"FREQUENT FARMERS AND FULANI-HERDSMEN CLASH IN EDO NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT"

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ABSTRACT
The Fulani by nature are nomadic pastoralist people, in the past the pastoralist nomadic often come into clashes with the farmers as a result of search for natural resources like land, water and gasing land for the survival of their cattle from their original home to other parts of the country. The focus is to critically examine the Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen clashes in Edo North Senatorial District, which are structural and procession factors to causes the Farmer and Fulani-herdsmen conflict in Edo North of the State. This research work will use primary and secondary sources to explain the major causes of frequent clashes between the Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen in Edo North Senatorial District, like poverty/unemployment, poor infrastructural development, climate change, migration and population growth struggle for natural resources and land dispute. This study investigated the major factors responsible for Famers and Fulani-herdsmen clashes in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State. Violent clashes between Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen have for a long period been the struggle foe economic livelihood in the country with consequences. As a result of climate change and migration by the Fulani-herdsmen from the Northern part of the country to the Southern part in search for water, land and gasing land, which often resulted in destruction of farm land, farm produce, loss of life of farmers and food shortage. This research contribution to knowledge is on the importance of the activities of local vigilante, youth groups and community rulers in security management The Government should encourage them to build more on peace, growth and development in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo Stat for safety purpose.

Introduction

One major crisis affecting farming activities in Nigeria today is the farmer-herdsmen crisis, the Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State in Nigeria is a home to multi-ethnic group with different language vast population who are pre-dominantly tamers any have interaction among themselves as one in colonial and, pre-colonial era. The phenomenon of insecurity and crisis between the farmers Fulani herder in the area stated to surface in the wake of 21st century. The dynamics of Farmers-Fulani herd's relation had resulted in unending destruction of lives and property and their farm land or produce in the process, which call for concern as a result of secured resources for farming activities.[1]

The security as a result of Famers-Fulani herdsmen has increased in the region, because of their easy access to small and light weapons has encouraged anarchy in Edo North Senatorial District as armed-herdsmen, armed banditry and kidnapping has increased. The proliferation of farms in the country has jack up the Farmer-Fulani herdsmen in the area because Fulani herdsmen now move with about with AK 47 gun in this 21st century. Whenever their cattle destroy farmland and they are query by the farmers this usually resulted to violent and crisis.[2]

They use these fire-arms to destroy lives and property at any slide provocation or argument. In this few years this negative activities of Fulani-herdsmen had increased gradualically as they kidnap for money, born down houses, villages, rape and kill people in the Edo North Senatorial District for example the online news of April 2022 which led to protest by the Afuze youth over the unwholesome activities of armed Fulani herdsmen using cattle to destroy their farmland raping and killing of a woman in the community by Fulani-herdsmen.

As a result of the failure government institutions and machineries to guarantee the life and property of the citizenry in Edo North Senatorial District, for example of Fulani-herdsmen attack on the people of Edo north over the recent murder of Catholic-Priest. Rev. Fr. Christopher Odia, the Administrator of St. Michael Catholic Church, lkabybo and also the Principal of St. Philip Catholic Secondary School lkabybo, Uzairue, Edo North Senatorial in Edo state. Who was abducted and killing by Fulani-herdsmen in the early hours of Sunday, 26th June, 2021 in Ikabigbo Community of Etsako-west Local Area of Edo State.[3]

The people of Edo North Senatorial District are reacting to the gruesome murder of the Reverend Father Odia, e.g Hon Paschal Ubgome Esq., alias Ominimini PDP Senatorial Candidate in the 2023 election said: "It is one death too many" and declared that herdsmen and other Marauders have declared war against Afenmai-land and other parts of Nigeria, but unfortunately the Government seems to have lost the ability to protect our nation.[4] Ugbome called on Afenmai People to brace up and defend our Father's land, he lauded the effort of the Amalgamated Afenmai forum which has established a vigilante group named "Oduma Protection Squad" to assist in providing security for Afenmai-land which is part of Edo north senatorial district and called in all Afenmai sons and daughters to support this noble effort.[5]

Finally, according to Williams Shakespeare, "i always feel happy, do you know why? Because i do not expect thing from anyone; waiting always hurts. Problems are not external, they always have a solution, and the only thing that cannot be cured is death. Do not allow anyone to insult humiliate or diminish your self esteem. Shouting is an instrument of the coward, of those who do not think we will always meet people who blame us for their problems and everyone will get what they deserve. We need to be strong and reanimate the downfalls that life impose on us to remind us that after a dark tunnel full of loneliness come very good things.

