TERROR IN THE FOOD BASKET
A look into the violence in North-Central Nigeria
About This Report

This report is the output of an unbiased and factual review of the crisis in Nigeria's North-Central geopolitical zone, and attempts to tell the story from the point of view of the victims of this crisis.

SBM Intelligence worked with a team of correspondents in the three states surveyed. Our researchers employed methods such as one-on-one interviews, desk research, and polling to collate the available data. Our data analysts and editors sifted through the data and prepared the report, using various propriety tools to fact-check and copy edit the information gathered.

Our correspondents went to great extent to interview people from various sides of the conflict at great risk to their well-being and lives. Majority of those successfully interviewed during the course of the study were indigene and non-indigene settlers (including Hausa-Fulani settlers).

The majority of our respondents have reserved the right to not be named in this report, while some were not only happy to be named, but wanted their photographs and videos displayed. We are grateful to some, who will rather not be named, for going through the report, helping with guidance, and corrections. Our thanks to you.

There are strong indications that the crisis in the North-Central is a lot more than “cattle rustling”. The wholesale slaughter of communities has been described by some as genocide. While some have described the current crisis as such, we will not make that leap yet. However, we must point out that ignoring it further will make that leap harder not to make.

It is important that this crisis be humanised, and reported. The spread of this crisis from north-to-south is almost inexorable, as shown in the kidnap of a former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Olu Falae. This crisis, as will be shown in this report, is also beginning to have an effect on the price of food in our commercial cities. It is important that we act, before it is too late.

Disclaimer

Whilst every effort was made in the preparation of this report to ensure the precision of statistics and other information contained therein, SB Morgen cannot accept liability in respect of any errors or omissions of data from external sources. Data contained in this report is only up-to-date as at September 30, 2015, when our last correspondent returned from the field, and is subject to change during the natural course of events.
Why We Should Care

The area known as the Middle Belt in Nigeria, is largely rural. A drive from Nigeria's capital, Abuja, to Enugu in the South-East geopolitical zone, takes you through large swathes of this area, through villages, which were once farming communities, and which unknown to so many Nigerians, are responsible, to a very large extent, for feeding the country.

However, because the most visible elite and middle class Nigerians are based in the urban conglomerations of Lagos-Ibadan, Abuja, Enugu-Onitsha, Port Harcourt-Aba and Kano-Kaduna, we do not see these rural poor, and as a result, hardly care about their problems.

We have to.

These problems are causing a large rural-urban drift, which is unsustainable in the short to medium term as seen in large parts of Jos, Plateau State, which are turning into huge refugee camps. In the long term, these security issues are causing a North-South drift, with the attendant conflict as various cultures clash.

Finally, and in the long term, there is the potential for escalation as the problem accelerates and more people, in their bid to get away from the problem crowd together, and compete more fiercely for ever dwindling resources.

This report serves as a start to a conversation over an issue that has been ignored for too long. It is not a final document, we do not know nearly enough of the problems in the North-Central. There is a lot more that needs to be done. A lot more.
Introduction

While Nigeria and the world focuses attention on the actions of the movement known as Boko Haram - especially given their recent links to the Islamic State - and the Buhari administration’s efforts to defeat them, another internal security challenge is brewing in Nigeria’s Middle Belt region.

The images that we have seen could be put amongst pictures from South Sudan at the height of the Sudanese Civil War; the Central African Republic during the anti-Balaka killings; or even the Boko Haram devastated towns and cities of North Eastern Nigeria and they would feel right at home.

But this is not any of those places. No war has been declared. Unlike the more high profile and internationally recognized Boko Haram insurgency, the conflict in the Middle Belt is under-reported in both the domestic and international media, and the government’s response to it has been a sort of denial that this conflict exists, with senior government officials preferring to focus on either Boko Haram, or the issue of cattle rustling in the North-West.

While the number of Nigerians that have been killed in this violence rivals the numbers affected by Boko Haram in 2015, the killings are just as indiscriminate – women, children, young men, the elderly – everyone is a target. In March 2014, Gabriel Suswam, then governor of Nigeria’s Benue State, came under attack.

Below is a quote from the Leadership Newspaper [1] of March 12, 2014:

Over 30 persons were reportedly killed in Kwande, Katsina Ala and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue State when suspected Fulani mercenaries dressed in military uniforms sacked six villages in the three council areas. According to an eyewitness, the herdsmen also burnt farmlands, houses and huts in the affected communities. It was reliably gathered that the invaders who had in the last few weeks attacked the southern part of the state, moved up north and were said to be heading towards the country home of Governor Gabriel Suswam in Logo and that of the former Minister of Steel, Wantaregh Paul Unongo in Jato Aka. According to the source, "Eighteen people were said to have been killed at Tse Ibor, Tombo and Mbawa all in Logo Local Government Area, while another seven were killed at Anyiase near Kashimbila in Kwande local government area."

This is about the vibrant, ethnic melting point in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria, an area known as the food basket of the nation, now reduced to the semblance of a war zone. In many hamlets and villages houses are burnt or torn down, and where the houses still stand they have been overtaken by weeds as the inhabitants have long fled. Schools and markets have been destroyed or shut down. Farms, have been deserted and whole communities have been emptied. It is a story shocking in both its effect on the region and in the near total government silence.

Bringing peace to the North Central formed part of the security promises of the APC during the campaign of President Buhari, and prior to his election, he
condemned the intolerance in the region following the massacre of 95 people by suspected Fulani herdsmen[2]. However, since this government assumed office, whilst the North East has received commendable attention, the North Central continues to be ignored.

The purpose of the report which follows is to give an on-the-ground assessment of the reasons for these security challenges, and what can be done to mitigate them. It will also examine whether the law enforcement agencies and traditional institutions are doing enough with regard to conflict resolution.

Our Approach

New reports and detailed coverage of these incidents have been scarce. In order to get a full sense of the devastation, we visited 14 communities in three of the most affected states in the region. We saw the devastation, how the people lived and spoke with them. Having spoken with Boko Haram victims in IDP camps, it is difficult not to see how similar the stories of the survivors are.

Our team visited the following communities: Agboghul, Enger, Tseyaoor and Uchen in Benue State; Angwan Kuje, Dadare, Gidan Sule, Gidinye and Railway in Nasarawa state; and Jong, Lobiring, Rabuk, Sho and Zim in Plateau State.

In each community, we interviewed various respondents who had survived such attacks. Most of the farmers have not planted or harvested crops since 2012.

