X-Raying the Impacts of Conflict on National Development: Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria as a Springboard

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Abstract

The incessant conflict between herdsmen and resident farmers has undoubtedly reached a crescendo which has resulted in the predominance of criminalities and insecurity in Nigeria. The menace has caused a huge deficit in the national development framework to the extent that efforts to ameliorate it have become tenuous and solution completely not in sight. Against this background, the paper examines the menace of farmer-herder clashes and its impacts on national development while drawing analysis from the climate change theory as its analytical framework. Relying on verifiable secondary sources of data, the paper established that the conflict has impacted development through ethnic bickering, enhanced food insecurity and socio-economic underdevelopment, increased illiteracy level and school dropouts and exposure of Nigeria's internal security deficiencies. The study concludes that the conflict between farmers and herders impacts national development humanly, economically while also

reducing the country's image across the globe. Following from this, the study recommends improved security for herders and farmers, strengthening police capacity to curb rustling and banditry, improve livestock tracking, establish grazing reserves and encourage ranching, and support community-based conflict resolution as a way to provide lasting solutions to the challenges posed by the conflict.

Key words: Farmers, Herders, Conflict, Livestock, Ranches

Introduction

The imperative of national development in Nigeria at this critical juncture cannot be overemphasised, since it is essential for promoting harmonious coexistence and fostering national integration. Peace, along with nation-building, serves as a catalyst for fostering unity, non-violence, economic prosperity, and human advancement. Nevertheless, the persistent issue of conflict between farmers and herders in certain regions of Nigeria appears to hinder the achievement of peace and national progress. According to Okereke (2012), there has been a significant increase in violence, kidnapping, insurgencies, vandalism, rape, unemployment, terrorist attacks, cultism, and armed robbery worldwide, especially in several third-world nations and the Middle East. The Nigerian state has experienced a proportionate part of this global dilemma, exacerbated by the prevalence of farmer-herder conflicts. Armed with weapons, the criminal herdsmen have inflicted significant casualties and destroyed property worth millions of naira. This has led to the displacement and homelessness of a significant number of people (Aigbe, 2022).

Unfortunately, farmers and herders have instigated a surge of violent conflict in present-day Nigeria, severely disrupting socio-economic, religious, and educational activities. Additionally, it has generated significant political instability, posing a threat to both national development, growth and food security (EASO, 2021; Oyaniran, 2020 and Kasarachi, 2016). The extrajudicial killings have compelled several individuals to evacuate their residences and agricultural fields in order to ensure their safety. According to Okereke (2012), the escalating violence has reached a point where it is undeniable that Nigeria is at a critical juncture and

slowly moving towards a society characterised by state failure. Currently, besides the Boko Haram insurgency, the primary obstacle endangering the unity and progress of Nigeria is the problem posed by farmer-herder clashes. The herdsmen have relentlessly attacked the indigenous farming communities of Plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Taraba, Adamawa, and Benue States (Ikelegbe, 2019). According to Aigbe & Akenzua (2020, p. 113), *"successive administrations in the country have been unsuccessful in developing a practical plan to improve the situation."* Every day, the media, including both print and electronic outlets, are filled with news and graphic images of violent assaults on local farmers. The inconsistencies in government policies appear to worsen the conflict (Aihie & Aigbe, 2024). It is against this background that this study aims to examine the menace of the farmer-herder conflict and its implications for national development in Nigeria. To this extent, the paper interrogates the question, what are the implications of the farmers-herders conflict on national development in Nigeria?

Conflict and Developmment: A Conceptual Issue Resolved

Development is a multi-faceted concept (Przeworski et al., 2000; Lipset, 1959; Dahl, 1971). The literature on the relationship between conflict and development is equally multi-faceted, and considering what development is helps in discussing the explanations of the relationship. Developed societies typically have an economy predominantly based on manufacturing and service production, whereas non-developed ones derive most of their income from agriculture and other forms of natural resource extraction. Extensive manufacturing and service production necessitate deep economic diversification (various sectors of the economy specialise in and exchange goods and services with each other). Associated with this widespread specialisation is a population and work force that are skilled and educated (developed economies cannot function unless they can draw on extensive human capital). This skilled labour is relatively well paid, which means that development, in most cases, means there is considerably less poverty and a sizeable middle class. Manufacturing, in particular, also requires easy access to financial capital, and banking is typically an important part of a developed country's service sector. Non-developed countries, on the other hand, rely on capital in the form of land that yields agricultural produce or other natural resources.

