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Research Paper

Resolving the Farmer-Herder Crisis in Nigeria's Central Zone: The Contribution of Trade and Gender Inclusion

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Abstract: In concert with population growth, crime, and inefficient police action, climate change has driven the farmer-herder crisis in the central zone of Nigeria. The crisis has resulted in deaths, destroyed property and caused food insecurity. This essay studies the farmers and herders, who are the key players in this crisis. It also examines the efforts made to prevent, remediate, or mitigate the effects of these conflicts. These efforts have varied from the African Union to the government to civil society organisations. They have mostly been ineffective due to poor implementation. Trade and gender inclusion are suggested as essential contributory elements in resolving the farmer-herder crisis. While used in other crises, it is underutilized in farmer-herder crisis resolution literature. It is the conclusion of this essay that trade and gender inclusion would strengthen any strategies for containing and preventing the farmer-herder crisis.

Keywords:
1. AfCFTA
2. Climate change
3. Farmer-herder crisis,
4. Fulani
5. Gender inclusion
6. Trade

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1. Introduction

Nigeria's central zone, also called the North Central or Middle Belt, is located roughly in the middle of Nigeria. It is the food production hub of the country. Presently, the region has gained international notoriety due to the farmer-herder crisis that has made the zone its major battleground.

Due to the crisis, six thousand persons have been killed and 62,000 displaced – more persons than have been either killed or displaced by Boko Haram (that terrorist group that had shocked the world in 2014 when they kidnap hundreds of girls from a boarding school in Chibok, Borno State) (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 7; The Economist, 2021). The consequences of the crisis are loss of life and displacement, food insecurity and loss of property and livelihoods (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 6).

Historically, governments and civil society organisations have sought ways to resolve these conflicts. The results have been varying, ranging from fairly effective to dismal. This essay

summarises these efforts together with history and conflict drivers while focusing on the contributions that trade, and gender inclusion can make to resolving the crisis because such modalities have not commonly featured as resolution techniques in the literature and because they have shown effectiveness in other crisis settings (UN Women, 2021).

2. Historical perspective

2.1. Who are the herders?

Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups, each speaking different languages and possessing different cultures, customs and practices. Even socioeconomic roles are often determined by the ethnic group (Thomas, 2024, p.6). Over 90 per cent of the herders are Fulani (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 1). The Fulani ethnic group are a large and important ethnic group in Nigeria's history, politics, and modern economy. Outside Nigeria, the Fulanis are found in 13 other West and Central African countries; they are the largest nomadic/semi-nomadic group in the world. (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 1). Aside from being herders, there are the "settled" and semi-nomadic groups of Fulani (Thomas, 2024, p. 6). They are well-connected with the herders, and their relationship is a symbiotic one. For example, the settled Fulani who are legislators or in the executive branch of government may advance policies that would protect the interests of the nomadic herders. In return, the herders may have among their flock animals owned by their "settled" counterparts.

The herder's contribution to Nigeria's modern economy is significant. They supply the greater portion of the country's meat, milk, hides, and dairy products (Majekodunmi, 2014, p. 1). The herders own 90 per cent – about 19.5 million cattle, 975,000 donkeys, 28,000 camels, 72.5 million goats and 41.3 million sheep – of the total animal herd in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2011, p. 27). Livestock makes up 20 to 30 per cent of agricultural production, and up to 8 per cent of overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Ogbeh, 2011).

Their migratory routes have facilitated ties between other ethnic groups and have enabled the exchange of goods, trade that otherwise would have been non-existent. Importantly, these migratory routes traverse national boundaries, cutting across West and Central Africa. There have even been suggestions that for the herders, the Fulani ethnic group identity is stronger than national identities, with national borders existing as simply modern and artificial distractions to their fraternity. Thirty per cent of livestock slaughtered in Nigeria are brought in by herders from other countries (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2013, p. 5). That is, Nigeria not only provides feed for foreign herds, but it also serves as a market for livestock. A crisis between farmers and herders threatens this market.

The Fulani have clear gender roles. While the male herders move about with the flock, the women produce and sell dairy products, farm crops and undertake other business activities that contribute to the local economies (Mercy Corps, 2022, p. 23). Male herders may often rear cattle for local farmers, in exchange for fees or patronage, further integrating them into the host region's socioeconomic life.

2.2. Who are the farmers?

Unlike the herders who come from largely the same ethnic group, the farmers come from a variety of ethnic groups such as Tiv, Jukun, and Chamba (Thomas, 2024, p. 6). These groups have long histories of being sedentary in particular areas. On the fringes of regional borders where

these ethnic groups intersect, there are usually communal clashes over the original owners of farmlands. For example, there have been Tiv-Jukun clashes in Taraba state over farmlands (Thomas, 2024, p. 6).

Nigeria is especially known for its oil and gas production. However, agriculture employs 70 per cent of the Nigerian labour force. Most of these farmers – 80 per cent – are smallholders (Thomas, 2024, p. 6) in the centre and south of the country, who supply most of the country's tuber and vegetable crops (cassava, yam, etc) while farmers in the north produce most of the grains (millet, rice, beans, maize, sorghum). Together, they account for 90 per cent of Nigeria's agricultural output (Thomas, 2024, p. 6).