We also dwelt, extensively, on a communal crisis in Benue, that left six communities obliterated, a number of people dead, and included an attack on the then serving governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswam.
Diagnosis

1. Causes Of The Conflict

Simply put, it is a conflict basically about resources. However, when you look closely, you will observe that this is a complex multi-dimensional issue.

The seasonal southward migration of Fulani herdsmen brings them into contention with indigenous people of the Middle Belt region for farmland, and according to respondents, this is the primary source of conflict. Locals report the destruction of their crops by the cattle of the Fulani herdsmen, whereas the herdsmen report that their cattle are being stolen, what is commonly termed as cattle rustling.

Such herder-settler conflicts have also been reported in North Western and North Eastern states of Nigeria but they are more prevalent in the North Central due to the extensive farmlands.

There are a lot more herdsmen today than there were in previous years, and it appears there are some accompanying them who are not practising the normal business of herding. There are allegations that some of the owners of the cattle are retired army generals and politicians – it is a big business. During the dry season, there is even more pressure on available grazing lands, and that is when most of the escalation occurs. We do not believe that this issue is a solely Fulani-Jihadist one as is being posited by many settlers in places like Makurdi, in Benue State.

There are indications that many of the new-breed Fulani herdsmen typically do not know the lay of the land and assume that the structure of land ownership is the same as in the North where land belongs to the traditional rulers – in Tiv land for example, the land belongs to the people. The native farmer ethnic groups cultivate their lands - these lands and the crops on them constitute one of their most important assets as a people. Working on the assumption that the land belongs to traditional rulers, these new-breed herdsmen come in and pay some traditional rulers for leave to graze on lands and some of the chiefs take money without informing their people. There are allegations that some of the Fulani herdsmen have given some of indigenous chiefs money to allow them graze. There are also allegations that some of the powerful political elite in the Middle Belt themselves have cattle and that this might explain why there has been seeming reluctance to blame cattle herdsmen for these attacks.

The Fulani herdsmen during their nomadic movement with their cattle, which constitute their own most important assets, encroach and graze on the lands and crops of the native ethnic groups in the Middle Belt. Inevitably, the natives complain and the herdsmen recourse to organized violence.

When this happens, the herdsmen, who reportedly have a powerful union across West Africa report back to their powerful owners that the cattle are being rustled or killed and then the Union organises for protection to come –
usually mercenaries accompany some of the herdsmen and attack villages where cattle have been rustled or killed. For example, 12 such ‘herdsmen’ were caught in Guma in 2013\(^3\). Only one of them was Nigerian. The others were foreigners.

These clashes have happened over many decades, but, the recent escalations do not fit into the prior levels of violence. There are also reports that some of the natives of the Middle-Belt, specifically the Alago, want Tiv people to lose the land in Guma as they believe that the Tiv took their land. They are alleged to have on numerous occasions connived with these ‘herdsmen’ to attack Tiv villages.

In Gidan Sule, Keana LGA, Nasarawa State, Asemekaha Nyiyongu (67), Benjamin Aor (32), and Gideon Bem Tgba (35), all of the Tiv ethnic group, told the same story as Atom Gboji (36), Aondoaver Ahua (40), and Ahua Yaor (40) in Tseyaoor, Gwer West, Benue State, a distance of at least 140 kilometres. The patterns are similar. The herdsmen arrive in the communities and are allowed to graze. Some communities even go as far as showing them designated areas for grazing. Many of them are even well known in the villages. However, within a short period of time, an excuse is found – stolen cattle, farmers complaining about the cattle grazing their crops, even altercations over sharing money from proceeds of stolen property – and then the herdsmen use this as *casus belli* to attack the community in numbers and with weapons that ordinary herdsmen are not expected to possess, killing as many as they can and ensuring the villages become uninhabitable. They then watch the roads to ensure that those who try to return to the communities are murdered to discourage others from trying, effectively emptying the communities for their own occupation.

From late 2012, the killings by herdsmen in the Middle Belt began to take on a systematic and methodical pattern that increasingly looks like a deliberate plan to wipe out native ethnic groups, either by killing or displacing them, in order to take control of lands and fields in the region. Our respondents also reported that the fields were being sowed with chemicals, which made cultivation impossible. Those who dared to brave it out and attempt farming were murdered.

The result is that an area which once served as the food basket of Nigeria, now experiences starvation, compounded by the fact that the roads are unsafe for the people to travel to get food supplies in lieu of that which they are unable to cultivate. But this is beyond mere clashes over grazing resources. Many have had their houses burnt or torn down and are now living as squatters with family, or as IDPs in camps.

In Benue, the state government has been perceived as not having given support to the communities and taking sides with the herdsmen even in the midst of various attacks on different Tiv settlements in Guma and Gwer West Local Government Areas over the last three years. There is also a perception that the state government did not seek assistance with the security situation, until recently - after there was trouble in Agatu Local Government, and more recently after the Tor Tiv’s home was burnt in Guma.
Traditionally, many of the herders used to sleep along the river bed and not in the villages. Now, the influx of cattle is too much for the land. A lot of the incidents, up until now, are happening mainly in Tar Iharev because it is believed that their chiefs have collected money.

The tactics of the new-breed herders are more sophisticated. They are alleged to now bribe indigenous young men with phones, and those young men in turn connive with them and give them information. In April 2014, two boys in Apir (15 kilometres outside Makurdi and near Ikpayongo) were caught holding arms, allegedly for the Fulani, and were murdered on the spot\[4\]. No one was brought to justice.

In Kwande there were attacks in Nyamado Village. Herdsmen crossed the boundary and went to the Ugbe people (a Tiv-speaking people) in Cameroon who turned them away; the herdsmen then came back to the Nigerian border with Kwande and vented their anger by killing 3 people. The Nyamado community was displaced and it took some time before they got back.

Historically, there have not been problems of this magnitude. Traditionally when their cattle grazed and occasionally ate from farms, the herdsmen would find out who owned the farm and pay. There are many Fulani living in some Middle Belt villages peacefully.

Udei (an old railway station near Kadorko) was also attacked some time in 2011. The security issue in that community still persists.

The actions of the herdsmen have not gone without reactions from the native ethnic groups. While most of our respondents said they would not join an ethnic militia to fight back against the Fulani herdsmen, among the Eggon natives who reside in Nasarawa, young men have opted for joining ethnic militias to defend themselves. But as with most of such things, these Eggon militias have morphed into aggressors against not just the Fulani but other, smaller ethnic groups in the area, constituting a second layer of inter-ethnic violence and increasing the complexity of the issues surrounding the violence in the area.