Development is also correlated with demographic changes. High education levels lead to lower fertility rates and, in the absence of poverty, a high life expectancy (Przeworski et al., 2000). When the population receives education, financial capital becomes significant and infant mortality rates decrease. Some sources of income, however (in particular, oil extraction), can produce wealth and other societal changes that are less widely diffused throughout society. On the other hand, conflict here is taken to mean organised, armed conflict between collective actors within a sovereign state. The Uppsala Conflict Data Programme provides a precise and widely used definition of `armed conflict'. According to Themner & Wallensteen (2011, p. 532), "an armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year." Important aspects of this definition are the `contested incompatibility' which implies that both parties have a stated political aim that motivates their fighting (governments fighting organised criminality) falls outside this definition; the use of armed force, which rules out non-violent conflicts even if they occasionally lead to unorganised violence; and a threshold in terms of the intensity of the use of violence (Przeworski et al., 2000).

How Conflict Impacts Development

Numerous studies abound that assume that variations in development are causally prior to conflict, but this is not necessarily the case. Conflicts might be developing in reverse: `In such a condition, there is no place for industry because the fruit thereof is uncertain', as recognised by Hobbes (1651–1968) hundreds of years ago. Several studies find a strong, adverse effect of conflict on GDP. For example, Collier (1999) and Gates et al. (2012) estimate that civil wars on average reduce GDP growth by more than 2% for each year of the war duration in Burkina Faso. Murdoch & Sandler (2002) find effects of a similar magnitude and also demonstrate that civil wars have adverse growth impacts in neighbouring countries.

Blomberg & Hess (2002) demonstrate that economic downturns can heighten the likelihood of both domestic and international warfare, thereby increasing the chances of experiencing recessions. Blomberg and Hess (2006), Bayer and Rupert (2004), Long (2008), and Magee and Massoud (2011) have discovered that political

violence has a negative impact on international trade, leading to a decrease in economic growth. On her part, Koubi (2005) examines the impact of both international and domestic conflicts on per capita real output's average growth. She discovers that the intensity of a war, as measured by the number of casualties in battle, has a substantial adverse effect on economic growth. Limiting the research to interstate wars eliminates the statistical significance, implying that civil wars are responsible for the relationship between war and economic growth (Koubi, 2005, p. 76). Collier (1999) also investigated the varying impacts of war length. He observes that brief conflicts result in ongoing decreases in post-war GDP, while sufficiently lengthy wars lead to a period of significant economic expansion. The reference to Collier (1999) on pages 175–176 indicates a phenomenon known as the 'Phoenix effect' as described by Organski and Kugler (1980). Collier ascribes the ongoing decrease in GDP following brief wars to the fact that post-war surroundings are less conducive to capital investment than pre-war conditions. Capital flight is a significant issue in economies that have experienced violence, as noted by Davies (2008).

Following the devastation caused by war, recovery is attained through a period of above-average economic expansion. However, this growth adheres to a specific pattern known as an inverted U, exhibiting the most significant progress in the fourth or fifth year following the establishment of peace (Chen, Loayza & Reynal-Querol, 2008, p. 72, 79). Similarly, Blomberg and Hess (2002) discovered a significant adverse impact of both external and internal conflict on economic growth. In this study, Flores and Nooruddin (2009) analyse the unique challenges that democracies have when attempting to enact economic policy reforms in a post-conflict setting. The economic consequences of civil conflict can have a ripple impact on neighbouring countries (Buhaug and Gleditsch, 2008). Murdoch and Sandler (2002; 2004) examine the consequences of conflicts in neighbouring countries and the increased expenses associated with being situated near a larger number of wars that make up a regional conflict. Murdoch and Sandler (2002, p. 96) demonstrate that the presence of a nearby civil war has both a direct and indirect impact on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Fights near the border cause incidental harm that directly impacts the GDP by destroying infrastructure and capital. The indirect effect arises from the heightened perception of risk among potential investors, leading to a diversion of foreign direct investment

away from neighbouring countries that are in a state of peace. Murdoch and Sandler (2002, p. 106–107) discovered that a civil war has a substantial detrimental impact on both the immediate economic growth of the country experiencing the conflict and the neighbouring countries.

