

THE IMPACT OF

AUGUST 2018

FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT ON WOMEN

IN ADAMAWA, GOMBE AND PLATEAU STATES OF NIGERIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	About the Authors
7	Executive Summary
9	Contextual Background
12	Social Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on Women in the Focal States
16	Economic Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on Women in the Focal States:
18	Women in Violent Farmer-Herder Conflict.
21	Women and Peace Processes in the Focal States.
24	Recommendations

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This policy brief is a publication of Search for Common Ground (Search) in Nigeria. Search is an international organization committed to conflict transformation. Since 1982, Search has led programs around the world to help societies transform the way they deal with conflicts, away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative solutions. With more than 600 staff and 1200 partners in 43 countries around the world, our programs reach 4.2 million people each year. Our Common Ground Approach enables us to bring together individuals and organizations with diverse political, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds for lasting change based on common interests. This approach allows individuals and groups to understand their differences, uncover shared interests, and explore potential win-win solutions.

Search implemented the “Promoting Women’s Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria” project in Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau States, funded by the European Union. The project ensures the practical implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and to document its benefits to the management, mitigation and resolution of conflict in the states on a demonstrable basis. Search appreciates the contribution of all the participants at the Consultative workshops and the Validation workshop. Special thanks to Kwaja A.M.C, Ph.D., Saleh Momale Ph.D., Shabnam Moallem and Tamwakat Golit for the technical input into the document.

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The development and Publication of this policy brief was achieved with funding and technical support from the European Union within the framework of the programme “Promoting Women’s Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria”, implemented by UN Women in partnership with the Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development. The content of this publication is solely the

responsibility of Search, Nigeria and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union and UN Women.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief highlights the impact of farmer-herder conflict on women in Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau States in Nigeria. It analyzes the concerns of women whose issues are neither sufficiently highlighted nor their voice very audible in discussion and decision on peace and conflict related issues. The policy brief highlights the impact of farmer - herder conflict on women in the three states, which has to do with: the social impact, as it relates to intergroup relations; the economic impact as it affects their livelihoods and resilience; the contributions of women in driving the conflict and reinforcing the cycle of violence; and the role of women in conflict prevention, transformation and post-conflict reconciliation - including trauma management.

The three focal states analyzed are neither on the same stage in the progression of the conflict nor are their experiences identical. However, there are underlying factors among the three states that are similar, regarding their causalities. The history of conflict between farmers and herders is not recent its decades old. While Plateau state has a long history of conflict between the two agro-producers and has recorded several vicious cycles of violent attacks and reprisals, Adamawa state's experience of violent eruption, organized attacks and loss of lives are more recent. Thus, the full understanding of the conflict and narratives for the causes, impact, and opportunities to transform it are still emerging. While Gombe state is typically not described as a state with active farmer-herder conflict, however a few local government areas (LGAs) in the state have a history of farmer-herder conflict and the state shares same drivers of attacks as observed in Plateau and Adamawa states, albeit in a lower degree.

Increasingly, there is a shift in the notion of women being seen solely as victims of violent conflicts to being contributors to the conflicts. This notion forms the basis for highlighting the contributions of women to farmer-herder conflict and the social and economic impact of the conflict on women.

Key Issues:

Social Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on Women: Conflict in any form weakens the social capital of a community such that the cohesive forces that bond members of a community together are weakened and broken down. Women play significant roles in sustaining this cohesion and social capital, but the hardships women experience during and after violent conflicts negatively impacts these roles. Loss of family members, disruption of the family structure, and breakdown of intergroup

relations along ethnic and religious lines directly threaten women's capacity to sustain the social capital. Also, community-based structures for protection from sexual and gender based-violence (SGBV) have become weakened, leaving women and girls vulnerable to SGBV such as rape. Rape is increasingly seen as a tactic of the conflict, with women and girls bodies considered part of the battlefield.

Economic Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on Women: Women constitute about 60% of smallholder sustenance farmers in Nigeria. Consequently, the farmer-herder conflict negatively affects women's economic directly, with dire implications for their livelihood. Destruction of crops, attacks, and theft of cattle, as well as theft of farm produce, are some of the direct economic impacts while indirect impacts include lack of access to the market to sell produce due to break down of intergroup relations and insecurity. Closures of village markets in some communities due to insecurity also affects women traders, trading in farm produce or herder women selling milk products such as locally produced milk, *nono* yogurt near or at markets. Limited economic opportunity reduced the resilience of women and pushed displaced women into begging and menial jobs. As the economic base of the family weakens, children are put at risk, due to increased vulnerabilities. In cases where women were able to diversify their means of livelihood, their capacity to market and sell produced goods is still limited.

Women in Farmer-Herder Conflict: Three categories of women's involvement in the violent conflict between farmer-herders in the states were highlighted. Women as primary party and direct actors in the conflict, women as secondary party that are interested in the outcomes, and women as shadow party working behind the scene to influence the dynamics of the conflict. Women's experience of previous violent conflict has reportedly traumatized them and increased their propensity to contribute to violent conflict.

Women and Peace Processes in the Focal States: Women's contribution to the peace process is multifaceted, from gathering early warning information for conflict prevention to directly supporting post-conflict stabilization and reconciliation. The role of women in conflict transformation seems to be the most observable of the contributions. However, the UNSCR 1325 calls for equal participation of women in the entire peace process and this is yet to be achieved.