When we add decades of simmering tension amongst ethnic groups like the Tiv, Jukun, Idoma, Berom and other much smaller groups, the thoughts that we might be headed to a potentially more disastrous insurgency than the Niger Delta and the Boko Haram insurgencies is difficult to shake off.

The truth however, is that at the moment, the Fulani herdsmen are better armed and better organized than the land owners and they have the advantage of being the aggressors, so they are able to pick soft targets at will, and call on other herdsmen to increase their numbers.

So far we have discussed from the perspective of the natives, rather than the settlers. In order to get a broader view of the conflict, we sent a team to Dadare village, a predominantly Muslim-Fulani farming settlement in Nasarawa State. Here the feedback was different. The respondents said they had been victims of attacks, not from cattle herdsmen but from other, non-indigene
settlers. Their blame for these attacks point mainly to the Eggon, who they claim have attacked the Migili, the Gwandara, and other Hausa/Fulani with little or no provocation. Due to the attacks, farming in Dadare was suspended in 2013. These people, like many others in Nasarawa, say they have a very good relationship with the Fulani herdsmen and will be willing to accommodate herdsmen if the community land is designated as grazing reserves for them.

Our team also sought to interview some Fulani herdsmen but were met with hostility and even threatened. We got the view of Muhammad Bello, Secretary General, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria.

From his perspective, this conflict is basically about resources - access to pasture and water. The conflicts between cattle breeders and farmers have been there since time immemorial. But more recently, the conflict has escalated due to the infiltration of other issues such as religion and ethnicity. The conflict he says cannot be addressed by politics or religion, but by agricultural and economic development. With this he places the blame not on the herdsmen or locals, but squarely on a government whose neglect of the agricultural sector (including livestock farming), since the discovery of crude oil, has left the economy of Northern Nigeria in chaos.

2. Impact Of The Conflict

The result of the violence is a loss of livelihood by affected natives. After having their crops eaten, some respondents have not planted or harvested since 2006. Many others have been forced to relocate.

One of our respondents, Vincent Ior (22), in Uchen, Makurdi LGA of Benue state, spoke of how himself and his family had had to relocate at least twice following attacks in which “many died and many survived”.

Because the government has failed to respond adequately by protecting the lives and property of the citizens in the region, the herdsmen have grown bolder, and their perceived attempt to wipe out the native ethnic groups has quietly morphed into low intensity warfare. Even where the traditional rulers have attempted to call the herdsmen to peace meetings, the herdsmen routinely take advantage of these occasions to perform reconnaissance for future attacks. Some of these are steeped in history.

Historically, in much of the interactions of the Fulani with the tribes of the region, they were the raiding grounds for slaves. The detailed diary of Hamman Yaji, an emir of Madagali in the Mandara Region, gives an insight into this relationship of violence which continued until Yaji was deposed in 1927.

Just as it was the duty of the British Colonial Government to stop the marauding of Hamman Yaji in 1927 through deliberate action, it is the duty of the Nigerian Government to stop these killings. The typical Nigerian attitude where government acts like if things are ignored, they will go away will not serve us. The Goodluck Jonathan administration initially adopted such an
approach with Boko Haram, as did the Olusegun Obasanjo administration in the Niger Delta Insurgency. Both became disastrous for the nation and the West African sub-region.

If we trace further back, we will see that this is the default position of the government in armed conflict – Maitatsine, Tiv Riots, killing of ethnic Igbos in the North prior to the Civil war; It has been the same, head-firmly-in-the-sand response, and that is exactly the same stance the administration of President Buhari is adopting with the killings in the North Central which, according to reports, have taken close to 1,000 lives since he came to power in May 2015.

3. Role Of Law Enforcement

Many of the respondents criticized the police for not doing enough to ensure law and order. In the absence of law enforcement, individuals tend to take matters into their own hands, often with disastrous consequences for social cohesion. Traditional leaders have also tried to step in to sue for peace, but with mixed results.

Whilst the killings escalated during the Goodluck Jonathan administration, the current government cannot fold its hands and watch until the killings in the North Central morph into something that is an existential threat to Nigeria or when the international community brings pressure on the government to bear. Sadly, the President has failed to acknowledge this as a major issue facing the country presently. Many have begun to wonder if this is because his kinsmen – the Fulani are the aggressors in this case, unlike with Boko Haram. Whatever the President’s reasons, it is imperative that the government responds to the plight of its citizens because it is its responsibility and ultimately the source of its legitimacy.

Even though all our respondents say they would not join an ethnic force to push back against the herdsmen, it is unknown how long this sentiment will be maintained. It is clear, from the responses, that attitudes are hardening, especially in Plateau State, the northernmost location of respondents to this survey. For now, however, their unwillingness to take up arms represents a silver lining and it reflects a situation that can still be brought under control before further escalation.
Case Studies

Sho, Plateau State

On September 20, SBM visited Sho, a Birom village in Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau State. A few days after we left, the village was attacked by Fulani herdsmen. The villagers and the police put up a fight, and the attackers fled. Following that, SBM tried to return to the village, but we were prevented from going back by townsmen who insisted that the Fulani had blockaded the road to the village.

In Sho, we spoke with Abel Mwaku Nus (31), Gyang Alamba (47), Dabature Dyam (66), and Nuhu Chumang Gwong (48). All four men are Birom, Christian, and are farmers. They all stated that the latest round of conflict started when cattle began eating their crops. They therefore place the blame for the trouble at the feet of the Fulani. The last time any of them was able to harvest crops was in 2006, although Gwong admitted to making an effort to plant last year (2014), though he insisted that the cattle destroyed his crops. Essentially, since 2006, these men, and their community, have been destitute. Luckily, none of the respondents expressed a willingness to join an ethnic militia.

All four men clearly display the hardening of attitudes towards this problem as they all claim that they not would permit the designation of land for grazing around their community if they had such authority. According to them, on more than one occasion when Berom leaders have called for peaceful meetings, they have been double crossed.

Illustration 1: Nuhu Chumang Gwong, a resident of Sho

Nus said he had lost twelve family members, and was not in a reconciliatory mood, insisting that prior to the settlement of the Fulani in large numbers, that the ethnic groups in the area lived in peace.

Alamba on his part had lost two family members to the conflict.