Crop production is the largest segment within agriculture and accounts for more than 80 per cent of agricultural production and nearly 19 per cent of the country's GDP (Thomas, 2024, p. 6). Aside from crop and livestock agriculture, fisheries and forestry make up 3.2 and 1.1 per cent of the GDP (Thomas, 2024, p. 6).

2.3. Farmer and Herder Interactions

For years before, during, and after colonialism, herders in Nigeria moved their cattle from the semi-arid zone of the Sahara Desert (Nigeria's northern region) to the south of the country (*see fig. 1)*. They were attracted by the pasture – Nigeria's middle belt and south consists of savannah and forests (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3). They were also attracted by heightened security in these regions and the non-endemicity of parasitic cattle diseases such as trypanosomiasis or sleeping sickness (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3). Further, the herders moved as a "tax-evasion" strategy. There was a cattle tax called the jangali, which was imposed by the British colonial administration in Nigeria (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3).

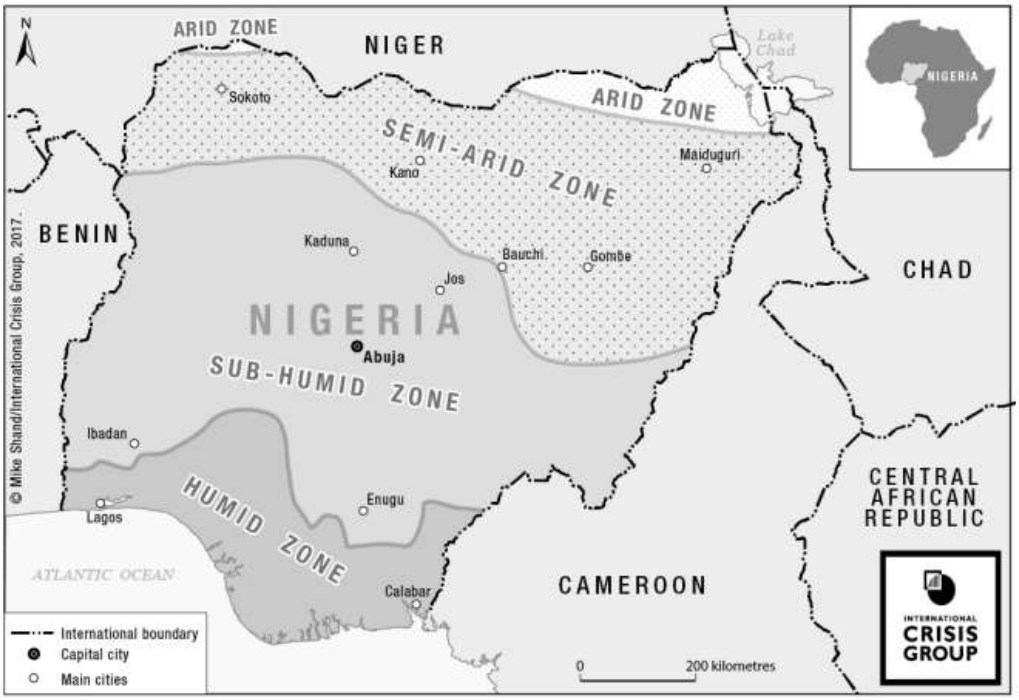

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria's Agricultural Belts (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 22)

Through the first six months of the year, there was a tacit rule–unwritten but known and obeyed by all–that permitted herders the use of lands for grazing. The first half of the year is the "dry season" when there is little rainfall and agricultural activity is low. Indeed, this was welcome as the animals fertilized the farmlands in preparation for the farming season.

These interactions have historically been symbiotic and, at times, competitive but hardly violent. Symbiotic because they were an exchange of goods – the herder provided meat and the farmer provided crops; farmers used cattle dung for manure; farmers entrusted their livestock to the herders; and after harvest, the cattle helped to clear farmlands in preparation for the next farming season (Moritz, 2022, p. 139). When the dry season ended, the herders normally vacated these areas, returned to their bases further in the north of the country and only returned the following first half of the year (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3). Competitive because the farmers needed the land for farming, while the herders needed the land to feed their cattle with vegetation. The symbiosis predominated the competition because there was a clear dividing line between the end of one activity and the start of the other.

Herders and community leaders of farming communities agreed on migratory routes – called the burti or butali. Whatever disputes that arose from the herd wandering away from those routes and damaging crops were resolved by the community leaders and herder leaders (ardos) (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 6). Defying these resolutions meant resorting to the local government authorities.

But the climate change has upset this balance – and with murderous consequences. The continuation of this migration southward insidiously resulted in conflicts between the farmers and the herders. In addition to climate change, other drivers for the escalation of these crises are population growth, crime, inefficient police action, incoherent national policies, and cultural changes.

3. Drivers

The farmer-herder conflict is a catch-all construction used to refer to "a range of interactions, typically describing resource competition between pastoralist herders and sedentary farmers" (Kendrick & Sanders, 2024). These interactions have historically been shown to be symbiotic and at times competitive but hardly violent. Climate change, population growth, crime, and weak policing are drivers of the crisis

3.1. Climate change

Between October and May, Nigeria's northern region experiences what is called the dry season where the physical environment is arid and semi-arid. From June to September, there is low rainfall ranging from 600 to 900mm (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3). The Nigerian Meteorological Agency reported that in 30 years, the annual rainfall has dropped from 150 to 120 days; and in 60 years, more than 350,000 sq km of what was already arid land has turned into desert or desert-like conditions – and yearly, this desert/desert-like conditions have progressed southward at a speed of 0.6km per year (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2008, p. 12). As a consequence of these environmental changes normal agricultural and human livelihoods have been disrupted. Thus, many herders and others (4.2 million in all) have been forced to migrate southwards in search of productive land – and away from the desert that follows them in pursuit.