Recommendations

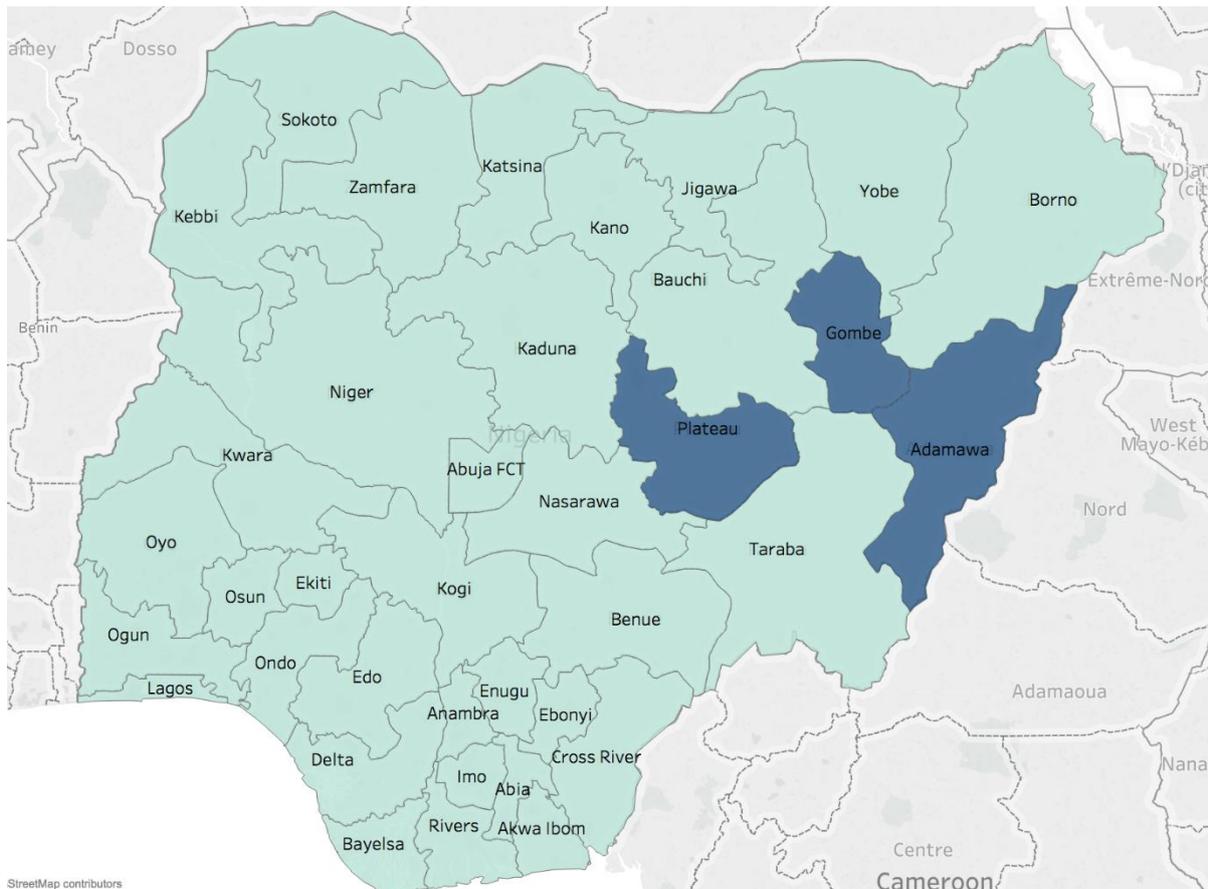
This policy brief offers recommendations for Nigerian government, civil society, and community's leadership as follows:

- The federal government and governments of Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau should make available adequate funding for the implementation of National and State Action Plans on Women's engagement in Peace and Security
- Intensification of peacebuilding activities by Plateau Peacebuilding Agency and the newly established Adamawa State Agency for Peace, Reconciliation and Reconstruction and the creation of a similar Agency in Gombe state.
- Governments at all levels should partner with civil society organizations to provide trauma healing and psychosocial support to victims of the conflict, especially women and girls
- The federal government and governments of Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau should prioritize economic and livelihood support for women and other victims of farmer-herder conflicts.
- Federal government should increase effort to confiscate arms from unauthorized persons and address the criminal activities driving the conflict
- The federal government and governments of Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau should invest in strengthening the role of traditional and religious leaders including women leaders in the reconciliation process and social cohesion at community and state level.
- Civil society organizations should prioritize projects that build trust and strengthen intercultural understanding between farmers and herders, with special focus on the women.
- Media should counter the negative reportage of farmer-herder conflict through transformative peace and trauma sensitive journalism
- Civil society organizations should provide support to strengthen the role of community women and community based women's groups/association in the peacebuilding process.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Adamawa, Gombe, and Plateau states confront challenges related to conflicts between farmers and herders. The fertile soil and climate in the states' region offer a favorable environment for farmers and herders to thrive, attracting migratory herders from neighboring states. The farming and herding communities in the states have for decades, benefitting from mutually beneficial relationships –

farmers benefit from cattle manure and herders crop residue. This symbiotic practice tied the wellbeing of the farmer to the wellbeing of the herder and allowed for most disputes between the two groups to be resolved amicably, through traditional mediation mechanisms¹. Over the last decades, this interdependence has increasingly deteriorated due to changing demography, environmental degradation, climate change resulting in shrinking natural resources, competition for resources and manipulation of the socio-political diversity of communities.



The weakening of community-based dispute management mechanisms, rising criminality associated with cattle rustling and raiding of villages, as well as ineffective law enforcement, continue to drive the conflict with wide-ranging implications for the livelihoods of communities, food security and the overall security of the states.² These and other country-wide challenges including poverty, and unemployment reduced livelihood opportunities as well as heterogeneous, multi-ethnic and multi-

¹ Kwaja, A. M.C and Ademola-Adelehin B 2017 *The Implications of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law on Farmer-Herder Relations in the Middle Belt of Nigeria*

² The report of a workshop on Conflict System Analysis of Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria, organized by the Forum on Farmer-Herder Relations in Nigeria, (2018).

linguistic characteristics³ of the states, resulting in violent conflicts becoming a major defining feature of farmer and herders interactions⁴ especially from 2000 till date.