Dyam, the oldest of our respondents in Sho, had lost fourteen family members
to this conflict.

The full interview with Nuhu Chumang Gwong can be seen on YouTube [https://youtu.be/_CQ4SLUteRI].

**Gidinye, Nasarawa State**

In Gidinye, Obi LGA, Nasarawa State, we spoke with Ayibro Dayagwa (40), Iliya Dagba Igube (49), Joseph Agada (69), and Agidis Jigbala (53). All four men are of the Migili ethnic group, and they are all Christian.

Nasarawa is south of Plateau State, so attitudes here are not as hard as among the Berom in Plateau. The respondents here are still willing to allow for designated grazing reserves. These attitudes could also be aided by the fact that in Nasarawa, there is also another conflict, this time amongst the indigenous population. All four men mentioned the Eggon community as being partly responsible for the losses that they have suffered, with Dayagwa and Agada elaborating to explain that the Eggon, Alago, Gwandara and Tiv ethnic groups were warring amongst themselves before the Fulani began to arrive.

According to some respondents, the most recent clashes in Gidinye were also not caused directly by cattle grazing, but by money that was distributed to the community.

Economically, Gidinye, like Sho, is a rural, agrarian community. Like Sho, since the clashes began, they have not had a harvest, the last harvest being in 2010.

*Illustration 2: Ayibro Dayagawa, a resident of Gidinye, Nasarawa State, who has lost family members, and has been unable to harvest crops since 2010*

In his interview, Dayagwa specifically mentioned the failure of the government in his state with regards job creation, stating that one of the problems in the state was that there were too many idle people.

All four men have lost faith in the ability of the Nigerian police to secure their region.
Ayibro Dayagwa’s interview can be seen on YouTube: https://youtu.be/FwoXaX5e3h0

Angwan Kuje, Nasarawa State

Angwan Kuje village is located in Keana LGA of Nasarawa State, which is Eggon heartland. All four men we spoke with: Alaku Titus Sule (33), Francis Ovey (35), Alaku Sule (59) and Christopher Asele (30) are Christians.

What we found interesting was that the Eggon do not seem to notice that other ethnic groups indigenous to the locality are hostile to them. They are more concerned with the Fulani, and the fact that the headmen’s' cattle eat their crops. In Angwan Kuje, the last harvest was in 2011.

However, while the blame the Fulani for the conflicts just like the Berom of Plateau, the Eggon diverge in their thinking about the solution. At the moment, they, like their Migili neighbours believe that designated grazing reserves will sort the problem out. Unlike both the Berom and Migili however, all the respondents in Angwan Kuje think that the police have not lost control, and are still able to keep law and order in the region.

Illustration 3: Alaku Sule, in Angwan Kuje, Nasarawa, has lost 2 family members, and has not had a harvest in four years

The interview with Alaku Sule in Angwan Kuje can be seen on YouTube: https://youtu.be/k4NYFQa5Gos
Finally, another difference between the Eggon approach to the problem and that of the others, is in the attitudes of their traditional rulers. While the others attempted to reach out to the herdsmen, the Eggon traditional rulers simply told their subjects to "stay out of trouble".

However, the activities of the Eggon militias in Nasarawa state have been worrying. Dozens of deaths have been reported following their attacks on Dadare Village over the past two years. In that period, the Fulani farmers have desisted from venturing into their farms for fear of more attacks.

**Summary Of Responses**

**Jong, Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau State**
Ethnicities of respondents - Berom
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2012
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No

**Lobiring, Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau State**
Ethnicities of respondents - Birom
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2014
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No

**Rabuk, Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau State**
Ethnicities of respondents - Birom
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2012
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No

**Sho, Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau State**
Ethnicities of respondents - Birom
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2006
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No

**Zim, Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau State**
Ethnicities of respondents - Berom
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2012
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No
Angwan Kuje, Keana LGA, Nasarawa State
Ethnicities of respondents - Eggon
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2011
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No

Dadare, Obi LGA, Nasarawa State
Ethnicities of respondents - Fulani, Gwandara, Hausa
Ethnicities of attackers - Eggon, Fulani, Gwandara, Hausa
Most recent harvest - 2013
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No

Gidan Sule, Keana LGA, Nasarawa State
Most recent harvest - 2013
Ethnicities of respondents - Tiv
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Confidence in security forces - No
Willingness to take up arms - No

Gidinye, Obi LGA, Nasarawa State
Ethnicities of respondents - Koro, Migili
Ethnicities of attackers - Alago, Eggon, Fulani, Gwandara, Tiv
Most recent harvest - 2010
Confidence in security forces - No
Willingness to take up arms - No

Railway, Keana LGA, Nasarawa State
Ethnicities of respondents - Eggon, Tiv
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2011
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No

Abdughul, Makurdi LGA, Benue State
Ethnicities of respondents - Idoma, Tiv
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani, Tiv
Most recent harvest - 2013
Confidence in security forces - No
Willingness to take up arms - Yes

Anune, Makurdi LGA, Benue State
Ethnicities of respondents - Tiv
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2012
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No
Enger, Gwer West LGA, Benue State
Ethnicities of respondents - Tiv
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2013
Confidence in security forces - No
Willingness to take up arms - No

Tseyaor, Gwer West LGA, Benue State
Ethnicities of respondents - Tiv
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2013
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No

Uchen, Makurdi LGA, Benue State
Ethnicities of respondents - Tiv
Ethnicities of attackers - Fulani
Most recent harvest - 2012
Confidence in security forces - Yes
Willingness to take up arms - No
The Tragedy Of John Anule, An Incident From Benue In 2014

In 2014, just before the attack on Governor Suswam’s, there was a massacre in Adaka, a village in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. We were able to get interviews, and pictures, from the incident. Please note that this section contains graphic images.

The resident we interviewed is still afraid for his life, and did not want to be identified.

Around 8pm on Friday night, February 21, 2014 I got a call from my fiancée that shots were being fired behind our house. I live beside the Glory of His Majesty ministries, a very big church. So I picked an okada and rushed to the house. On my way going to the house, I met my mother coming out with my nephews – they were coming out of my house – so I came down from the okada and they climbed and I directed the okadaman to take them to my elder brother’s house.