Theoretical Framework

Numerous theoretical strands have been employed by scholars in the analysis of violent conflict that exists among various groups. Some scholars have talked about frustration-aggression theory, some other people have also used structural functionalism while others have spoken of systems theory. To ensure specificity, this project will employ the climate change theory. One important reality of the climate change discourse is its changing political economy of meaning, perception, and interpretation. Climate change initially emerged as an environmental issue. However, it became an energy problem before becoming recast as a security threat, and it was then lifted to the level of the United Nations Security Council for discussion. The UN Security Council meeting tabled climate change for discussion, marking one of the most significant moments for the integration of climate change as a security threat and related discourses into the UN body. It was argued that fights over water, changing patterns of rainfall, and fights over food production and land use are the major causes of war, and therefore the Security Council must be interested in what causes them, one of which is climate change. Also, the British Ambassador to the UN used the occasion to argue that "border disputes, migration, energy supplies, resource shortages, societal stress, and humanitarian crises" are examples of the threat to international peace and security that climate change poses (Agrawal, 2008). Since then, the security dimension of the phenomenon of climate change has become a recurring theme in international security discourse.

The existing relationship between climate change and conflict brings to light the knowledge that substantial variation in climatic conditions is a major trigger of violent conflict. A strong nexus did exist between changes in climatic conditions and a propensity for violent conflict (Hsiang et al, 2017; Burke, Hsiang & Miguel, 2015). Hendrix and Glaser (2007), in their study on rainfall predictability in Africa, concluded that erratic rainfall triggers violent conflict. Similarly, Tonah (2006) locates the violent conflicts between local farmers and Fulani cattle herders as a

result of dwindling grasses in the Sahelian region. The old patterns of transhumance practiced by the Fulani have had to change; Fulani who may have passed through a region or stayed for a limited and defined period of time now stay permanently. In other cases, they move into new areas they have not used before (Le Houérou, 1989). Climate change clearly puts pressure on the herders to move into other regions, leading to localised conflicts and tensions. The aggressive behaviour of contemporary herders and farmers in the wetland areas is due to a high level of frustration. Here, the frustration is two-way: the herders are fleeing their traditional arid zones towards wetter places and are frustrated by dwindling pastures that sustain their means of livelihood. Upon reaching the wetter regions, their cattle consume the crops of farmers, who, in frustration, respond by attempting to kill off the destructive animals or drive out the newcomers. Revenge missions by grazers result in circles of violence. In other words, both parties trace their basic source of frustration to climate change, a result of both human and natural factors.

Overview of Farmers-Herders Conflict in Nigeria

The activities of some criminal herdsmen cut across various violent acts which in most cases have no direct bearing to their illegal occupation of land for grazing but solely for criminal purposes as they engage in armed robbery, murder, looting, kidnapping, kidnap for ransom, rape, arson, destruction of communities and Churches (Ikelegbe, 2019). These criminal acts are subsumed under the guise of land struggle for cow rearing. Most importantly, no government security agency in Nigeria has taken punitive action aimed at apprehending, investigating and prosecution of these criminals. The heinous crimes committed by these criminal elements have remained unchallenged and glamorized and thus their impunity unabated.

Livestock production is endemic and deep rooted in Nigeria's political and socio-economic terrains. Besides the huge contribution to the country's annual GDP, it contributes largely to youth employment thereby increasing income per capita. However, the activities of armed herdsmen who have been terrorizing, particularly farming communities in some states in Nigeria which include: Plateau, Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Nasarawa and Southern Kaduna States have been of grave concern. Over the last decade, there has been incessant reportage of

farmers-herders conflict across the states in Nigeria. The surge in farmers-herders witnessed a different dimension from 2013 when the herdsmen began to unleash terror through guns and machetes on armless farmers which have led to scores of people fleeing their homes and farmlands. From this period, Nigeria became used to newspaper headlines such as "scores killed as herdsmen attack some communities in Nigeria". According to the statistics provided by GTI (2014), 63 people were killed from clashes between farmers and herders in 2013. By 2014, this figure tremendously increased to 1229 casualties (GTI, 2015). The spate of insecurity occasioned by herdsmen is alarming in Nigeria to the extent that a day hardly passes by without news of attacks. In June 2018, the country woke up to the news that rampaging Criminal Herdsmen had attacked eleven (11) communities in Barkin Ladi local government area of Benue State. This particular attack left Eighty-six (86) toll with Fifty (50) houses burnt in the process (Ezemenaka & Ekumaoko, 2018).