The binary identity assigned to farmers and herders conflict- presenting herders as predominantly Muslim and of Fulani extraction and farmers as predominantly Christian of various ethnic groups- is increasingly misunderstood and misused by different interest groups. This further deepens the divide and instill hostility, fear, and reproach towards the perceived aggressor in the farmer-herder conflict. This plays down the fact that some farmers are also herders and some herders also farmers; as well as the fact that some largely homogenous communities have recorded violent farmers-herders conflict while in some other communities, farmers and herders coexist peacefully despite ethnic and religious differences. With the binary identity narrative, when conflict is triggered between the two groups by cattle damage of crops or blockage of grazing routes – the resulting tensions often descend into cycles of revenge attacks based on identity. As conflicts increase and become protracted, any threat to crops or cattle is viewed as direct threat to identity and source of survival, resulting in groups adopting violent means to protect their livelihood.

Violent clashes between farmers-herders are largely viewed as attacks perpetrated by male aggressors, while women and children are categorized as vulnerable groups who are caught up in a vicious web of violence. This highlights the image of women as victims who bear the brunt of the violent conflict. This image however does not recognize the fact that women are stakeholders in the agriculture sector and may share the grievances and concerns of male farmers and herders. Women accounting for such a high percentage of smallholder farmers imply the likelihood of their direct or indirect involvement in the conflict.

Nigeria population was estimated to be 195million¹ people in 2018, with females in approximately 49% of the population. 70% of the population reportedly engages in agricultural production¹, 80 % of these are smallholder subsistence farmers¹ with 60% being women¹.

The fractured relations between farmers and herders is not just having a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved; it has also disrupted the sustainability of food and livestock production

³Johannes Harnischfeger (2008), *Democratization and Islamic Law: The Sharia Conflict in Nigeria*, Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

⁴Muhammed, I., Ismaila, B.A., Bibi, M.U (2015) An assessment of farmer-pastoralist conflict in Nigeria using GIS, *International Journal of Engineering Science Invention*, Vol.4, Issue 7, pp. 23-33.

in Nigeria. At least 2,000 annual deaths were reported by the International Crisis Group in the Middle Belt due to the farmer-herder conflict between 2011 and 2016⁵ while another report recorded 1,300 deaths in the first quarter of 2018 alone⁶. Economic cost and loss from the conflict are also significant. All these have serious implications and a negative impact on the role of women within the communities involved in conflict. A 2010 report by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding⁷ showed that women are affected in all ramifications- physically, socially, psychologically, economically and politically in the situation of violent conflict between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Increasingly, there is a shift in the notion of women as sole victims of violent conflicts to being contributors to the conflicts. This is why highlighting the contributions of women to farmer-herder conflict, and the impact of the conflict on women is compelling.

1. The Social Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on Women

The cohesion of societies rests on the fundamental pillars of relationships, networks and social bonds, which connect individuals and communities and facilitate collective actions. Some key factors of community cohesion are interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, shared cultural norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, reciprocity and networks of association representing groups that gather consistently for a common purpose. These are often referred to as social capital⁸. Violent Conflicts weaken the social capital such that the cohesive forces that bond members of a community together are broken down. Women play major roles in the cohesion of the community, performing reproductive, productive and community management roles⁹ to ensure the relationship among the community members is sustained. However, the hardships women often experience during and after conflicts negatively impact these social cohesion roles. Specific social impacts of farmer-herder conflicts identified in the focal states are described below.

Loss of Loved Ones and Disruption of Family Structure:

Loss of family members and relations represent one of the most traumatic experiences of women in farmer-herder conflicts. The trauma of losing husbands and children is the greatest psycho-social impact of the farmer-herder crisis on the women¹⁰. This experience can lead to trauma and post

⁵ <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN1JM1V0-OZATP>

⁶ International Crisis Group (26 July 2018), Stopping Nigeria's spiralling farmer-herder violence, <https://d2071andvip0wi.cloudfront.net/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence.pdf>

⁷ Osakwe, B. and Okechukwu, I. (2011). Caught in the divide: A Situation Assessment of the Plight of Women in Conflict Prone Communities of Nigeria, WANEP

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_capital

⁹ Moser, C.N. Triple role of women. <https://www.agriliqns.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/ING%20Info%20Sheet%20>

¹⁰ Hassan Mubi (2018). The economic impact of farmer-herder conflict on women and their livelihood. Paper presented during Panel Discussion on Gender Dimension at the Consultative workshop on the gender dimension of the farmer herder conflict in Adamawa State.

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which manifests in poor mental and physical health, reduced quality of life and difficulties in managing work and family life. The effects from this experiences are often passed down from one generation to the next resulting in deepening the sense of victimhood that often leads to an agressor cycle of good vs evil narratives, demonizing and dehumanizing the other, redemptive violence and the desire for revenge. This cycle leads to attacks and counter attacks in the name of self defense, justice and restoring honor¹¹.

The loss of a husband creates a vacuum in the family and often thrusts women into the unprepared role of breadwinner and decision makers for their family. This sudden single parenthood increases women's burden of care often not just for their immediate family but also to provide care for extended family members who were wounded, sick, despairing and displaced as a result of the conflict. Cases of women caring for an additional ten to twenty extended family members are a common experience in this conflict. The additional role and associated demands often push families into poverty and dependence, especially when the women lack the skills, experience or support to effectively take up such huge roles. Lack of resources to meet this demand increases the vulnerability of women to exploitation and forces them into allowing their children to take up menial jobs as a means of contributing to family welfare. This burden of care also reportedly reduces the quality and length of time women have for proper upbringing of their children, which is indirectly linked to increase in anti-social activities of young people in for example Plateau state¹² where the rate of use of illicit drugs among young people is becoming epidemic. Women have also taken up the spaces previously occupied by men and as a fall out of this factor, many become heads of households and active in keeping homes together, relocating families and returning families to homes during and after conflict periods as was the case in Numan LGA of Adamawa state.¹³

Displacement and Dislocation of Family: Farmer-herder conflict displaced¹⁴ hundreds of thousands of people from their homes forcing displaced persons to seek refuge in houses of family members and temporary IDP camps in Plateau and Adamawa states. Associated with displacements is dislocation of families. Forced displacement creates immense human sufferings associated with loss, uprooting, poverty, destruction of normal patterns of living, worsened economic status, separation of families and

¹¹ Village STAR Breaking the Cycles of Violence: Building Healthy Individuals and Communities.