After they left, I rushed to the house to make sure everything was secure. My house is before Mount Carmel Secondary School gate. I came back to the house for a few minutes and I saw some men going back to their houses in Adaka but the women were not able to go back. So I followed the men and decided to stay back. We stayed outside for some hours, until around 1-2 am and then we decided to go into our various homes till the next day. The next day I left the house and came back to the shop and discovered that some policemen went down to where that incident took place and took the dead body of an Igbo man that died to the hospital. He was the only person that they killed. They killed him in his room. I was not there, but I was told that when the Fulani people came and were shooting, he lit a torch in his room so the light shone on the people outside so they shot at him.

**SBM: So those are the shots that your fiancée heard?**
Yes. It was not a single gunshot. More than 10 persons were shooting. She said that people were running and that I should rush over so I could get Mama out. Before I could reach that Mobile Barracks junction here, I saw some people running out. Vehicles, machines, etc. So I just took courage to make sure I get to where my people are. That Igbo man was the only person they killed that day. It was even the next day around 10am that the police went and took his corpse to the hospital.

**SBM: Has there been any more disturbances since then?**
Yes. The day before yesterday (Tuesday, February 25, 2014), we have Mt Carmel Secondary School, Command Secondary School, New Covenant Secondary School there then on Tuesday – they told these students from New Covenant at these schools to pack out. It seems some militias from Tiv people, from Tiv land came to that side. As our people are fighting outside, those Fulani people get access. They gain access through our village (Uchar, Gwer West) and then destroy more villages. They(who?) told those students to move out from the Adaka area. New Covenant Secondary School is within
that Adaka area. Adeke is a different community - it is where that chief stayed that they (the shooters) came after him. Adaka is where the Fulani are penetrating to go inside those villages and that place has become their access road. So the students packed out – after the militia came. It was left the Command and the Mt. Carmel, so those Fulani who went to take care of their cattle were returning and the militia now attacked them. If you go about a kilometre from here, you will see dead cows by the roadside right now as I am talking to you. They killed a lot of cows – that is the Tiv people killed the cows. The dead cows are by Timber Shed. That was what happened day before yesterday.

**SBM: In retaliation for Friday’s attack?**
Yes. On Wednesday night (February 26) the Fulani came back to attack the Tiv but did not find anyone so they burnt the whole of Adaka down.

**SBM: Where are the residents who fled from your area? Those who do not have relatives to stay with, where did they go?**
Some people went to Our Lady of Perpetual Help just down the road. I asked and was told that, when they fled there on Friday night, at first they refused to open the gate for them but later when the (Reverend) Father came, he asked that they let the stranded villagers in. Up till now, many people flee to the church for safety - men, women, children. If you wait till about 7PM, you'll see the exodus. Only a few of us (men) sleep in Adaka/Adeke now. I told my mum to stay in my brother’s house behind Modern Market because his area is safer than ours. That is the present situation.

**SBM: Is there any police or anybody guarding that area now?**
No. Except that very day when those Tiv people attacked those Fulani people about seven vehicles of police went down to that side. Even I myself was there when they called me that they are shooting around that Command Secondary School side. I now rushed to the house to make sure everything is secure. So we rushed down to where - you know those people were killing the cows and pursuing the Fulani going down. They have already killed the cows - the place where the thing started, all these vehicles belonging to this SARS (anti-robbery squad), and HQ, D Division all those stations, about 7-8 vehicles were parked there and that was where everybody was stopping. Nobody went beyond that area.

**SBM: Do you know anybody who saw the attackers on Friday?**
Yes. My friend told me that they came to attack the Chief of Adeke - that is the story. The chief has a fenced house and some stores that he gave out for rent. One of those stores is an alcohol joint – some people were drinking there. He says after some time he saw some people in black suits. He did not tell me that they were Fulani but he told me he saw some people in black suits so the movement was becoming somehow suspicious. So the sharp ones left before the people started shooting. But the shooting was not directly on people. They were shooting in the air. So they all ran away.
**SBM: So those in Our Lady of Perpetual Help do they sleep there every night?**

Yes they do – in the afternoon, they go to their various places to get their things but in the night they are too afraid to sleep there (in Adaka and Adeke). And some sleep in an uncompleted building nearby.

Our respondent further noted that since the crisis had started on 21/2/2014 until the interview speaking, he had not seen the leader of the people (Governor Suswam) come to inspect the affected areas (Adaka and Adeke) even though it was right in Makurdi.

**Talking To The Displaced**

Some displaced community members of Ichei Adem and Utur Villages both in Makurdi LGA had run to relatives living in one of the communities along the Naka Road. There are at least eight displaced families staying with one family in Bam-Bam, Modern Market Ward. They narrated their story about how they came to be displaced:

On January 19, 2014, Ichei Adem was attacked by suspected Fulani herdsmen and they all fled into Makurdi. They reported that these were not the normal Fulani herdsmen – these ones had sophisticated weapons and wore black clothes! One the men said, ‘Hmm! These people are not Fulani!’ Some of the villagers were captured and killed by the attackers and many of their houses, including a church, were burnt. Bombs were reportedly thrown by both warring sides. All reported significant losses.

The respondents provided some pictures of people they said were captured and killed as well as pictures of destroyed properties.

*Illustration 4: Four Utur villagers captured by alleged Fulani militia or attackers with said attackers standing guard in the background*
The whereabouts of the villagers in the pictures above remain a mystery. There were also corpses the villagers discovered with the first identified as Dewua Shiwegh and the second body identified as Shayinga Orken:

The displaced persons now staying in Bam-Bam further commented on the Friday February 21 attack, saying that the wives of the police in the mobile police barracks were also running. They themselves ran off from Bam-Bam as well thinking, ‘If the wives of people in security forces are taking to their heels, who are we to stay?’

They also reported that in the recent attacks in the Adaka and Adeke communities, a young man named John had been captured by the attackers who then used his phone to call one of his family members. The family members recorded the ensuing conversation. The conversation between John, his captors and his family is translated and abridged:

**John (in great distress):** Come and save me. I am being tortured. They have roasted my testicles.

**John’s family members:** Where are you?

*(sound of people speaking Hausa in the background and the cocking of a gun)*

**John’s family:** My God! Where are you?

**Captors (interjecting in Hausa, mixed with heavily accented Tiv):** He was rustling our cattle so we will keep him here. We will kill him! Speak! Speak!

This went on for over 7 minutes with John begging his family to come and rescue him, his family being nonplussed and confused and begging his captors.

The displaced persons in Bam-BBam reported that they had received little or no assistance from the state government and lamented that the governor only ran to the Federal Government for help about the issue after the Tor Tiv’s house was burnt in Guma LGA.