Migration is not a new phenomenon, as has been previously stated. But it was seasonal – when the north was at its most arid and rainless – between December and May, usually stopped

at the central zone of the country before a return was made back to the north. In the past 20 years, in response to their changing indigenous climatic conditions, pastures have shrunk or disappeared in the north and herders are staying for longer periods in the central zone – from December to July versus December to May (Crisis Group, 2017, 3). Increasingly, some herders are choosing to graze their herds permanently in the central zone as there is no pasture to return to in the north – in or out of season. Naturally, this has triggered disputes with the farmers as their farming seasons now clash with the migration and settlement of herders – especially as the number of sedentary farmers is on the increase.

3.2. Population growth

The most common immediate driver of farmer-herder conflict is damage to crops caused by migrating or resident livestock (Brottem, 2021, p. 2). The expansion of the population of the central zone – as indeed the rest of Nigeria - has caused the use of more land for agricultural cultivation. First, the farmers have increased in number. Similarly, the herders and herds may have increased in number to meet the growing meat, milk and hide needs of a growing population. This means that the contact between crop and herd – the most immediate cause of conflict – is more likely and thus the occasions where conflicts are a likely sequela.

A rural population in West and Central Africa, for example, was said to have grown by more than 40 per cent in the past 20 years; and over the past 40 years, cropland has doubled in size and covers at least 25 per cent of the total land surface (Brottem, 2021, p. 2).

Population growth also means an increase in non-agricultural uses of land, such as for the development of settlements, industrial complexes, and other public buildings. Either grazing lands or farmlands would be converted into these uses. In this case, alternatives must be sought for farming and grazing.

Farming communities are growing and with them the need to cultivate larger land portions for extended periods. Therefore, they now farm almost all year round – deploying dry-season farming techniques such as irrigation. Consequently, the farmers are now farming all year round and herders are grazing all year round (Bloem, Damon, Francis, & Mitchell, 2023, p.1 - 2). Since 1993, National Fadama Development Programme (a World Bank-funded project) has used public water sources such as rivers and streams for irrigation (World Bank, 2015). That herders utilise same sources for their herd has meant that these water sources constitute potential flashpoints for persistent conflicts.

What follows this arrangement is a cycle of attacks, reprisals, kidnappings, and destruction of crops and property. Armed militias have been formed and linked with either the herding groups or the farming groups (Bloem, Damon, Francis, & Mitchell, 2023, p. 6). These groups clash occasionally and with serious consequences, especially as the forming of these groups correlates with a proliferation of small arms. Equally worrying, pastoral land paucity is said to have pushed herders into sanctuary areas such as national parks and classified forests (Brottem, 2021, p. 2).

3.3. Crime

Crime in Nigeria relating to the farmer-herder crisis has varying dimensions, including rural banditry and cattle rustling, conflicts across Northern Nigeria, and terrorism.

A bandit is "a member of an armed group of thieves who attack travellers" (Hornby, 2015, p. 104). Were this to be the bandits that operated in Nigeria, the security question would have been less serious. These bandits have proliferated, engage in armed robberies, raid villages and

towns, and kidnap for ransom (Kuna & Ibrahim, 2015, p. 2). A combination of these has been identified as a contributory factor to the migrations of the herders' southwards (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 6).

Cattle rustling has increased roughly in the same period that has seen an increase in the farmer-herder crisis. The activity has grown in scale in the northern states where these rustling groups have operated with increasing boldness. Cattle rustling has also been reported as a major funding source for Boko Haram (Crisis Group,2017, p. 5). Boko Haram is the terrorist group that had in 2014 kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls from their school in an act that shook Nigeria and reverberated right through the world. That same group has been responsible for the execution of thousands of Nigerians in the decade that has followed that mass kidnap. The herders reported that they had lost over one million cattle to the Boko Haram insurgency (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 6).

The northwest has become a sort of terror capital in the region. The roll call of terror organisations active in this region would include the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara, Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimin, Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and the Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP). The concentration of these terror groups in the region is one thing, their ability to function almost unimpeded is quite another. In this, it is aided by a series of factors which include the following: the porosity of the Nigeria-Niger border which is about 1500km and invested with forest reserves and dense vegetation; arms and weapons trafficking; weak governance and poverty (five of Nigeria's 10 poorest states are found in this region). Also, the engagement of the military in at least 30 states of the federation means that they are stretched; this emboldens terror groups, and they can operate with little resistance (Ojewale, 2021).

Consequently, it was reported that in 2013, more than 64,750 cattle were stolen and at least 2,991 herders were killed across the northern region (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 5). Vigilante groups have been formed to combat bandits. But these have worsened insecurity by arrest and extrajudicial execution of rustlers – which has sometimes resulted in massive retaliation. In other cases, these vigilantes prey on the herders by demanding cash from herders as a "protection levy" (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 5).