¹² <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/07/ndlea-decries-alarming-rate-drug-abuse-plateau/>

¹³ Data during the course of a research which shows that women led the return of families to ashes of their homes in Numan in Adamawa sate and completely rejection the proposition of taking families to displaced persons camps

¹⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/07/26/this-little-known-conflict-in-nigeria-is-now-deadlier-than-boko-haram/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.fa5068287d8f

uncertainties about location and safety of loved ones that lead to trauma and PTSD. Displaced women expressed concerns over loss of economic resources often from leaving their cultivated farms as most of the produces are harvested in their absence by unknown persons. In terms of displacement, women suffer the most because they mostly move with the children while men largely move as individuals. Influx of displaced persons reportedly led to ethno-religious tension in some communities in the states where indigene-settler dichotomy have resurfaced in form of decline in social interaction between the indigene and the people that moved into the communities. Displaced communities often construct a collective victimhood identity which becomes the impetus for revenge and human rights abuses that frequently occur after return to their communities.

Breakdown of Inter-group Relations: A key implication of the conflict is the breakdown of relations between farming and herding communities in the states. Both farmers and herders are nostalgic of the past symbiotic relations and peaceful coexistence with both sides desirous of returning to such state. Despite their desire to peacefully coexist, several road blocks are in the path of such return. The breakdown of mutual trust between the groups, evident in the breakdown of relationship between farming and pastoral women has eroded jointly celebrated ceremonies, intercultural festivities for example the *funyennng* ceremony formerly practiced by the Taroks and Fulanis in Plateau state, communal farming (*gaiya*) activities, inter-religious engagements, inter-ethnic marriages between the groups as well as the reluctance to communicate in the language of other ethnic group for the fear of being mistaken as a member of the group are some of the emergent breakdown of relations as a result of the conflict. This breakdown has further alienated the groups and given rise to image of *aggressor versus victims* which further breaks social harmony, deepens animosity, increases mutual suspicion and tension, which in turn, have degenerated into polarization along ethno-religious lines. The breakdown of this relationship negatively impacts the social and economic activities of women. Unfortunately, restoring mutual trust in the aftermath of violent conflict is difficult as memories of the violence perpetuated by the conflicting groups are still fresh and the social vestiges of destruction still visible.

Weakened Protection from Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV): Worldwide, violent conflict weakens the social fabric of a community and the structures that protects its most vulnerable persons thereby exposing them to negative impacts that they would have otherwise been protected from. This is also the reality in violent farmer-herder conflicts that leave vulnerable groups like - the elderly, people with physical disability, children and women with less protection from SGBV. Beyond the direct impact of violent attacks, which disproportionately affect the vulnerable groups; women and

girls are reported to be increasingly vulnerable to SGBV especially rape before, during and after attacks.

Respondents across the states alleged increase in the rate of rape¹⁵ of women and girls across the divide. Women¹⁶ and girls from farming communities were reportedly targeted and raped by suspected 'herders' while working on the farm or logging firewood in forests. Conversely, women and girls from pastoral communities are also allegedly targeted and raped by males suspected to be farmers while walking through lonely path to get to the school or sell in the village markets. Beyond these opportunistic rapes, a worrisome trend is the use of rape as tactic of conflict as reported in the states. In a community in Song LGA of Adamawa state, girls from the herding communities were reportedly raped and sexually exploited in retaliation for the destruction of cultivated farmland. In Gombe state, rape of girls from the herding communities reportedly triggered 'reprisal rape' of girls from farming communities, by suspected males from the herding communities. This reportedly led to tension and increased the potential for outbreak of large scale violent conflict. The vulnerability of women and girls across the divide increases as rape is used as instrument of war with women and girls bodies considered part of the battle field.

Security personnel deployed to keep peace are also accused of assaulting or sexually exploiting women and girls in the communities and IDP camps. Increase in sexual exploitation and SGBV is symptomatic of the breakdown of the social protection structures in local communities that protects women and girls from rape and punishes offenders. The survivors of SGBV suffer stigma and trauma as they are left with legacy of shame, anger, distrust, sometimes unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Negative perception of safety and security at community level: Among respondents, there are concerns about exacerbated rate of fear and high sense of insecurity by communities in especially Adamawa and Plateau states. This fear weakens the resilience capacity of the people in the communities. This is driven largely by the alleged proliferation of small and light weapons¹⁷ being carried by persons from both the herding and farming communities. There has been concerns about

¹⁵ The issue of rape was raised repeatedly by different actors in the focal states data could however not be accessed for comparison of the pre, during and post conflict incidents in the states.

¹⁶ <http://sunnewsonline.com/raped-to-death-two-married-women-suffer-sad-fate-at-same-spot-in-plateau/>

¹⁷ <http://thenationonlineng.net/arms-proliferation-threat-national-security/>

the availability of small arms in the polity and mobilized young people serving as ethnic defender/militias, which continue to escalate tension at community level. In Bokkos LGA of Plateau state, there were allegation of people coming from Bauchi and countries such as Chad and Niger as fighters.¹⁸ This, with wide availability of illicit drugs becomes a dangerous combination which influences killings and sexual and SGBV recorded in farmer-herder conflict. Increasingly criminal activities including cattle rustling are reported as farmer- herder conflict thereby pushing the boundaries of the conflict and deepening sentiments around how people perceive and associate themselves to the conflict.

2. Economic Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on Women in the Focal States:

Traditionally, women are farmers and herders¹⁹ and contribute significantly to crop farming and livestock rearing, with data reporting that women are 60% of small holder sustenance farmers in Nigeria. Consequently, the conflict negatively affects their economic activities with dire implications for their livelihood. Some key highlights of the economic impact of the conflict on women are below.