The displaced persons further complained that their representative at the State Assembly (identified as one Barrister Adanyi) had not offered any support or help to their community at this time. The displaced persons noted that the Senator of their zone (George Akume) had visited displaced persons at Daudu and donated some food items while also donating more items to those who were displaced from Adaka and Adeke.

They also alleged that there were some Tiv boys in the villages who were giving information to the attackers after every community security meeting while there were others sabotaging resistance efforts by diverting funds they were given for feeding the militia fighting in the bushes. The family head of the hamlet where the displaced persons had taken refuge said any help that any group could give to the displaced persons would be most welcome as his family was carrying a great burden of feeding several displaced families.

**Visiting Adaka and Adeke**

We then went to see for ourselves the affected communities with one of the
residents as our guide. Along the Naka Road, at the Adaka Methodist Church junction, we could see the carcasses of dead cows in the bushes but were wary of going closer to investigate. This area is roughly 9-10km from the modern market. Our guide said that we could not drive beyond Adaka further along the Naka Road as there were reports that the attackers would sometimes hide up in the trees and shoot at oncoming vehicles and persons. He reported that anyone planning to go to Naka had to go through Aliade.

Our tour revealed the following:

Illustration 5: Deserted homesteads in the Adaka and Adeke communities

On our way out of Adaka, we ran into some of the Adaka community members who sat by the roadside keeping watch.

Illustration 6: Some of the yam seedlings burnt in Adaka village

They lamented the government’s inability to protect them. We were further informed that the missing man’s full name is John Anule and were told that he worked at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
We dropped off our guide and went back into the town – sobered by what we had seen. Little did we know there was more to come.

**A Detour (WARNING: GRAPHIC IMAGES)**

Just as we had turned off the Naka Road and were approaching the Railway Bypass (barely 5 minutes later), we got a call from our guide saying that John's decomposing corpse had just been found by his brothers.

We raced back to our guide's drop off point to pick up the guide and John’s afore-mentioned brother, Tersoo. They led us to one of the hamlets along Naka Road where we found John's relatives digging a grave. We had expected to see John’s corpse by the graveside but were told that he was found elsewhere but could not be carried to the site since his body was so decomposed – his relatives would have to get plastic bags to transport his remains. We were taken to where John’s body was found – about a kilometre or less away from New Covenant School. The smell of decaying flesh was overpowering. The area was deserted and there was a deathly silence. It dawned on us that we could be in danger. We quickly piled back into the car and made our way back to the grave site.

![Illustration 7: John's friends digging his grave](image)

We asked for John’s picture and were informed by the family that John’s wife had the pictures and was on her way to the burial site. We went along with John’s brother and met with her near the place where she had gone for refuge, got a picture of John and took her to the burial site.
Illustration 8: John's mutilated corpse

Illustration 9: John Anule
She told us her story. Their sixth marriage anniversary was coming up in April (2014) and as they had no children and they had been consulting a doctor for help in their conceiving a baby. She told us the following:

My name is Judith. On Monday morning, my husband took me to the hospital and after we saw the doctor, the doctor told my husband not to go back to his homestead (in Adaka) that Monday night and told him (John) to leave the homestead and stay with me where I have been staying. John replied that he could not leave his home unguarded. The doctor was insistent and told John to leave behind everything as I was in town and come into town for his safety. John smiled as the doctor kept repeating the warning.

We left and John started saying he was hungry. I asked him to come back to where I was staying and eat something but John said that he could not leave our home unguarded, took me nearby to where I was staying, gave me transport fare and then took a taxi bike back to our home. He then said he was going to our home to pack a bag and met our pastor on his way. The pastor offered to escort John to our home and help with him with the bag. They went to the home (presumably on the pastor’s bike), got the bag and then the pastor said he would escort to a meeting and come back for the bike. My husband sat around Tionsha and called me to say that Fulani had killed many people. He said that they had killed many many people. He was speaking to me and then got up and left. After he left, one of our neighbours was around there and was calling to say he saw the militia who were fighting and shooting the attackers. He kept calling to give us reports of the fighting and then said he could not see John any more. After a while, he told them to tell me to try John’s number. Once he said this, I called and then I started crying. I knew the Fulani had got him. Someone else took the handset from me and called and it was the Fulani who picked up. And it is them (Fulani) who have been speaking every time on the phone. Every time I call, it goes through but I cannot speak Hausa so someone else takes the phone from me to speak to the Fulani. When we ask them where John is, they say John went to look after the cattle or they will say John was caught trying to rustle their cattle and that is why they caught him. The last thing I remember my husband saying to me is that Tiv people are also killing the Fulani well and their cows. That is the last thing he said to me. I last spoke to him on Monday evening around after 5pm.

We stopped asking questions as we saw that it was too traumatising to keep getting her to repeat the story over and over. We took John’s wife to the grave site but advised against her viewing the body as it was too decomposed. She broke down after she saw the grave being dug and we escorted her back into the main town.
## Chronology Of Attacks In 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of victims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 3</td>
<td>Ambe-Madaki, Sanga LGA, Kaduna</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 3</td>
<td>Shurun, Mangu LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>Taraba</td>
<td>1 (Joshua Adah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>January 27</td>
<td>Yangal-Fadan, Zango-Kataf LGA, Kaduna</td>
<td>8 (12 others injured)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Nwonko, Wukari LGA, Taraba</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Egba, Agatu LGA, Benue</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>April 20</td>
<td>Donga LGA, Taraba</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>8 villages in Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Shengev, Gwer West LGA, Benue</td>
<td>8 (100s displaced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>May 18 – 19</td>
<td>Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>May 24</td>
<td>Ukura, Gafa, Per, Tse-Gusa; all are villages and *+refugee camps in Logo LGA, Benue</td>
<td>100+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>July 4</td>
<td>Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>July 8</td>
<td>Dananacha, Gassol LGA, Taraba</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>July 11</td>
<td>Dananacha, Gassol LGA, Taraba</td>
<td>4 (20 others injured)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>July 12</td>
<td>Kofar Gwari, Kokona LGA, Nasarawa</td>
<td>3 (2 others injured)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>July 14</td>
<td>Degari, Gassol LGA, Taraba</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>July 17</td>
<td>Katsina Ala, Benue</td>
<td>13 (including Atoza Hidan, a PDP official)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>July 19</td>
<td>Kofar Gwari, Kokona LGA, Nasarawa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>July 31</td>
<td>Ropp, Plateau</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>August 21</td>
<td>Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>August 28</td>
<td>Fan-Nding Road, Plateau</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>August 30</td>
<td>Dorong, Foron LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>August 30</td>
<td>Jol, Plateau</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>August 31</td>
<td>Tanti, Bokkos LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>5 (1 infant injured)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>Bachit, Riyom LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>Sho-Barkin Ladi Road, Barkin Ladi LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>3 (2 others injured)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>September 6</td>
<td>Kortse, Gassol LGA, Taraba</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>September 6</td>
<td>Riyom LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>Kwi, Riyom LGA, Plateau</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>September 10</td>
<td>Asema Pever, Gassol LGA, Taraba</td>
<td>1 (dead child was 2 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>September 12</td>
<td>Sarkin Kudu, Ibi LGA, Taraba</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the tabulated attacks, which were tabulated simply because of the casualties, there have been major attacks in Atakkad in Southern Kaduna, where villagers were displaced from 16 villages; Tse-Agbulu, Tse-Atakpa and Tse-Abichi, all in Benue State where many were wounded and dispossessed of their belongings; Ropp, Gwol, Barkin Ladi LGA of Plateau State and Jol in Riyom LGA of the same state which saw the destruction of crops by herdsmen; and Sho, in Barkin Ladi LGA of Plateau State, where villagers and the Mobile Police put up a fight, forcing the attackers to flee. However, SBM was not allowed back into Sho, because our guides deemed it unsafe.