The above taken together have driven the herders away from the north of the country. Also, such exposure to attacks may have caused the herders to procure small arms for self-defence (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 11). It is these same arms that are used in the farmer-herder crisis that takes place in the central zone of the country.

3.4. Inefficient police action

Farmer-herder crisis are a distortion of security. That it progresses begs the question of the role of the security forces, namely, the police force in restoring peace and order in troubled places. Nigeria operates a national police force (Azom & Uba-Uzoagwu, 2023, p. 296). That is, its command is centrally structured such that operative and administrative control comes from the lone Inspector General. This leaves the governors of states powerless in the face of conflicts that take place within their jurisdictions as the police force stationed in their state does not take commands from them. The governors are considered the "chief security officers" of their states but they lack operational control as far as the police force is concerned. When police respond to clashes between herders and farmers, it is usually after reports have been passed from state to federal levels and orders returned. The consequence is that the response is "slow poor, and above all without proper coordination" (Azom & Uba-Uzoagwu, 2023, p. 301). This has eroded trust in the police force as it is regarded as unable to handle clashes, as nonchalant or even as

complicit in the crisis. The response of the state government to this situation has been the formation of vigilante groups. This has led to a proliferation of small arms. And when such groups clash with the herders who had similarly armed themselves in response to banditry and cattle rustling, there is an endless cycle of violence and retaliation with loss of human life.

4. Consequences

The farmer herder crisis causes human casualties, food insecurity, livelihood and economic losses.

4.1. Loss of life

The human casualties that have arisen from the crisis are astounding. Estimates put the toll at 2,500 killed in 2016 – this was more than were killed by the Boko Haram insurgency in the same year. In Benue State alone, 1,878 people were killed between 2014 and 2016 (*Crisis Group, 2017, p. 7; see fig. 2 for the geographical spread of farmer-herder casualties and fig. 3 for Boko Haram-related casualties*). The total death toll from the farmer-herder crisis is put at 6,000 and more than 62,000 people have been displaced (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018. p. 6).

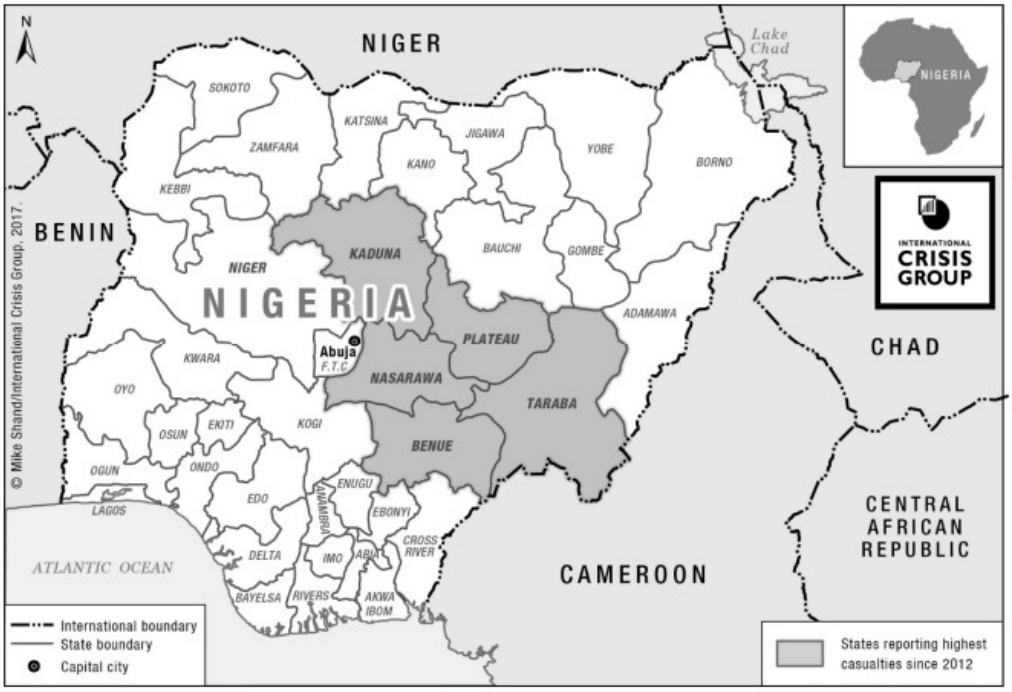

Figure 2. Map of Nigerian states with high incidence of herder-farmer casualties (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 24)