Before you talk ---------- Inhale

Before you say ----------Listen

Before you criticize -------- Look at your self

Before you write ---------- Think

Before you hurt ---------- Look

Before you give up--------- Try it

Before you die---------- Enjoy.[6]

Farmers and herdsmen crisis remain the most predominant 'resource-use' conflict and a growing concern to national insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District, with emphasis on the rate of insecurity across Nigeria geo-political zone; the Northeast, Northwest, North central, Southeast, South south and Southwest regions, especially in Maiduguri, Kaduna, Benue, Taraba, Zamfara, Adamawa, Cross-River, Niger, Kwara, Imo, Enugu, Delta and Edo States with more on Edo North.[7] However, it is worthy to note that there has been a

significant reduction in reported cases of clashes between farmers/herdsmen in recent times in Edo North Senatorial District. But the crisis has demonstrated a high potential to exacerbate food crisis, particularly in rural communities where most of the insecurity are localised, with reverberating repercussions on the people of Edo and Nigeria at large.

Causes

Poverty/Unemployment: The severity of poverty in Edo North Senatorial District when examined with the indicators such as the rate of standard of living, per-capital income, life expectancy, birth rate, infant mortality rate, death rate demonstrates the challenging nature if the situation in Edo North Senatorial District.[8] This on its own contributed to serious insecurity and socio-economic threat to the people of Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State and Nigeria at large. Central to our present experiences are the worsening crises of unemployment in Nigeria. In a society where youths graduate for over ten years and remain unemployed, it takes the intervention of the divine will to foster order in that social system. A social order in which examination malpractices becomes the norm produces youths with a constricted mindset. When these youths are confronted with poverty arising from the incapacity of the state, their indulgence in criminal activities for the purpose of survival becomes predictive.

Poor Infrastructural Development: The detract in the distribution of infrastructure by the Federal, state and local government authority in Edo North Senatorial District is one of the causes of insecurity. For example lack of good road, electricity, market, pipe born water, light, school, hospital and so on. These results to insecurity as the people see it as government failure and unfair treatment and insult to their sensibility.

Poor Educational Backgrounds and Orientation: Education is the bedrock of any society that wants to leap into future greatness and develop along the globe for economic, social, political and cultural advancement. This is because education breeds an enlightened citizenry with bright ideas to develop the country and create self-empowerment in order to increase the growth and development of the society.[9] Thus, free and compulsory education is germane to address the challenge of poor basic education and to reduce the level of illiteracy and underdevelopment. This will help to reduce the level of farmers/Fulani-herdsmen clashes by building mutual relationship and peaceful co-existence between the Farmers and the Fulani-herdsmen in Edo North Senatorial District for growth and development.

Climate Change, Migration, and Population Growth: The far North of Nigeria which is an arid and semi-arid region experiences lesser rainfall compared to other regions in the country. This position is clearly explained with the National Meteorological Agency (NMA) reported that the annual rainy season dropped from an average of 150 to 120 days over the course of the last 30 years.[10] Again the International Crisis Group Report alerted our minds to the fact that states like Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara, were gradually becoming deserts with 50-75 percent of the land area drying up progressively.[11]

These environmental changes according to the report have affected human livelihoods and also been a factor contributing to pastoralist's southward migration,[12] particularly Edo North Senatorial District in search for pastures for their cattle which often result in clashes between Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen. Migration activities were seasonal, with Fulani-herder men searching for garsing land, water for their cattle from the period of November to January in Edo North Senatorial District.

According to Isola, this forced migration has led to the massive influx of herdsmen in the region, which has given rise to the increase in violent clashes between herdsmen and residents of the community where they migrate to especially the farmers.[13] From the findings, climate change remains one of the major causal factors that led to the increase in hostility between the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers in Edo North Senatorial District.

From the interaction with Mr Ahonsi, a 51 years old farmers, it was revealed that the desertification and irregular rainfall in the North as the result of climate change changed the migration pattern of the Fulani herdsmen which in turn have significant effect on the increase in population of herdsmen that compete with farmers for land in the community.[14] According to Ahonsi "Before, you have like two groups of Fulani herdsmen coming and going out of the community, they don't stay for long. But later the number increased to like 10 different herds, if you ask me now, the numbers of herds are uncountable.