**Excerpts Of The Interview With Muhammad Bello, Secretary General, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria**[6]

**What in your opinion is the cause of the conflict**

It is a conflict basically about resources. Now, it is a conflict about resources, access to pasture, the issue of water and the issue of access to these resources.

The conflicts have been there since time in memorial, the conflicts between corps breeders and farmer. But of recent, you know, there are infusion of you know, legal issues, constitutional issues, infusion of religion, infusion of other actors in the dispute, and then you know, the whole dispute has now become module up.

This is a conflict between two cousins, but really, it because of the infiltration of other issues in the matter. You know now, it has taken shape of either it comes in the form of religion or it comes in the form of ethnic identity or it comes in the form of geographical identity, but those of us who are active in the sector always insist that look, by the time you filter out all these infusions that you have, the primary dispute is about resources and it is a developmental challenge that can be addressed not through politics or through religion but through geography.

**Why have the Government failed to address the herdsmen and farmers conflict?**

The government has failed to address the issue because livestock development...
has been neglected for a while, you know agriculture itself has suffered tremendously because when Nigeria discovered oil, you know, the centre of financial derivation resource moved away from agriculture to oil, and then you can have people who can come to Abuja and the sit down and at the end of the month, federal government will just, you know, give them their share from the oil sales and everybody goes home. So agriculture itself was neglected. Livestock being a company of agriculture, also suffered most and the producers in the livestock sector also suffered most, so this is a combination of years of neglect of these actors in this area. Now because of that neglect, or because people just gross over these issues, now it has come out in the kind of things that we have been telling government and policy maker all these years, that unless you address these development challenges you will have these kind of disputes

Now you have people who are coming in with arms and ammunititions, you know, anarchy who try to feast on it, then you have even the issue of even religion people trying to draw a line between, okay saying, these set of producers are from this religion or that set of producers are from that religion, then you have this kind of things. So it is something that has been brewing for a quite a long time.

If you look at particularly in Northern Nigeria since 1965 when the Northern Nigeria government created the grazing areas and dedicated these grazing areas to cattle because that time the centre of economic activity was agriculture and everybody was interested in it but from 1965 to 2005 or even 2013, you know, things have changed tremendously and agriculture, it is now that people are even appreciating that we should go back to agriculture because Nigeria as a food producing nation has become a net food importer and we are tying our economic lives and we are even tying our livelihood to the economic benefit of another country, why should it be like that?

**Why is the grazing reserve bill not gaining traction in the National Assembly?**

The bill before the National Assembly, you know both the Senate and the House of Representative is for the bill to create a commission, you know that will manage stockrooms and grazing reserves in Nigeria The point we have been making is, look, agriculture has transcended, you know, local government and state government it has now move to a level whereby the federal government has to intervene. There are issues that should be addressed. You don't expect a local government or a state government to address issues that border on international obligations of the federal government of Nigeria. Why for example, do we have people from other countries coming into Nigeria, what roads are they coming through, and where are they going to stay.

Now apart from that, there is the issue of the grazing reserves that were created by the federal government, who should manage them, they invest in them, the develop them. So, why we have saddled an agency of government with huge responsibility without a corresponding increase in the capacity to manage that responsibility? Incidentally Nigeria is almost the largest livestock
producer in West Africa, but its only in Nigeria, almost all these other counties have ministries of livestock. In Nigeria livestock is just a unit in a department in the federal ministry of agriculture and looking at what livestock have become and what livestock producers have become and the economic activities that is derived from livestock and the conflicts that come along with it, now we feel it is absolutely necessary to have, you know a department or an agency at the federal level to manage the issues of livestock.

**Who are the Rustlers?**

A lot of people don’t even understand the concept of cattle rustling. Cattle rustlers are people who come and steal cattle at gun point or at a violent level, you know, not necessary at got point but at violent level, you know, to take away cattle belonging to either agro-pastoralist or pastoralist or even big time farmers. The security agencies are just coming into terms with this issue of cattle rustling because it is an offence that has just emerge of recent very big because of the huge increase of population, urban areas and consumption patter of people. By the time you don't address this issue of cattle rustling, then you have people who are bringing in small arms and ammunitions because they feast on these conflicts. So, this is what we are saying, cattle rustling has emerged so strongly of recent.

The biggest problem is that HEART identification system in Nigeria has collapse, from the mid 1980s up till now, HEART identification system has collapse. Prior to now, you know, if you are going about with cow, you know, you use to have an identification system because you use to pay what we use to call in Northern Nigeria "jankilida" that is the cattle tax. The cattle tax will identify the cows as belonging to you but now that cattle tax is gone and there is no HEART identification system in place to replace it. What is essential is, you give unto Caesar and take something in return. We are not shy of the fact that pastoralist should ordinarily pay cattle tax on their own cattle, and in return, government will give them certain things in return, government will give them incentives, government will vaccinate their house, government will give them grazing area. If you are going to provide these facilities, no HAGER in Nigeria will say, okay look, we shouldn't, we should just walk around free but by the time you don't have these things, its very difficult for you to ask a HAGER, you know to pay tax, whereas he gets nothing in return, probably if you are taking tomorrow he will just migrate to the other area but in this bill that we have now provided, you know, even the management of the grazing areas that will be created or that will be taking over under this bill, it has a contributory scheme that the people who are settling there should contribute towards the development and management of those grazing reserves.