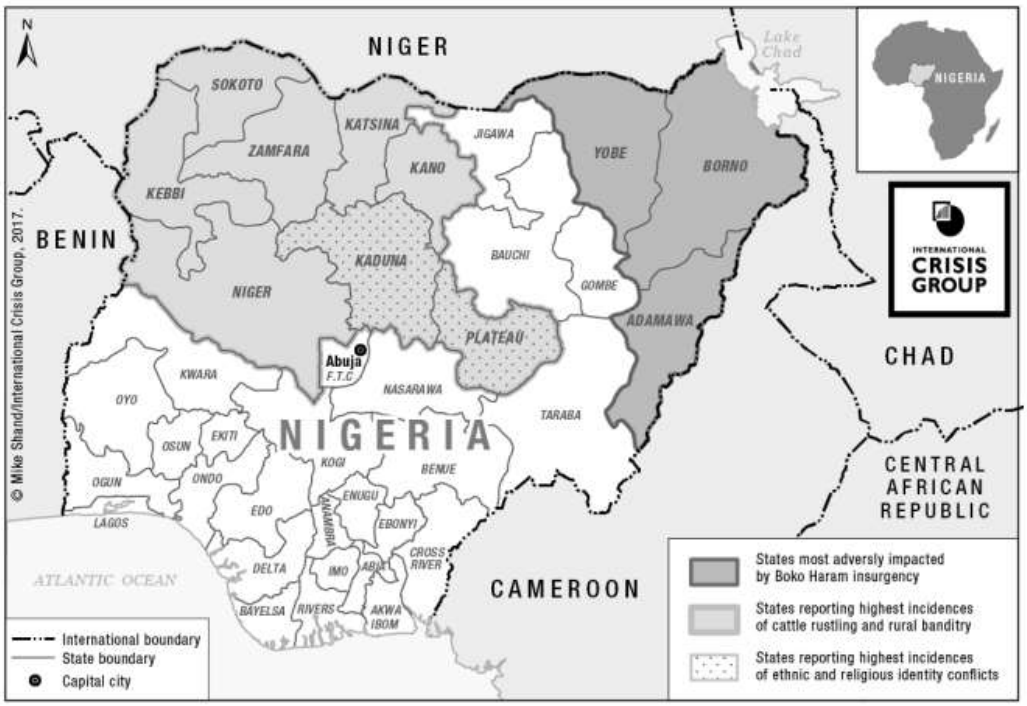

Figure 3. Map of Conflict and Insecurity in Northern Nigeria (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 23)

4.2. Food Insecurity

A consequence of the farmer-herder crisis has been food insecurity. The relationship is a direct and dynamic causal one (D'Souza & Jolliffe, 2013, p. 17). Globally, it is estimated that 650.3 million people who are categorized as "chronically undernourished" come from countries that are in conflicts aggravated by "climate-related shocks" (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, & WHO, 2021, p. 51). Further, 75 per cent of children aged under five with stunted growth live in conflict countries (FAO, et al., 2021, p. 3).

Conflicts push farmers away from their farmlands – and this would mean a year of hunger as most of these farmers eat that which they produce. A Benue farmer reported losing 80% of crops, highlighting economic devastation (Bloem et al., 2023). Not only this, but they may also leave their households due to the conflict and find themselves in internally displaced persons camps – these have rapidly increased in the past year in keeping with the exacerbation of the farmer herder conflicts. In the camps, survival is the goal, and farming is a luxury that these camps do not usually cater for. Feeding is at the mercy of international aid organizations.

4.3. Livelihood And Economic Loss

The conflicts also limit the activities of both herders and farmers: this threatens their livelihoods (Dary, James, & Mohammed, 2017, p. 141), causes a decline in agricultural productivity, diminishes cattle holding and cultivated land area (George, Adelaja, & Awokuse, 2021). There are thus clear economic losses for the farmers and herders, and this is reflected even in GDP figures. The contribution of agriculture to Nigeria's GDP fell by 30 percentage points from 133.64

billion USD in 2013 to 78.45 billion USD in 2017 – this is in great part due to the farmer herder conflicts and the greatest dip coincides with times when the conflicts peaked (Okibe, 2022, p. 5; Sulaiman & Ja'afar-Furo, 2010, p. 147).

In two Southern states, Edo and Delta States, it was estimated that crops worth 40 million USD were lost annually to cattle invasion (Okibe, 2022, p. 3). The herders may report similar losses. Tellingly, these clashes take place mostly in the agriculturally most productive region of the country – the middle belt – the north central of the country. To the North is taken over by an ingression of the Sahel desert and droughts. To the South is a thick mangrove forest that is not amenable to large-scale farming – where the environment has not been rendered unproductive because of the oil explorative activities going on and the attendant environmental degradation.

5. Summary of efforts at containing crisis

5.1. The African Union

As a response to economic, political, and security changes arising from climate change and its knock-on effects, the African Union launched the Great Green Wall Initiative in 2007 (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 8). It aimed to set up 8,000km of trees along the southern Sahel in addition to rural development and ecosystem management initiatives. In 2013, the Nigerian government established an Agency saddled with the responsibility (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 8).

As climate change is a driver of the farmer-herder crisis, this represents among the most far-sighted responses. The Initiative established orchards, nurseries, solar and wind-powered boreholes. However, the tempo of activities has slowed down – almost to a halt – due to the failure of the Nigerian Federal Government fund the Initiative (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 8).

5.2. Government

The government at federal and state levels have taken turns creating Grazing reserves (1965), establishing the National Commission for Nomadic Education (1989), deploying security, establishing national grazing reserves (2016), state-level laws prohibiting open grazing, the Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan (2015), and National Livestock Transformation Plan (2019 – 2028) (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 7; Nigerian Economic Summit Group, n.d.).

Most of these have been ineffective. For example, a presidential committee issued a report that recommended the "the recovery and improvement of all grazing routes encroached by farmers" (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 10). The committee also suggested a release of $317 million to state governments for ranch construction. On paper, this solution was satisfactory to both parties as farms were protected (via ranching) and grazing lands were also protected (via grazing routes reclamation). There was a change of government through elections. The funds were released to state governors. Nothing has been heard of the funds or from the parliamentary committee that was setup to investigate it. Established grazing reserves under state government arrangements have failed as a result of poor infrastructure and consumable such as pasture and water (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 7).