The table below shows some selected herders' attacks against the resident farmers between 2018 and 2021. The selected figures indicate that the casualties resulting from farmers-herders attack has continued to witness remarkable increase in numbers and casualties coupled with the surge in internally displaced persons. Between June 2015 and January 2016, five hundred and twenty-five (525) persons were killed while in 2016 alone, one thousand, five hundred (1,500) people were killed from farmers and herders clashes with 62,000 people displaced; most of them women and children (Herbert & Husaini, 2018, p.17 & Crisis Group, 2017, p.7). Also, one thousand and seven hundred (1,700) deaths were recorded in 2017. Furthermore, the first six months of 2018 recorded about one thousand, seven hundred and fifty (1,750) human fatality and the figure increased to 2, 000 by the end of the year. Between 2015 and 2018, the death occasioned by herdsmen is put at five thousand, two hundred and seventy-five (5,275) (Enor, Magor & Ekpo 2019, p.267). According to Agbu, Musa & Zhema (2020) violence between Nigerian herders and farmers intensified in early 2018 with approximately three hundred thousand (300,000) people fleeing their homes.

The surge in the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria has become worrisome. Prior to now, the reverse existed in that there was a cordial and symbiotic relationship between the farmers and the pastoralists. While it was observed that

the pastoralists depended on the farmers for arable lands in order to enable grazing for their cattle, the farmers in turn use the excretion deposited by the cattle as manure to grow more crops (Fiki & Lee, 2005). This explains the mutual relationship that had been in place. However, the manner in which the hitherto mutually benefitting relationship between the duos graduated from rapprochement to hostility is still a source of concern to scholars.

Selected Farmers-Herders Attacks in Nigeria

Date	Incident	Location	Consequences
24th June, 2018	Multiple attacks on farming communities in Plateau State by armed-Criminal herdsmen	Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Bokkos, & Mangu LGAs of Plateau State	233 deaths were recorded with several persons injured & property destroyed.
15th July, 2018	Armed-Criminal herdsmen attacks farming communities in the two LGAs of Numan and Demsa	Numan & Demsa LGAs of Adamawa State.	100 persons were killed while others were injured, burning of houses and food items which left over 130 displaced
11th February, 2019	Armed Criminal herdsmen, attacked farming communities in Kaduna State	Kajuru, Kaduna State	Over 151 persons were killed while several persons were injured. Properties & farmlands destroyed.
7th May, 2019	Armed-Criminal herdsmen attacked Jukun-Kona communities.	Kona, Ardo-Kola LGA of Taraba State.	20 persons lost their lives in the attack with several houses burnt down & farm produce destroyed.
15th February, 2020	Herdsmen attacked a community in Delta state	Uwheru community, Ugheli	14 people were killed in the attacked with some of them said to be

		North local government, Delta state	returning from the farm.
1st January, 2020	Criminal herdsmen attacked Kulben Village	Kulben Village of Kombun District of Mangu LGA of Plateau State.	12 persons were killed in the attack
16th February, 2021	herdsmen attacked two communities in Edo State.	Ugboke and Okokhuo community, Ovia North-East Local government area, Edo State.	Seven people were confirmed to be killed from the attack.
3rd December, 2021	Herdsmen attacked one community in Edo state	Odiguetue community, Ovia North-East local Government, Edo state	5 people lost their lives from the attack.

Source: Akov (2018); Agbu, Musa & Zhema (2021),

The Implications of Farmers-Herders Conflict for National Development in Nigeria

The criminal activities of Fulani herdsmen have remained unhampered since their inception. At the moment, the herdsmen militias have been tagged the 4th most dangerous terrorist group in the world (GTI, 2015). This has far-reaching implications for the Nigerian image, coupled with insurgencies in the North East and militants in the Niger Delta. Nigeria's unity is on the verge of collapsing courtesy of Fulani herdsmen's criminal impunity and government political

lopsidedness in combating the menace. There is general apathy and a feeling that the governance in Nigeria is weak and failed. This kind of image will create the impression that Nigeria is a risky country to do business with. This means that our country's desired economic growth and sustainable development goals for the year 2030 are a complete mirage. When there is developmental growth to sustain national security, it thrives.

