navigate their prized cows, from one location to another in search for food and water. As a result of this regular search, it may lead to the invasion of other people's farms by the herdsmen. The Fulani Herdsmen crisis remains a major issue in Nigeria. So far, thousands have been killed and many more have been expelled from their homes, and the Nigerian government does not appear willing to initiate any forceful action against them. Rather, they are requesting for pieces of land from states in order to provide the rampaging herdsmen with permanent feeding ground. They are largely nomads who go through towns with their cattle. In Nigeria, the Fulani and the Hausa people dominate the northern states, with a population of well over 30 million. Notably, people of the Fulani tribe rarely ever use artificial birth control methods and, as a result of this, there is rapid increase in their rate, hence their vast population and their presence in almost every state across the country. Due to the peculiarity of the activities of the herdsmen, they move from one place to another in search of pasture. In this process, the herdsmen have reportedly encountered cattle rustlers and made complaints to the relevant authorities who fail to investigate the issue, hence their purported reason for carrying arms about. During their journey, they frequently trespass farmlands owned by farmers in their communities, destroying crops and valuables. Attempts by farmers to prevent them from causing havoc are met with stiff and violent resistance. Most times, the farmers are overpowered, injured and killed, while others are evicted from their homes. Sometimes, the herdsmen are accused of taking these opportunities to steal, rape, raze houses and kill innocent members of the communities they pass through (Akinkuolie, 2018, Blench, 1984, World Bank, 1989).

Before now, the herdsmen have been known to wreak havoc in certain communities in Nigeria, but now, the rate at which they commit these atrocities has increased exponentially. According to statistics provided by the Institute for Economics and Peace, 1,229 people were killed in 2014, and 63 in 2013 and Benue State seems to be the hardest hit in recent times. Barely five days to the end of Governor Gabriel Suswam's administration in May 2015, over 100 farmers and their family members were reportedly massacred in villages and refugee camps located in the Ukura, Per, Gafa and Tse-Gusa local government areas of the state. According to reports, in July 2015, suspected herdsmen attacked Adeke, a community on the outskirts of the state capital, Makurdi. Last December, six persons were killed at Idele village in the Oju local government area. A reprisal attack by youths in the community saw three Fulani herdsmen killed and beheaded.

In February this year 2018, as a result of crises between herdsmen and farmers in Benue State, 40 more people were killed, about 2,000 displaced and not less than 100 were seriously injured. Most recently, more than 92 Nigerians were massacred by suspected Fulani Herdsmen in Benue and Niger states. Also, before this time, there have been reported attacks by the Fulani Herdsmen in southern states of the country, including Enugu, Ekiti and Ondo states (Daniels, 2006).

Concerns have been raised as to the true identity of those behind the attacks. Many with dissenting views believe they may be members of the Boko Haram sect, masquerading as Fulani Herdsmen. A few others, including the Nigerian military, have said they are herdsmen from other parts in West Africa and not Fulani. While the latter may be admissible due to porous Nigerian borders and poor immigration surveillance, especially in northern parts of the country, it is very difficult to correlate the activities of Boko Haram terrorists to those of the Fulani

Herdsmen. Boko Haram has utilised explosives carried by suicide bombers or hidden in a target, but accounts by victims of the herdsmen crisis have shown that the Fulani Herdsmen are mainly concerned with gaining greater access to grazing lands for livestock. In fact, following the February attacks in Benue, the leadership of the Fulani group openly admitted that the attacks were carried out by its members (Ajayi, & Allagenyi, 2001, Daniels,2006).

### **Information Dissemination: The Role of librarians in Crises Resolution**

Historically, libraries have always been a key contributor to national development and it is appropriate that they take a leadership role in the current movement on national security.