Another government measure that had questionable sustainability potentials at its roots and may have been undone by corruption was the following. The Federal Minister of Agriculture had

placed an order of “massive hectares of grasses” from Brazil. Such grass was never seen (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 7).

Others have directly resulted in conflicts – such as the anti-open grazing laws by state governments (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 8). These conflicts have arisen as the herders feel targeted by these laws. Indeed, local vigilantes have occasionally expelled herders from areas (Crisis Group, 2017, p. 12 -13). In other states, the herders have threatened legal challenge to the laws.

5.3. Civil society organisations

Studies by one non-governmental organisation recommended a strengthening of the conflict resolution capacities and supporting them to implement action plans that would transform conflict relationships and minimize conflict intensity (Mercy Corps, 2024, p. 29). Another recommends a differentiation between local disputes and armed extremist activity in high-risk areas, investing capital in the improvement of land management infrastructure, and prioritizing trust between communities and security forces (Brottem, 2021, p. 7 - 8).

Also, they have been the deployment of information, communication and technology, and programmatic interventions by these organisations (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 9 -10). For example, in response to cattle rustling, the Zycom Surveillance (Nigeria) and Datamars (Switzerland) developed a Radio Frequency Identification Device system which has can track and monitor cattle movements including when they are captured by rustlers (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 9). Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) developed a system for providing minute-by-minute information and alerts on cattle rustling (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018, p. 9). While these are innovative, the question remains: once in the keep of the heavily armed rustlers would the police force engage the rustlers to retrieve cattle? If no, would the herders arm themselves to fight the rustlers and retrieve their cattle? Indeed, where cattle monitoring systems show cattle grazing on farmlands, exactly how would this knowledge prevent clashes? Would it perhaps provide farmers with an “objective” basis for fighting? Research is needed on these questions

6. Trade

In Nigeria, passing livestock may damage crops and it is a trigger for farmer-herder conflicts. These conflicts take more lives than prolific terror organizations working within the same territory. At the root of these conflicts lies a changing climate. Knock-on effects such as food insecurity and loss of livelihoods arise from these climate-induced conflicts.

In this section, it is argued that trade and trade policy can prevent farmer-herder conflicts, cause a reversal of the knock-on effects and foster resilience. One such trade policy, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), operationalizes this argument.

6.1. The response of trade to farmer-herder conflicts: the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)

AfCFTA came into force with an ambition to "facilitate trade in food products and support the development of international production chains and greater value addition in Africa" (PwC, 2022, p. 4). The World Bank reports that full operationalisation of AfCFTA would see more than 50 million Africans lifted out of extreme poverty by 2035 (PwC, 2022, p. 4).

Nonetheless, whatever benefits arose from the agreement, climate change threatens to undo them. Especially as Africa is already very prone to adverse climate events – this is while still being the continent with the lowest emissions per capita. The emissions are atmospheric with warming effects bearing little relationship to the emission's place of origin.

AfCFTA can help minimise the risk of conflict by fostering the development of international production chains and value addition – both forms of the "deterrence mechanism". In boosting food security, medium and small enterprises can optimise the opportunities that AfCFTA offers by onboarding them into supply chains that were previously dominated by groups that mixed up armed conflict objectives with agricultural or business ones.

By addressing the knock-on effects of climate change, AfCFTA can address climate change - especially as it has been said to be compatible with Africa's climate objectives (PwC, 2022, p. 6).

6.1.1. Prevention

Trade policies can encourage conflict-reducing actions. It can also serve as punishment (CfR, 2023). Sometimes with great effect. There are international instruments that regulate sustainable fishing practices, for example. Fish that is not sustainably caught, in line with agreed-upon practices, would simply not be bought (PwC, 2022, p. 11). This could apply to the products that are on offer by the farmers and herders. If so, cattle raised on farms of displaced farmers or raised on national reserves or forests would not be bought; crops raised by in one way or another by farmers who have done combat with herders would not be bought.

Farm produces are more closely tied to a fixed geographical location than many other products. As farmer violence is in response to cattle encroachment, farmers engage in violence within small geographical radii. Thus, produce from farms of violent farmers can be recognised through measures such as certification issue. For the herders, the earlier section showed how tracking systems have been used in monitoring the movement of cattle – with an aim to curtailing rustling. These same systems can be used to delineate which herd of cattle is owned by a violent herder. That is, violence that took place at a given location and time can be traced to cattle herds that were at that location and time. Again, it is unlikely that herders would abandon cattle many kilometres away to fight.

These sanctions would pressure bad actors – whether farmers or herders – into proper behaviour. Battles are fought because, at the end of them, there would be consumers to sell to. Where these consumers are prevented by regulation, the aim of the battle would have been defeated for the combatants. This is the so-called deterrence mechanism (Assem, 2023, p. 2). Where the loss of livelihood is taken to fuel the farmer-herder crisis, an invigoration of trade would engage the combatants, give them a livelihood, and thus prevent future cycles of conflicts.

6.1.2. Reversal of effects

Extreme climate events, and their consequences such as farmer-herder conflicts, affect poor and marginalized populations to a greater extent than it does other populations (Barbier, 2020, p. 8). For example, it is poor farmers and poor herders who suffer food insecurity and loss of livelihoods the most during episodes of conflict. In addition, they all reside with the rural areas that suffer neglect in terms of absence of policing and social amenities, which heighten their vulnerabilities.