This has effect on the land resources because they are not only competing with farmers for grazing lands but also compete among them. So, it is first come first serve, as a result, those that comes

late will rather graze their cattle on people's farms which usually lead to conflict when the farmers attempt to stop them".[15] In an attempt to confirm the statement of Ahonsi and other farmers, the position of the officials of the Local Government Area Council of the Senatorial District on Farmers and Fulani-Herders clashes was that there is a general public misconception about all herdsmen to be Fulani.

To Blench and Braukamper, that documented evidence has showed that herdsmen in Nigeria is not limited to Fulani extractions because there are more than 12 other ethnic groups such as the Kanuri, Arab, Shuwa, Manga, Kanembu that are predominantly pastoralist, although, the Fulani are more visible due to their large population in Nigeria.[16] The people of Edo North Senatorial District maintained that there are many ethnic groups that are predominantly normads and pastoralist that usually don't venture deep into the zone, but because of the fact that they are looking for the same thing as the Fulanis, they now move deep down zone. So when the farmers see herders trampling on their farms with cattle, they quickly spread the news to the villages and towns that Fulani herdsmen are damaging their crops which in real sense might not be Fulani herdsmen".[17] The climatic conditions such deforestation, drought, spatial rainfall and drying of rivers/seas, desertification and high heat waves resulting from global warming account for the biggest cause of Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen conflicts in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State.

The Struggle for Natural Resources: The struggle for resources such as water, land farmland, gasingland, gasing-route and forage in Owanland, Edo State of Nigeria has resulted in the constant clashes between the Farmers and the Fulani-herdsmen in Owanland. In recent time nomadic pastoralist and farming have continued to evolve in Owan, this is referring to the traditional way of life in which nomadic communities keep large numbers of animals moving from place to place in search of forage and water depending on where the rain falls. The pastoralists have to adapt to climate change and increase in population, which affect the availability of water, land and pasture which eventually led to clashes as the competition for resources with farmers becomes fierce. To Reenberg et al., argued that the increase in population has, in turn, had drastic effects, like shortage in food, land conflict and the expansion of agriculture that give rise to competition for natural resources[18]. The struggle for natural resources like water and land, gasingland and with the growing population of sedentary crop farmers has triggered clashes between Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State.

Porous Border: Porous borders are one immediate factor that enhances Farmer and Fulani-herdsmen clashes in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State. Edo State is bounded by Kogi State in Northeast and East, Anambra to the East, Delta to the Southeast and South, and Ondo to the West and Northwest, the River Niger flows along the Eastern boundary. Therefore, Edo North Senatorial District is boarded by Kogi State in North-central and Ondo State in the Southwest. In a situation where people or individual's movements are largely unchecked, this poses serious security challenge and threat to the locals in their various communities and the country at large. The porosity of the borders of Edo North Senatorial District has negative impact of inflow of Faluni-herdsmen with their cattle for the purpose of gasing which in clashes between the Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen. The Fulani-herdsmen move about with AK 47 riffle and the easy access to these weapons have enabled Fulani-herdsmen move around with their cattle and often result to crisis over destruction of the Farmer's farmland, farm produce, and crops.

Again, this Fulani-herdsman moving around with AK 47 riffle and their cattle increase movement of small arms and light weapons in Edo North Senatorial District, because their safety is being threaten and competition or struggle for natural resources such as water, farmland and gasingland between the original locals and Fulani-herdsmen. According to, Adeola and Oluyemi, argued that "the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for unwarranted influx of migrants from neighboring countries with their cattle such as Republic of Niger, Chad and Republic of Benin".[19] This migrant are mostly young youths who are the brain-child behind this destruction of farmland, farm produce, crops, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, burning of house, killing and raping of women and its terror related activities in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State and the Country in general.

Land Tenure / Land Act in Nigeria: According to the land Act where land was owned by lineages or extended families, individuals or persons have only right of use on such family land and cannot be sold without consents from the king or family head. Most of the villages who are not aware of the selling of land just go to the farm unaware and are killed in the bid to challenge the activities of the Fulani's on their farm. Before the advent of the British colonizing Nigeria, the land tenure system was different across the country.