Increased Under Development and ethnic bickering

Nigeria has been striving to sustain national development since 1999 by applying democratic principles to governance. The principles of federal character, due process, rule of law, basic applications of the fundamental human rights (freedom to religious worship, movement, fair hearing, life, association, etc.), and building integrity and trust before the community of nations have been the common thrust to building sustainable development and national security. These present governments have, by implication and application, jettisoned all these through the so-called body language posture of the APC leadership, to the detriment of national security and sustainable development. The government has encouraged hate speech, terrorism, corruption, marginalisation, nepothism, ethnocentrism, parochial interest, organised criminality, subjugation, and suppression of people through the use of national security forces to the demise of genuine national development and growth. The implication is that instead of building and sustaining the development so far made, we have ended up further impoverishing and underdeveloping the people and the country. Instead of building bridges across ethnic regions, we have been busy creating and encouraging divisions and imposing one's will on another, thereby destroying the already existing bridges and things that kept us together as one country. Century-old bridges built to keep us together as one nation have been deliberately destroyed by parochial ethnic interests without hope of building other ones.

Increased Food insecurity and Socio-Economic underdevelopment

`Countries all over the world are working very hard to move away from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030 through massive industrial and technological production and the availability of food for everyone. In Nigeria, the activities of criminal herdsmen and government inaction have increased food insecurity, hardship,

starvation, and economic underdevelopment (Aihie & Aigbe, 2024). This is a result of the massive dislocation of people from their farms and homes by herdsmen, which has increased the number of people in the IDPs. People who should have been busy working on their farms have, without fault of their own, become beggars and refugees, depending on the survival of their families in their own country, while their homes and farms lie waste at the hands of criminal herdsmen.

It is important to recognise that no matter what the government may want to put forward in this matter, the economic and human waste these criminal activities have caused does not permit sustainable development and security. Furthermore, the wanton destruction of farm lands, fish, and water has serious consequences for food security. The effect is that food supply is negatively affected both in quantity and price (Tenuche & Ifatimehin, 2009). Perhaps one may agree that the profit the government is making through corruption in the allocation of funds to IDPs and the reception of grants from foreign donors compel them to do nothing to solve the menace of the Fulani herdsmen and the increasing capacity at the IDP camps.

Increased Illiteracy and School Dropouts

It must be recalled that the attack in the Ukpabi Nimbo Community of Uzo Uwani Local Government Area in Enugu State on April 24, 2016 occurred at a time when students were writing their Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE). As a result of the attack, officials of the West African Examination Council who were conducting the examination in the community fled the community for their safety (Umoru & Erunke, 2014). It is known that in the execution of their criminal activities, these criminal elements have targeted young school children, who are then kidnapped for ransom. For instance, 200 pupils were recently kidnapped by armed bandits from Government Secondary School, Kuriga, Kaduna State, and held hostage for two weeks (Yakubu, 2024). In 2021, armed herders invaded a Kaduna State boarding school, kidnapping over 150 secondary school pupils. In February 2021, armed herders abducted 317 girls from Government Girls Secondary School in Jangebe, Zamfara State (Akpan, 2022). This crisis also affects tertiary institutions. In March 2021, 39 students from the College of Forestry Mechanisation in Kaduna State were kidnapped by armed bandits. After three weeks, it took close to two million dollars to release them.

Also, in April 2021, at Greenfield University in Kaduna State, bandits broke into students' hostels and abducted 18 along with two staff. The bandits killed five of the kidnapped students and demanded over $5 million in ransom from their parents before releasing them (Okwuwada, 2023). Even though some of the pupils were released, the mental damage and trauma they may have gone through can reduce their propensity for further education. As noted by Ezemeneka & Ekumaoko (2018, p. 41), when these criminal elements perpetrate their gruesome acts, they burn down houses and destroy properties. The implication of this is that young people who ought to be in school are sent to IDP camps with no possibility of furthering their education. The government, it must be mentioned, has not assumed the responsibility of rebuilding any of the destroyed schools. Most of the children enmeshed in this crisis may never have the opportunity to write the SSSCE for life or go back to school due to poverty and other social dislocations.