Trade at local, global, or regional levels can foster resilience by impacting incomes, food availability and prices (Department for International Development, 2013, p.15). Trade can act

to support Nigerians, in the short run, by making available a flow of supplies to regions that have seen violence the most and have experienced a shock/sudden reduction in food production and thus suffer food shortages the most.

More permanently, trade can facilitate changes in the agricultural sector by facilitating transformation to modern, sustainable and all-year-round farming and livestock techniques. Nigeria should not have to choose between meat or crop; it should be able to have both and all year round too. Population expansion and ongoing urbanization would demand this. And the investments that trade policies would attract would help institute these changes. Therefore, trade would "cushion" the effects of the farmer-herder crisis in the short run and "enable" an agricultural paradigm that would eliminate the farmer-herder crisis in the long run.

Further, international trade can create or restore livelihoods and raise incomes. This facilitates resilience and cyclically helps them escape food insecurity by granting them greater purchasing power. In 2015 – 16, El Nino induced a drought that left at least 41 million people food insecure in Southern Africa (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2021, p. 8); within the same period, countries within the region experienced some of their hottest recorded years within a century with nearly 10% drop in agricultural production. This is a region where much of agriculture is fed by rainfall.

Staples such as maize were scarce and the currency depreciation due to the adverse event made purchasing even more difficult. Trade policy cushioned the effects in the short run in the following way: maize importation restrictions were lifted; maize became available, and prices dropped. By switching from net food exporter to net food importer, resilience was fostered, and a knock-on effect of climate change was kept at bay (World Trade Organisation, 2022, p. 101).

6.1.3. Resilience fostering

Displaced from farms and farming, there is a notable trend in farmers taking up work in the informal sector. Before the displacements, this was already an important sector in Nigeria with the International Monetary Fund estimating that 60 per cent of Nigeria's GDP was due to the sector (Bloem, Damon, Francis, & Mitchell, 2023, p. 7). The entry of displaced farmers into the sector particularly peaked at a time when the clashes between them and the herders peaked. Entry into the informal sector in this way has been discussed as a "safety net" in response to shocks – of both conflict and climate change (Bloem, Damon, Francis, & Mitchell, 2023, p. 8). This has been studied extensively and appears to suggest how trade can begin to reverse the secondary consequences of climate change (such as food and economic insecurity) while creating resilience in the face of the primary consequences (such as farmer-herder conflicts) (Bloem, Damon, Francis, & Mitchell, 2023, p. 8).

7. Gender inclusion

To base peace on inequality is to merely postpone violence and conflict. Unfortunately, this has been the preferred pattern of peace processes: the involvement of men and the exclusion of women. To pursue peace in this fashion, involving men and excluding women, belies a flawed approach. Where a peace process seeks to merely end violence, “women who are rarely the belligerents – are unlikely to be considered legitimate participants” (O’Reilly, Suilleabhain, & Paffenholz, 2015, p. 5).

“If the goal” however “is to build peace, it makes sense to gain more diverse inputs from the rest of the society” (O’Reilly, et al., 2015, p. 1). It is instructive to note that the “rest of society” consists of half of the world’s population. Therefore, society need not be surprised when peace,

pursued in this fashion, is unsustainable. Indeed, peace that is not sustainable is not peace at all.

The position taken in this essay is that women are essential in the sustenance of peace and the prevention of violence. This position is arrived at through an examination of the game-changing role of women in peace processes, obstacles to their participation in such processes, and classroom lessons that history teaches.

From the outset, it must be stated that "women are much more than victims of war and conflict" (United Nations, 2018). Recognition of this would mean that the presence of women in peace processes would not be out of tokenism, or a consolation prize for one who has suffered, but out of relevance. Beyond participation at the negotiating table, women's inclusion could include the following: inclusive commissions, participation in problem-solving workshops, public decision-making, observer status at discussions, and mass action (Paffenholz, Ross, Dixon, Shluchter, & True, 2015, p. 6 - 8). Taken together, these pathways for inclusion would work for several reasons.

Where women are involved in peace processes, there is a much higher chance of an agreement being reached. In a research study undertaken by the Graduate Institute in Geneva, an in-depth analysis of dozens of peace processes revealed that women's participation tended to increase the outcomes of a peace process as compared to when they exercised weak or no influence on these peace processes (O'Reilly, et al., 2015, p. 1). Indeed, where women participated actively, the tendency for an agreement to arise was almost 100 per cent. Further, the participation of women in these processes meant that the likelihood of such agreements being implemented was greater (Smyth, Hersi, Baldoumus, & Tonelli, 2020, p.32).

The involvement of women in peace processes tends to push for the "commencement, resumption, or finalization" of negotiations (UN Women, 2015) – especially when negotiations have reached a deadlock or where they have lost momentum or faltered altogether. People tend to get used to prevailing situations whether good or bad. Wars, conflict, and violence are habits that stick too. Combatants who have spent several years in the trenches fighting would see the commencement, continuation, or finalization of peace processes as a new occurrence that would uproot the lives that they have gotten used to. Women, whose discrimination usually extends even to the battlefields, have no such inhibitions. For them, the life that they remember is the one that was before the institution of hostilities; the life where they were committed to their advancement (whether in education or business), family advancement, and also societal advancement. For them, peace represents a return to all these. Thus, the peace processes for them carry a more urgent quality. Therefore, they push for more concrete and fundamental issues instead of peripheral ones that tend to sidetrack negotiations (Paffenholz, et al., 2015, p. 10).