To Meek opined that apart from the land system in the Lagos colony where an English freehold system was established following its annexation in 1861, alongside the use of the customary land law system in rural areas.[20] According to Mabogunje, the freehold system was evident in northern Nigeria where land was placed under the Governor by the colonial administration.[19] According to the Land Use Act of 1978, the ordinance of 1910 allows the Governor to administer and hold the land for the benefit of this people via a trusteeship. Any native or native community lawfully using and occupying land following native law and custom enjoys a full right of occupancy with the protection of the Ordinance of 1910, and no rent is paid in respect of such rights.[21]

Mabogunje posit, some factors that guided the Land Use Decree of 1978, listed below are the seven factors;

i. All land situated in the territory of each state in the country is vested in the Governor of the state. For southern Nigeria in particular, this means state appropriation of land from families and communities without any compensation except for economic crops and other betterment on the land.

ii. All land control and management, including land allocation in urban areas come under the Governor of each state while land located in rural areas becomes the responsibility of the various local governments. Only the Governor can declare parts of the state territory governed by him as an urban area by an order published in the state gazette;

iii. All land in urban areas is to be administered by a body known as the Land Use and Allocation Committee which has the responsibility of advising the Governor on the management of urban land; similarly, a Land Allocation Advisory Committee is provided to advise local governments in like manner;

iv. All land which has already been developed remained the possession of the person in whom it was vested before the Act became effective;

v. The Governor is empowered to grant statutory certificate of occupancy (C of O) which would be for a definite term to any person for all purposes and rights of access to land under his control;

vi. The maximum area of undeveloped land that any person could hold in any one urban area in a state is one half of a hectare; in the rural areas this must not exceed 500 hectares except with the permission of the Governor;

vii. The consent of the Governor must be secured for the transfer of a statutory right of occupancy through either mortgage or assignment. The consent of the Local government or that of the Governor in appropriate cases must also be obtained for the transfer of customary right of occupancy. To ensure the validity of this decree it was enshrined as an integral part of the 1979 constitution and later in the 1999 constitution.[22]

Lack of Trust: The phenomenon of Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen frequent conflicts pose grave threat to the corporate existence of the people of the zone especially in area of co-existing with Fulani-herdsmen because of the fact that the Fulani-herdsmen ranks as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world and their negative activities other parts of the country, such as Benue, Kunada, Zamfara, Bornu and so on.

Lack of Government Good will/Corruption: Government inability to investigate, arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of the Farmers and Fulani-herdsmen conflict over the years in the country.[23] The failure of Government in her primary responsibility in the area of protection lives and property of the citizenry and her inability to effectively tackle the Fulani-herdsmen menace has resulted to incessant loss of lives and property of local people in the Edo North Senatorial District. It also, contributed to embolden the culprits to continue to carry on with their evil act, this have negative effect on the people of Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State and Nigeria in general in aspect of food shortage or food insecurity resulting from disruption of agricultural production, destruction of farmland, farm produce, crops, displacement of arable crop farmers, killing, rape, kidnapping, burning of houses due to frequent clashes between rural Farmers and Fulnai-herdsmen.

Conclusion

This has resulted in slow space of the development and growth of the Edo North Senatorial District over the time. This research has shown empirically that insecurity impact negatively on economic growth and development in the area.

It has result in many negative impacts to the people for example; many had been rendered homes, children become orphans with no hope of the future, many lives and properties have been lost, food shortage, fear, tension, destruction of farmland, farm produce, crops, displacement of arable crop farmers, killing, rape, kidnapping, burning of houses and many women rendered widows.

However, government had made reasonable effort to tackle these insecurity problems in Edo north senatorial district of Edo State, by putting in place checking points of Nigeria army, Police, Civil defence, Local vigilante and other sister agency in strategic places in Edo north senatorial district. But the rate of insecurity is still alarming, therefore the following recommendation should be put in place for the area to experience relatively peace, growth and development for the people to enjoy the dividend of democracy. For the communities in Edo North Senatorial District to experience relatively peace, growth and development for the people to enjoy the dividend of democracy, the Government should ensure that nobody leaves inside the forest any part of Edo North Senatorial District, employment more youth into local security out-feet or local vigilante and forest guard.

The Government should beef up security in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo State and the country in general and should declare war on all of form of insecurity in Edo North Senatorial District and Nigeria at large. There should be increase in the employment of security agents for more personnel, arms and welfare to fight insecurity or insurgency as the case may be. Finally, there should be inter-security agency, cooperation, collaboration and synergy and the role of traditional ruler should be taken into serious consideration or emphasis should be on role of traditional ruler in maintaining peace and harmony in their domain.

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