Destruction of Means of Livelihood: One of the key impacts of violent farmer-herder conflict on female farmers and herders is the destruction of economic activities resulting in loss of means of livelihood on both groups. For farmers, key impact of the conflict is desertion of farming activities due to non-accessibility of farmland due to insecurity and fear of attack by armed groups. This manifests in two ways: one, female farmers due to high level of insecurity are unable to go to farm and thus loose the potential products of the farming season. Secondly, during attacks women often flee leaving behind cultivated farmland, which they are often unable to access it to harvest produce because of insecurity. In many cases women who were able to access their farms after the violence found out that the crops were either spoilt, harvested by other people as reported in Barkin Ladi LGA of Plateau state or destroyed by cattle. Decline in farming activities and crop productivity reportedly contributes to the escalation of the prices of agricultural outputs and reduces the per capita income of an individual¹ with ultimate impact on food security in the region.

¹⁸ Academia, University of Jos (2018). The contribution of women in driving the conflict and reinforcing the vicious cycle of farmer-herder conflict in the target states. Paper presented at the Consultative Workshop on the Gender Dimension of the Farmer –Herder Conflict in Plateau State. July 2018

¹⁹ Mubi, H. (2018). Presentation on The Economic impact of farmer-herder conflict on women and their livelihood; changes in women economic activities and examples of the resilience of women in the target states at the Consultative Workshop on the Gender Dimension of the Farmer –Herder Conflict in Adamawa State. July, 2018.

Women in herding communities are either directly engaged in cattle herding, goat and chicken rearing or selling of cattle milk (*nono*), butter (*man-shanu*) and or local cereal (*fura*) as their main economic activities. Killing of cattle directly affects the means of livelihood of herders and indirectly reduces the volume of milk and butter available for sale.

Reduced access to farms, theft or destruction of farm produce, killing of animals and reduction in sales of

products have negative implication for the economic activities and livelihood of women across the divide. This ultimately impacts food security in the region. Beyond the women who are directly involved in food production, the economic activities of women who trade in farm produces are also negatively impacted especially as village market days could not hold due to insecurity.

Weak Capacity for Economic Resilience: Women from pastoral and farming communities affected by this conflict lost their means of livelihood due to the destruction of farmlands, animals, and property and killings of people during attacks, the high level of insecurity and associated social tension triggered by the conflict. Either the women that remained in the affected communities or the ones that were displaced and hosted in temporary IDP camps and with hosts shared a similar harrowing experience of loss of livelihood and efforts to provide the basic necessities for themselves and their families. Female farmers who remained in attacked communities have stopped going to farms that are far away due to fear of being attacked by suspected herders. With farms unsafe, the women and their children who they depend on for labour are forced to find alternative means of livelihood including petty trading. Some female herders resorted to weaving colourful cotton wool trays but they neither have sufficient skills to sell this product nor access to the market to make it a profitable and sustainable means of livelihood.

Due to the hardship faced by families, many displaced women in host communities were reported by eg alms while some become nannies or domestic help to earn a living. Children reportedly hawk, while some work as laborers on farms. Others turned to menial jobs such as washing of dishes, clothes, and other menial tasks to people in the communities where they are displaced. Concerns over the trend of women giving out their children as paid domestic help were reported; as this act increases children's vulnerability to abuse. Some of these children reportedly run away from the houses where

The breakdown of social relations also negatively impacted the economic activities of women. Fulani women reported increased antagonism which inhibits their ability to sell nono (milk) and other products. This is because farming communities are alleging them of spying for attackers. Women also reported instances where they were requested by buyers to taste the nono they are about to sell as a proof that the nono is not poisoned.

they serve due to ill-treatment. These ‘run away’ children are often caught up in the web of social vices like prostitution and drug abuse. Displaced girls and women are also reported to engage in transactional sex as a means of survival. This comes with higher risks of sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and child neglect among others.

Women in IDP camps seem to fare better, as they have access to some food and non-food items, given by government and humanitarian organizations. Though, economic activities are reportedly minimal within the camps. Some of the IDP women have allegedly used some of the donations received from private individuals and humanitarian organizations for petty trading in daily needs items such as soap, cream, etc. However, livelihood support programs such as cash transfer, entrepreneurship program, and other economic activities are largely missing.

A cross-cutting issue that is reportedly inhibiting the capacity of women across the divide and levels of impact to rebuild their lives and livelihood is the trauma and psychological effects of their experiences in the violent conflicts. The experience of killing and destruction witnessed comes with a sense of hopelessness and helplessness that makes it difficult for people to identify or embrace needed changes. While trauma healing and counselling are dire needs for these women, it is often not a priority in the emergency response provided to victims in IDP camps or host communities.

3. Women in Violent Farmer-Herder Conflict.

Assessing the contributions of women in driving and reinforcing the vicious cycle of farmer-herder conflict in the target states provides an opportunity to highlight some of the perceptions around women’s participation in farmer-herder conflict in the focal states. In conflict situations, women have reportedly participated in as primary parties involved in combat²⁰, interested parties with stake in the conflict and vested interest in the outcomes or as shadow parties who indirectly and discreetly influence and fuel the violence.

Women as Primary Party:

The consultations that culminated in the production of this policy brief, sought to respond to the question - if women are direct combatants in the violent conflict between farmers-and herders in the focal states? Interestingly, no concrete evidence was reported on women’s direct participation in the violence associated with this conflict. Nevertheless, the contributions of women as primary actors in

²⁰http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbap/docs/Research%20&%20Publications/human_development/RBAP-APHDR-TBP_2010_11.pdf

this conflict could be hinged on the fact that some of the activities of female farmers and herders are key drivers of the conflict. Encroachment²¹ of grazing route and destruction of cultivated farmland had been identified by several experts as a key driver of violent clashes between the groups. In the three states, population increase²² and development has caused the building of human settlement into hitherto farmlands and thus, a need to search for alternate farmlands pushed farmers to encroach on designated cattle routes. Herders²³ mostly claim that they have problems with all farmers, male and female; problems created by encroachment onto grazing routes curtail cattle movement and invariable cause damage to crops. From the admission of women farmers interviewed, they have had to extend their farm into “*burtali*”²⁴ which are usually the only unfarmed lands in proximity to them and to which they seemingly even if wrongly, have access.²⁵ When cattle move along these routes, they eat up and destroyed crops, thus giving rise to the confrontation that often lead to killing triggering more deadly reprisals. Farming on grazing routes is an instance of the contribution to the violence even if subtle. Similar experience was recorded in Plateau and Gombe States where women are the majority of farmers and also encroach cattle routes.