Further, women act as catalysts for peace because of the length, depth, and width of their local influence and networks. They know the situation on the ground; they know what issue would soon degenerate into a full-blown crisis, and what issue should not hinder the arrival of peaceful resolutions. In these, a case in point was given by Hilary Clinton, then US Secretary of State. In a negotiation that had deadlocked over the control of a certain river in Sudan, it was the womenfolk who intervened by stating that the river in question had dried up many years ago, was of no relevance to anyone, and so should not hinder a peace process. These women arrived at this knowledge which eluded their male folk because daily they had been the ones who went or knew others who went to the said river to obtain water for domestic needs (Clinton, 2011).

A peace agreement is likely to be sustained for about 15 more years if women take an active part in the negotiations (Smyth, et al., 2020, p. 8). In light of this, it is surprising that between

1996 and 2019, only 13% of women were negotiators and 6% of signatories of peace deals were women (The Economist, 2021). In Plateau State, Nigeria, women's involvement in conflict mediation and peacebuilding efforts was shown to reduce violence relapse (UN Women, 2021).

Challenges: obstacles to the participation of women

While piles of research and learned experiences have shown the benefit of women in the attainment of peace and security, it is strange to note that this option is not considered often enough. This situation is attributable to tradition, gender stereotypes, legislation, and state structures (Calman, 2011, p. 6).

Tradition hinders women's participation through a widespread acceptance of domestic violence against women and even honour killings – where women are killed by their male family members who disagree with their behaviour (usually sexual). Women are also hindered from participation through directed slander and defamatory campaigns aimed at embarrassing women out of public spaces. Where rape and sexual violence are used against women, women would tend to keep away from public roles to hide what their cultures have insidiously called 'shame'. Also, a tradition that restricts women from accessing information would automatically prevent their participation in any peace process simply because they are ignorant of the existence of that process. For example, the town hall meetings where such processes are initiated would normally be an all-male affair.

Where increased fundamentalist and sectarian groups target women, women would immediately get the message that their visibility is an invitation to attacks. This is seen in Nigeria where hundreds of women have been kidnapped by Boko Haram in the Northeast of the country, the best-known of which was the Chibok girls (The Economist, 2021). Traditions that hinder women-visibility and movement, such as the Purdah system, would prevent the vital participation of women in peace processes.

Gender stereotypes also contribute to the dismal participation of women in peace processes (Calman, 2011, p. 6). The stereotype that the role of women does not extend beyond domestic responsibilities means that the possibility of women participating in the very public role of peace-making is automatically limited. Another stereotype, especially perpetuated by the media is that focusing on the flaws – real or perceived – of the private lives of women instead of their very evident professional achievements. Related to this, unreasonably high demands are made on female public officials, far exceeding the scrutiny to which males are subjected.

Another stereotype is a patronising one whereby politics is taken to be a dirty game (due to use of dishonesty, negative campaigning, corruption, compromise, etc.), one in which women should not take part. Women, this view holds, are to restrict themselves to gossip and small talk. Repeated enough times, women themselves come to believe this and summarily keep away from peace processes. Also, war and conflict are seen as serious issues that can benefit only from discussions among men. Apart from being inaccurate, these stereotypes tend to prolong conflicts by stripping away the contribution of women - which research has proven to be very effective.

The third obstacle to participation is a restrictive legal and state structure. This is evident in situations where channels for gender equality are underfunded and lack any true correlation with the reality of women. Also, international and national state policies on domestic violence are routinely adopted. They fail, however, to bring about any real good because the political will is at best lethargic.

Legislation (especially customary law) also hinders the participation of women in public life as it prevents them from inheriting property, owning or having access to financial resources (Calman, 2011, p. 9). Even at the level of civil society, state structures blunt impact by stating

that support and grants would only be given to them if they develop a certain anti-women stance. For example, they would be routinely asked not to have women as workers or not to be vocal against domestic violence or honour killings. These conditions may even put the independence of civil society in question (Calman, 2011, p. 11).

Government and civil society organisations must take leadership in avoiding these stereotypes by including women in peace process. This is an evidence-based not only in the global West but also in Nigeria. These pieces of evidence must be widely disseminated in advocacy drives to win over men who may act as gatekeepers. Information sharing and exchanges among women at different must be facilitated through creation of fora for discussions between women at local levels and those with decision-making positions.

8. Conclusion

Through a direct and primary connection, climate change causes farmer-herder conflicts as has been demonstrated. Secondarily, climate change (through the conflicts) causes human wastage, food insecurity and economic collapse, among other things.

Trade is instrumental to reversing these primary and secondary consequences of climate change. Similarly, research is clear on the role that women play in peace. The reasons for their marginalization have been identified as tradition, stereotypes, and legislative and state structures. Whatever benefits these reasons (which are not real reasons at all) may bring to vested interests do not justify these impediments to peace. Indeed, "nations that fail women, fail" (The Economist, 2021).

All actions – both present and future – regarding the containment and prevention of the farmer-herder crisis must have trade and gender inclusion components if they are to sustainably succeed.

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