Exposure of Nigeria's Internal Security Deficiencies

There have been gross allegations that the armed herdsmen who are committing various degrees of violent crimes in Nigeria are not Nigerians. Aside from the porosity of our borders, it further indicts our security agents of their inability to properly police our country domestic security. The fact that foreigners can move from neighbouring countries into the country's hinter lands with dangerous AK 47 rifles unchecked by the numerous road blocks across the country speaks volumes of our security agencies inefficiency, experience, professionalism and patriotism. This is a great danger for our national security.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the implications of the current farmers-herders conflict for national development, specifically focusing on Nigeria. The study revealed that a conflict of this magnitude significantly impacts national development in various ways: Increased underdevelopment and ethnic bickering**.** The conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria has resulted in underdevelopment, leading to the destruction of numerous homes and projects. It also brings about ethnic bickering in the sense that it has created a gulf between not just the North and South, but also Christians and Muslims. Also, the menace has created increased food insecurity and socio-economic problems. The deadly attacks against farmers have caused a surge in death tolls and injuries, while also

dislocating people from their homes, thereby increasing the number of people in IDP camps. The implication is that economic activities have declined, while the desire to increase farm productivity has dwindled among farmers due to insecurity. Furthermore, the conflict between herdsmen and farmers has increased illiteracy and school dropout rates. When they carry out their dastardly act, most times they burn down schools and homes. They leave the children and their families homeless, forcing them to seek refuge in the dilapidated IDP camps (Umoru & Erunke, 2014). As a result, the victims no longer possess the wherewithal to proceed academically, making them drop out of school. Additionally, the surge in farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria has exposed Nigeria's internal security deficiencies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will aid policy makers to tackle the conflict so as to make the country a better place to leave in.

Improve Security for Herders and Farmers

An immediate step is to improve security for both herders and farming communities. At a minimum, the federal government and its security agencies should intensify operations against cattle rustlers, improving systems to track livestock movement and trade, arresting individuals who carry illegal firearms and prosecuting suspected assailants.

Strengthen police capacity to curb rustling and banditry

In recent years, the federal government and governments of some northern states have initiated several joint efforts against cattle rustlers and bandits. In July 2015, the governors of Niger, Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina and Zamfara states jointly funded an anti-rustling operation in the Kamuku/Kuyanbana forests that straddle all six states. The operation involved four organisations: the army, Nigeria Police Force, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps and Directorate of State Security (DSS). In 2016, the army launched two other operations against cattle rustlers and bandits in the North West, parts of the north-east and north-central zones. Some state governments, such as Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto, also have negotiated peace agreements with the bandits, inviting them to lay down

their arms and return stolen cattle in exchange for building roads, hospitals and schools in their communities and grants of cash and land to individuals. Despite these efforts, the menace keeps occurring unabated. There is therefore a need to strengthen the police for so as to measure up with the challenge of quelling the conflict.

Improve livestock tracking

Smarter animal tracking and identification systems can also curb cattle rustling. State ministries of agriculture should oversee cattle branding, certify cattle traders, monitor cattle markets and regulate abattoirs and slaughterhouses. The federal agriculture and transport ministries should renew efforts to establish safer and more efficient arrangements for transporting livestock across the country. Although a long-distance transportation arrangement, utilizing the government-run rail system, was inaugurated in 2016, the effort was suspended shortly thereafter amid mutual accusations of bad faith and incompetence. Adoption of so-called smart devices could also help. Herders acquiring solar-powered Livestock Tracking Devices and herders' associations subscribing to and regularly updating the Cattle Rustling Information System (CATRIS), could help generate some of the information security agencies need to track rustlers and recover stolen cattle.

Support Community-based Conflict Resolution

Local and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms have proved effective in both averting violence and helping communities recover from conflict. Forums that allow various constituencies – farmers, pastoralists, community vigilantes and state security agencies – to monitor, identify, discuss and manage potential threats can be particularly helpful. These also can be used to help farmers and pastoralists explore mutually beneficial ways to coexist. Wherever possible, state and local governments should support or establish such mechanisms, especially across the worst-affected north-central region. For their part, local politicians, ethnic, religious and community leaders, as well as representatives of pastoralist and farmer associations need to speak out against violence. The media should try to provide more balanced coverage that avoids inflaming tensions through stereotyping, unfair generalizations and sensational reporting.

Establish Grazing Reserves and Encourage Ranching

There is urgent need to reform and improve grazing arrangements. In March 2016, the federal government announced its intent to establish grazing areas across the country, but vehement opposition from farming communities forced it to relent. It needs a more nuanced approach, which takes into account local sensitivities regarding cattle roaming and open grazing, not only in the south but also in predominantly farming areas of the north-central zone. As a first step, the federal government, working with state governments, should jointly survey, demarcate and officially document existing grazing reserves that have not been over-run by human settlements and infrastructure.

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