Recent studies have noted that lack of adequate or balanced information was the most significant cause of most of the violent conflicts. This seems to be true because without knowledge and information, there is likely to be a conflict. The African continent, witnessed the introduction of “genocide” in the African lexicon in Rwanda in 1994, and evidence points to the negative role of the mass media, especially Radio Miles Colines, in preparing the minds of Hutus against Tutsis. As the apparatus of the Hutu State, the radio station tried to portray Tutsis as demons that must be exterminated from the face of the earth, and in an attempt to wipe the Tutsis out; Hutus themselves suffered one of the worst refugee crises on the African continent (Blench, 2003).

Information dissemination or communication has been described as a need comparable with other basic human needs. Free flow of information is a right of the people which enables them to participate effectively in the process of economic, social and political activities in the society, and enhances education, knowledge and learning (Laloo, 2002). Therefore, for any nation to make meaningful impact in conflict prevention, peace promotion and crises resolution, early warning information is needed. Timely alert to potential conflicts is central to an early warning system which, in order to be meaningful, must be complemented by early political action. Such



alertness underlines the predictive capability of any early warning system. To that extent, therefore, early warning should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather, as a tool for preparedness, prevention and mitigation of crises, the efficiency of which is predicated upon a clear methodology for data collection, analysis and information exchange (Laloo, 2002).

Early warning information should be facts on the matter. Some of this early warning information, which could include internet, community radio, television, video conferencing and voice over of Internet protocol (Volp), email, print media, and reference services, are important, in order for people to know the implications of embarking on the crises. This information can be given first to those who can take constructive action. This generally means government and groups likely to be immediately involved in efforts to prevent the crisis such as the United Nations, UN Security Council, religious and media organizations.

Libraries, information centers, and librarians have a strategic position in taking the role of information dissemination through the library resource and programs which include: talk show, symposium, library week, book exhibition, book fair, mobile library in rural areas. It is believed that some of these conflicts could be avoided, if there were adequate communication among the warring communities and peace makers before they broke out. In other words, if there were information channels that are open to everybody, then the crises would have been curtailed. Timely alert to potential conflicts is central to an early warning system which in order to be meaningful, must be complemented by early political action (Echezona, 2007). For any nation to make meaningful impact in crises prevention, peace promotion and crises resolution, early warning information is needed. Free flow of information in any society is also very important because absence of it brings about crises (Laloo, 2002). Echezona, Ozioko & Ugwuanyi (2011) stressed that Library and information service is a key player in providing unhindered access to

essential information resources for economics and cultural advancement. Effective information dissemination through libraries and internet will put the leaders and the people at alert on facts of potential and crises, including their causes, evolution, consequences and solutions. Services that could be rendered and the collection of an academic library determine its involvement in conflict resolution included in his study current awareness services, selective dissemination of information and organizing seminars, conferences, workshops and symposia as services that could be rendered by academic libraries for crises resolution. Adewnyi, (2009) & (Haruna, 2009) considered government publications such as gazettes, constitutions, government bulletins and materials of cultural heritages as veritable tools in crises resolution that should be included in the library collection. Research has revealed the efficacy of libraries and information centers in crises resolution. The World Bank Report, (2005) states that countries such as Ethiopia, Namibia, Uganda, Somalia and Liberia had mobilized library community resources in innovative ways, such as organizing seminars, conferences and workshop on crises resolution, creating access to free information, providing links with non-governmental organizations, extension services and indigenous knowledge systems, repackaging information in a way that illiterate ones would be able to comprehend it, creating a web site on conflict resolution where the target users can access and discuss matters relating to crises resolution.

Library has the potentials to work with any of the media e.g. TV, radio for propaganda through which the ideology and beliefs of a group is expressed to effect a timely intervention in crises periods. Some early information media through which library can create awareness of the imminent crises include internet, community radio, television video conferencing, email, print media and reference services. Ahiazu (2005) stated that the need for libraries and information in the developmental efforts of any society is basically that of survival. Libraries have the capacity

to work with non-governmental organizations to organize out-reach programmes for distribution of information materials, delivering lectures and talks which would stimulate discussion among the participants to encourage them to embrace simple steps to promote peace and resolve crises. Essentially, public and academic libraries are equipped to function in this capacity. However, the realization of the potential roles of the academic libraries in offering services for crises resolution has prompted some universities to introduce the course “Peace and crises resolution” as general studies course as it is the Nigerian University where peace and crises resolution studies is taught as one of the general studies. Ani (2005) also agitated for the learning of inter-religious socialization as a peace education subject for lifelong education that would promote peace in the country.