Women as Secondary or Interested Party:

Female farmers and herders are interested parties in the conflict and share similar interest with male even if they are not found taking active part in attacks. The shared interest is on the elimination of perceived ‘enemy’ access to necessary resources for their agricultural practices, thus threatening their source of livelihood. The ethno-religious coloration of this conflict also breeds a sense of ‘communal threat’ that needs communal effort to address, with attacks in many cases allegedly endorse by the communities including women even if subtly. Key issues around women’s access to prior information about attacks which they do not share with actors that could prevent attacks also strengthen this argument. Women are also alleged of protecting people that commit criminal acts like rape, killings and cattle rustling which often herald each cycle of violent attacks.

There are also reported cases of women indirectly supporting men in preparing for attacks, for example, in the Mangu-Bokkos conflict in 1997-1998 women were allegedly involved in the selection of stones and other objects to use in the fight.²⁶ Similarly, women in the three states allegedly helped men conceal or courier arms used in attacks. Women in some of the communities allegedly chant war

²¹ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/252-herders-against-farmers-nigerias-expanding-deadly-conflict>

²² Population increase has been due to larger families and also migration from the drying up Lake Chad area

²³ Resident herders and not nomads that were interviewed at various dates between July 1- August 7, 2018

²⁴ grazing routes called “*burtali*” in Fulani and known by that name to both farmers and herders

²⁵ The admission to encroaching into “*burtali*” was made by women in both Mubi and Madagali.

songs to stimulate men to carry out attack. Women allegedly directly instigate men to carry out reprisal attack as a way of proving their bravery as men. A typical example is when a conflict affects the farmer on the farm and he does nothing, he is persuaded by his wife to take revenge and usually the men take actions based on the persuasion of the woman. The woman may sometimes blackmail the man in reacting even against his wish²⁶. Similarly, women were alleged of negative socialization of their children, transferring hatred and animosity to fuel deep seated anger and dehumanization of the other groups. This negative socialisation reportedly increases young people's propensity to carry out violent attacks or reprisals on perceived enemies. Beyond the aforementioned, women allegedly peddle fake news, rumour and hate speech to increase primordial sentiments about groups in the conflict. This allegedly deepens animosity and inhibits progress towards conflict resolution.

The concern that women are gradually becoming desensitized to the ills of their indirect contributions to the violence is significant is viewed to be as a result of their long exposure to violence. Women in some of the most vulnerable communities in Plateau and Adamawa states have witnessed gruesome killings of up to eight members of their family in a single attack, as shared by one of the participants at the consultative meeting in Plateau state. The deep sense of despair, anger and sense of helplessness, all effects of trauma are reportedly moving them from being peace actors to conflict drivers. In defense of the allegation of hiding criminals and withholding information, women claimed they are wary of being harassed by security officials in the cases where they are unable to produce concrete evidence²⁷ to substantiate the information shared.

Women as Shadow Party:

Women are also described as the unseen hands fuelling violent farmer-herder conflict in their communities. Women across the divide allegedly spy on the "other" community and provide information that informs attacks on communities. Fulani women were alleged of spying on farming communities, in the process of selling *nono*, this caused backlash that reduced the access of Fulani women in farming communities. Women are also alle involved in the illicit trade of small arms. In Numan LGA of Adamawa²⁸ state, a popular route of illegal arms, women reportedly trade in and traffick arms hidden in the fishes and other food produce that they sell. Frequent interception of arms from women has given rise to undignified body search conducted on women and associated

²⁶ Gapsiso, R. (2018). The contributions of women in driving the conflict and reinforcing the vicious cycle of farmer-herder conflict in the target states. Paper presented at the Consultative Workshop on the Gender Dimension of the Farmer –Herder Conflict in Gombe State. July 2018

²⁷ Response from a key informant in Numan LGA of Adamawa state

²⁸ <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/sunday/index.../9331-army-nabs-gunrunners-in-adamawa>

harassment by security personnel during search at road blocks mounted in the area; a situation that gives rise to further hostilities and could have easily been averted by use of metal detectors, scanners or other women security operatives. Proliferation of small arms is directly connected to violent farmer-herder conflicts in the state and elsewhere in Nigeria. Similarly, proliferation of small arms is a major security challenge in Plateau²⁹ state³⁰ and fuels violent conflict in the state.

4. Women and Peace Processes in the Focal States.

In the preface of the 1998 Women and Post Conflict Reconstruction, it was reported that women are instrumental in inciting men to defend group interests, honor, and collective livelihoods but also play a key role in preserving order and normalcy in the midst of chaos and destruction³¹. Women in the focal states have taken different roles in conflict prevention, conflict mitigation and transformation, post conflict stabilization and peacebuilding in the target states. Women have made contribution in some of these processes and have potentials for improved contribution if appropriate support at both technical and political level is available. This is especially needed in discussions of women's engagement in peacebuilding. Reference is often made of women's nurturing and care-taking role, which she renders as peace activities and natural extension of their social domestic roles as wives and mothers but with no concrete role in formal peace processes.