## **Conclusion**

This paper focuses on herdsmen/farmers crisis in Nigeria: the role of librarians in resolving crises. Most of the libraries are doing well in the dissemination of information on security issues in Nigeria with resounding activities on organization of lectures and library week themed with crises resolution issues but this is not enough. Radio/TV partnership programmes were low. ICT especially electronic mail was mostly used by librarians in these libraries to disseminate information on crises resolution.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are suggested for proper crises resolutions between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers. Experts should be assembled to map out the duration, strategy and timelines for the transition plan. As there is no miracle model for solving the problems, the plan should simultaneously pursue a number of models including:

- International Modern ranching can be pursued as one of the possible models in areas with lower population densities in the North East (Sambisa Game Reserve in Borno State) and North West (Gidan Jaja Grazing Reserve in Zamfara State);
- Semi-intensive systems of animal husbandry should be pursued accompanied with requisite investment in infrastructure, training, extension, marketing and animal health service delivery in conjuncture with the private sector;
- The traditional form of pastoralism should continue for a period to be agreed upon with some improvements (in the form of coordinated mobility between wet and dry season grazing areas and effective management of farmers and pastoralists relations);
- Use of and development of ranching to target pastoralists with large stocks where skills for pasture production, large milk production, etc can be promoted.
- Development of integrated crop-livestock systems with farmers and pastoralists being encouraged to keep some animals in their farms.
- In order to meet the feeding needs of herds, alternative low water and drought resistant grasses should be produced, in response to the impact of desertification on fodder production.
- There is need for viable NGOs on farmer-herdsmen crises management, especially in the areas of awareness, education, prevention, and amelioration. Furthermore, nongovernmental organizations should support livestock-centered livelihoods including cattle herding, not only in crises mitigation but also in the support of grassroots innovations and in influencing favourable national policies.
- Government should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation of decisions.

Traditional and local leaders should be well involved in finding solutions to herdsman-farmer crises. The committees proposed above must have representatives of the local leadership.

- . The atmosphere between farming and pastoral communities is extremely bitter and negative. Support should be provided for creative writers in Nollywood, Kannywood, radio and television to create new narratives showing how the interaction between the two groups could be peaceful and mutually beneficial. Above all, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), as an institution with presence across the 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the country, should provide these critical services.
- In addition to the search for improving security in the zone through the use of security forces and mobilizing the civil population, some policy decisions are required. The military should be encouraged to pursue the path of ranching as it has already decided to. The Sambisa Grazing Reserve (4800 hectares) is an ideal and symbolic place to take-off by establishing a ranch run by the military. It would significantly improve the security situation in the zone and encourage cooperation between pastoralists and the military. In the North West, the military should also be encouraged to create ranches in the Gidan Jaja Grazing Reserve (565,000 hectares) for the same purpose of improving security and cooperation with pastoralists.
- The programme for the country's transition to modern forms of animal husbandry must be accelerated and funded. The national stock would require rapid improvement and modernisation to meet market demands for meat, milk, hides and other products from the industry:

- Commercial ranches should be established in some of the sparsely populated zones in the North East and North West;
- The business community should be encouraged through policy measures to invest in the establishment of modern dairy farms; Sensitisation programmes should be undertaken on the values of livestock improvement and breeding centres for the production of quality heifers to improve pastoral stock should be developed all over the country.
- Efforts should be made towards modeling best practices of pastoral-farmer relations as evident in countries such as Chad, Ethiopia and Niger, where the existence of institutionalized and functional mechanisms for pre-empting and resolving conflicts between farmers and pastoralists enable them to live in peace.

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