Early Warning and Conflict Prevention:

The perception that women have innate capacity to nurture, observe, keen intuition to perceive changes and the capacity for social interaction at the family level and the larger community level are some of the characteristics that plausibly put women in an advantageous positions to provide early warnings in conflict situations. However, the availability of these capacities of women has not adequately or systemically informed conflict and violence prevention in the focal states. Nevertheless, women have demonstrated this in the focal states. In Gombe state, observation of the availability of different ethnic groups at the community markets is an early warning on potential attack, while in Adamawa state; women reportedly observed and raised concern about the mopping up of machetes in a market and also non-opening of shops of particular ethnic identities³². This information was reportedly used by security operatives in averting violence in the LGA. In Plateau state, women were identified to be early warners before the outbreak of violence; in the 1997- 98 Mangu- Bokkos

²⁹ <http://dailypost.ng/2017/02/10/number-arms-communities-across-plateau-scary-joseph-lengmang/>

³⁰ <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/its-arms-arms-everywhere-on-the-plateau.html>

³¹ Sorensen B. (June1998). Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources. WSP Occasional Paper No. 3

³² Presentation of Adamawa States delegates at the validation of the policy brief.

conflict, women reportedly foresaw the danger and alerted other women who inter-married to move back to their original places of origin, this may have contributed to further polarization of the groups in the conflict but it is an example of the role of women that could be fine-tuned for peaceful outcome and prevention of violent conflict.

Conflict Mitigation and Transformation:

Women are not a homogeneous group and their reaction to violent conflict varies. Advocacy and campaign by women's groups on media and other platforms to call for cessation of violence and peaceful resolution of conflict was described as one of the key contributions of women to conflict mitigation and transformation in the states. In Plateau state, farmer-herder attacks triggered women from Irigwe community in Miango District, Bassa LGA to embark on peaceful protests against the killings of women and children during attacks in Miango Villages in 2018. Women hold peace rallies on International Women's Day, often with slogans such as "*We Want Peace*" "*Women Unite for Peace*" call for an end to the violence. Women frequently hold protest³³ rallies calling for the arrest of attackers, response by government³⁴ and security actors and justice for the victims. Women are also on other platforms³⁵ that call for the end of farmer-herder conflict in their states. Peace activism by women groups in Adamawa state led to the establishment of a *Hope Center*, a 'one-stop shop' for legal, medical and psych-socio support for women post conflict situations. The National Council for Women Societies (NCWS) also carried out sensitization for the policy makers to put an end to the conflicts, the use of national and international frameworks to end the violence (UNSCR 1325).

Media programs on women, peace and security like the *Muriyan mata* on Plateau state, *Zamu Iya* on radio in the three focal states provided the space and opportunity for women to raise awareness on how conflict impact women, campaign for cessation of violence and call for participation of women in peace processes in the states. At the community level, women also contribute directly to the transformation of local conflicts. In Plateau state, women leaders with the support traditional council strengthen the capacity and role of other women in peacebuilding processes while women in Gombe State provided trauma healing services to other women. With the activities of civil society organizations like Search for Common Ground, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding among others, women have reportedly increase the skills to contribute to interfaith/interethnic dialogue and

³³ <http://thenationonlineng.net/killings-turn-plateau-women-into-perpetual-protesters/>

³⁴ <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/crises-displaced-plateau-women-protest-humanitarian-difficulties.html>

³⁵ <http://saharareporters.com/2018/08/01/many-bloodied-adamawa-police-disrupt-can%E2%80%99s-anti-herdsmen-protest>

mediation of the farmer-herder conflict at the community level in the focal states. Women in Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGAs in Plateau state, built on their participation in community based security architecture dialogue to promote cultural understanding among the herding and farming communities. Women reportedly exchange of gifts and participation in religious ceremonies of the other ethnic group as opportunities to promote social cohesion.

Mubi and Madagali local government areas in Adamawa state, and Yelmatu Deba in Gombe state reportedly has an arrangement in which farmers are requested to harvest all farm produces by December and January to allow herder graze. This arrangement has reportedly mitigated violence in the communities it exists. Women in the communities support the arrangement as it reduces occurrence of violence between the groups in communities.

Stabilization and Post-conflict Peacebuilding:

The cycles of violence recorded in the conflict between farming and herding communities, especially Adamawa and Plateau states call for deeper reflection, in relation to the concerns of women. The narrative on the post-conflict situation of women shows that despite the role of women in facilitating the return of peace to their communities, they have received minimal recognition. They are rarely consulted during peace negotiations between the perceived 'aggressors and victims' of the conflict. At the post-conflict stage, they are often faced with the challenge of rehabilitation of a damaged livelihood, promotion of social cohesion and equal participation in formal peace processes.

Government's response to the conflict is largely the deployment of security personnel or setting up of panel of enquiry which produces white paper report on the particular crisis. Despite the disproportionate impact of this conflict on women, there is yet to be a white paper dedicated to the impact of the conflict on women or on how the post conflict situation could be gender sensitive and thus sustainable. A cross-cutting concern raised in several of the consultations to produce this policy brief is the dire need of trauma healing services and psychosocial support for women and young people negatively impacted by the conflict. The trauma of women in IDP camps, host communities or even those that have returned to their communities is real and addressing it must be prioritized in any post-conflict peacebuilding effort.

Mainstreaming women issues and women's empowerment programs in post-conflict situation requires an integrated framework for action. This should address institutional and structural barriers in both

the political/security and socioeconomic³⁶ realms. Poverty, unequal gender norms, impunity for and the fear of violence, which prevent women from participating in and benefiting from post-conflict processes and become setback for peace, reconciliation and the long-term recovery of societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While farmer-herder conflict in the Middle Belt region has negatively impacted women, responses by state and non-state actors, have not address the dimensions of the impact or the contributions of women to the conflict. It is therefore important that the Nigerian government, civil society, and communities take a holistic approach to understand and address the impacts, mitigate the negative and strengthen the positive contributions of women to famer-headers conflict in the focal states. This policy brief offers recommendations to different stakeholders:

Federal, State and Local Government:

- *The federal government and governments of Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau should make available adequate funding for the implementation of National and State Action Plans on Women Peace and Security:* The UNSCR 1325 is the first normative framework for the prevention, protection of women in conflict situation and promotion of the participation of women in peace security globally. In Nigeria, a National Action Plan³⁷(NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions was adopted in 2013', State Action Plans (SAP) exists in Plateau, Gombe and Adamawa states with Local Action Plan in one LGA in Plateau and two in Gombe state. To achieve the goal to protect women and increase their participation in peace process as encapsulated in the action plans, the federal government and the governments of Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau states should adequately appropriate funds for the implementation of the NAP and SAP respectively. Budgetary allocation for women, peace and security should be within relevant Ministries like the Women Affairs and Social Development, Economic Planning, etc.
- *Intensification of peacebuilding activities by Plateau Peacebuilding Agency and the newly established Adamawa State Agency for Peace, Reconciliation and Reconstruction and the creation of a similar Agency in Gombe state.* The availability of a state level agency to coordinate peacebuilding activities

³⁶ Jacqui T 2013, Policy Brief on Women, peace and security in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts. http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/true_noref_unscr1325_feb_2013_final.pdf

³⁷ Federal Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development (May 2017). National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security in Nigeria 2017 – 2020. May 2017.

in the states is important. However, these agencies should intensify effort to design and implement gender sensitive conflict prevention initiatives that could prevent the outbreak of violence. Sufficient investment in post conflict period should also be prioritized to address both the structural and proximate conditions leading to the spiralling violent farmer-herder conflict. These agencies should increase the active participation of women, including in leadership position in the agencies, design interventions on women peace and security as well as ensure women's equal participation in formal peace process in the state. Gombe State should also consider having a similar Agency to institutionalize gender sensitive peacebuilding in the state.

- *Government at all levels should partner with civil society organizations to provide trauma healing and psychosocial support to victims of the conflict, especially women and girls:* To meet the dire need of trauma healing for victims of this conflict, federal and the government of the affected states should identify and coordinate with non-governmental organizations with expertise and experience in trauma healing and psychosocial support in terms of the deployment of social workers and trauma practitioners to provide service for victims at the community level. Special attention should be given to women, boys and girls that are survivors of SGBV. This should include the establishment of safe spaces for women and girls, one stop centres where survivors of SGBV especially women can have access to different health services similar to the Hope Centre in Adamawa State. Addressing trauma is critical to healing the emotional and social wounds, which continue to fuel cycles of violence and placing communities in the path of reconciliation and social cohesion.
- *The federal government and governments of Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau should prioritize economic and livelihood support for women and other victims of farmer-herder conflict.* The impact of farmer-herder conflict on the livelihood of women cannot be overemphasized. To address this, both the federal and state governments should partner with relevant civil society organizations and the private sector in developing context specific socioeconomic reintegration and livelihood support plan for women and other victims of this conflict. A needs assessment for post-conflict financing to integrate gender mainstreaming assessments and gender budgeting should be conducted by the state governments as a measure to ensure that available resources benefit women. The assessment should identify existing opportunities and potential for economic empowerment areas including but not limited to agriculture and trading. Initiatives like cash transfer has been found to be useful in other contexts, this could be contextualized for the states. This initiative should be developed with community leaders of both affected and impacted communities for proper identification and

location of the beneficiaries. The current breakdown of economic activities of women due to the conflict has gone so far that it may be difficult to reverse except deliberate, clear and targeted economic activities for women are taken regain their economic activities. This effort should be supported by relevant state and non-state actors.

- *Federal government should increase effort to confiscate arms from unauthorized persons and address the criminal activities driving the conflict:* Appropriate security agencies working with relevant community structures should intensify efforts to confiscate arms out of the hands of unauthorized persons in local communities. Government should embark on a nation-wide programme of disarmament and demobilization. A critical step to the success of the disarmament, demobilization of the criminal groups is the need for government at different levels to rebuild the trust of people in government's capacity to provide security and safety. This will contribute to reducing people resorting to self-help to defend themselves and reprisal attacks. Persons involved in criminal activities including gun running, cattle rustling and other related activities should be prosecuted to serve as a deterrent to others.
- *The federal government and governments of Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau should invest in strengthening the role of traditional and religious leaders including women leaders in reconciliation and social cohesion at community and state level.* Although the role of traditional leader in governance was not proscribed in the Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, nevertheless, traditional leaders in local communities have moral role and authority to convene and influence members of the community. This is also for religious leaders who wield a lot of influence on their followers. These two institutions are in a vantage position to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in communities torn apart by farmer-herder conflict. In Plateau State, the role of female chiefs and wives of community leaders in promoting peace is becoming more recognized and has potentials to mobilize women across the divide for peace. These roles could be strengthened by the State Peacebuilding Agency and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) a government agency with presence in all communities for larger influencing of and enlightenment of community members on peaceful co-existence.
- *Civil society organizations should prioritize projects that build trust and strengthen intercultural understanding between farmers and herders, with special focus on the women.* This should be through the use of facilitative dialogues, mediation, religious peace messages and radio messages for

improved community cohesion. When there is dialogue, farmers and herders will start seeing themselves as complementary.

- *Civil society organizations should provide support to strengthen the role of community women and community based women's groups/association in peacebuilding:* Opportunities exist at the community levels for women across the divide to better contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation. Peacebuilding focused NGOs should build on this to raise a critical mass of women and build their capacity to serve as agents of peace and conflict transformation at the local level. Engagements on peacebuilding should be accompanied with trauma healing, women's leadership and empowerment, with aspects of rebuilding their economic activities and livelihood.
- *Media should counter the negative reportage of farmer-herder conflict through transformative peace and trauma sensitive journalism:* The media has not done creditably well enough in terms of unbiased, accurate and sensitive reporting of the farmer-herder's conflict. However, inherent in the media is the power to shape perception and this could be used to promote tolerance and social cohesion through the use of media programs and discussions featuring women from different communities. CSOs could complement this by organizing capacity strengthening engagements for the media. This engagement with the media should be two pronged; one to target correspondents of media establishments while editors and the other to engage owners of such establishments to get their support. Female media practitioners have played several positive roles in using their platform for peacebuilding programs. Special attention should therefore be on engaging female media practitioners to perform similar roles in promoting peace between farmers and herders in the states.



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