**Solving it at all**

Policy makers needs to focus on the real producers, you know, the major challenge is the rural producers both livestock producers and agricultural producers are neglected. Policy is shaped by people in the cities. Even if you look at the media in Nigeria today, you know, 75 percent or even 80 percent of all the newspaper columns and article are dedicated to the issue of politics,
politics, politics and politics. You don't have people, you know, most of the papers will just have a day's pull out of agriculture or you know a weekly things.

You don't focus on it but we should understand that, you know, for us as a nation, you know to survive, we need food security, and if we inadequate food security, you will have the political insecurity that is shaping the perception of the media, that is the kind of thing and unless we address the challenges that are facing people in the rural area, people who are the real producers of food in Nigeria, you know, this kind of conflict inevitably will affect people in the cities.
The Spill-On Effect Of The Conflict

Lagos, which is the commercial nerve of Nigeria with an estimated population of about 20 million people, depends greatly on farm produce from other states. What many Lagosians are unaware of is that majority of these products are sourced from the Middle Belt. The continuous communal clashes in the region has greatly affected the production of food there, and distribution to other parts of Nigeria, is being adversely affected. The negative effect of the Middle Belt crisis is the constant hike in the price of commodities such as tomatoes, yam, onions, pepper, beans and beef, staples which originate mainly from the North-Central, or have to pass through the North-Central en route Lagos.

Illustration 10: The rise of food prices in Lagos for specific units of some common food items

Lagos dwellers, farm produce consumers and sellers have constantly lamented on the high cost of feeding in the state. However, based on interviews with people involved in the supply of these products to Lagos, and people who sell in the markets, tougher times are ahead for Lagosians if the situation is not urgently addressed.

While many traders blamed the current situation of constant increases in price on the shortage of food staples on the activities of insurgents and communal clashes where these items are produced, others attributed the hikes to the high cost of transportation, illegal extortion at various checkpoints en route Lagos by police, double taxation from both local and state governments, and multiple charges at the depot.

Ketu-Mile 12 is one of the main markets in Lagos where food staples coming in from various part of the country are offloaded.

During a visit to the tomato depot in Ketu, we observed that the prices of
tomatoes have increased by at least 225 per cent in the last two years, and in some cases, as high as 360 per cent. The variation in the prices during that time frame can only be described as shocking. A small basket of tomatoes (roughly 3kg), which used to sell for between N5,000 and N6,000 in 2013, now sells for N18,000. The big basket (roughly 15kg), which was sold for N12,000 now costs between N26,000 and N27,000 depending on one's bargaining power.

Mrs Adenike Balogun, a tomato seller in Ketu market was gracious to shed more light on the situation of things in the market. According to her, her major source of tomatoes supply comes from Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna and Kano.

"The reason we used to be given most times by the farmers is low harvest as a result of heavy down pour of rain and most times, the high demand of some particular farm produce when it's out of season. When this happens, it tends to cause shortage in supply, the effect is a price hike as demand is more and supply is low.

"But these days we have started hearing other reasons, and now it is no longer low harvest, but no harvest. Today it is Boko Haram, tomorrow it is farmer and herdsmen, next tomorrow it is another fight. The security unrest in the north has made so many farmers abandon their farms and the effect is that farm produce will be low which directly affects the price as we depend more on the farm produce that comes from the north."

According to her, farmers lament a lot about illegal extortion in various checkpoints.

"Farmers use to tell us that, when bringing in their produce from the North into Lagos, they get extorted by policemen at all checkpoints and to make matter worst, local and state government also levy various kind of charges on them."

Mrs Adele, a tomato and yam seller in Oyingbo Market, shared her view, and it was not too different from that of Mrs Balogun. She said that as a tomato and yam seller, she relies solely on produce from the Middle Belt and the North.

"I get my produce from the Mile 12 depot of which 85 per cent of tomatoes and yam that are offloaded in Mile 12 comes from Benue and some other parts of the North like Nasarawa and Kaduna."

"The prices of tomatoes in the last two years has risen badly. The prices per basket two years ago use to be around N5,000 and N9,000 but now, tomatoes sells for around N15,000 in Mile 12 and in Oyingbo, it can go for as much as N17,000 or more.

"Same things has been experienced on yams. Two years ago, a tuber of yam for a family of 6 sells for about N150 and N170, a maximum of N200 but now, the case is different, yams is now seen as farm produce that only the rich can afford. The same size tuber of yam now sells for N700 of which two years ago,
₦700 will buy 4 tubers. Four set of yams now cost ₦2,500 or ₦2,600 in few cases, more."

Mrs Adele cited various factors that has lead to the rise in price of tomatoes, yam and other farm staples as the unending security issues where these produce comes from.

"The security challenges in some states in the North and the Middle Belt is one factor. Another factor is the cost of transporting the produce is high coupled with the fact that our roads are not motorable."

"Another factor is that, tomatoes are perishable produce and the means in which they are transported doesn't preserve it, many get spoilt along the way and on getting to the market, the good ones are not much, which in all case, demand outplays supply."

She said when prices are very high or demand outstrips supply, they look to supplies from other parts of the country, and in extreme cases, even outside Nigeria, with Port Novo in the Republic of Benin being the most likely external source.

A yam seller in Balogun Market, Lagos Island, who simply gave his name Abdul told us that even in the north, the prices of foodstuff have gone up. He said so many farmers have been made redundant causing a big shortage in supply.

"Farmers have abandoned their farms. Many farmers are even migrating to other states to become security men. Nobody is happy about the situation but that's the case we find ourselves at the moment.

"We are appealing to the federal government to do something about the situation as it is affecting sales and cost of farm produce, most especially yam."

At Iddo Market, we met the same response.

Ado Bala said, "Before now, I pay ₦4,500 to bring in 120 yams from Abuja and ₦5,500 from Kaduna but now, transporting in same yams from Abuja cost me ₦8,500 and ₦10,000 from Kaduna."

He attributed the increase in transportation to the unstable price of fuel and security issues in the North.

A seller who simply gave his name as Sule, said that the current demand for yams in Lagos has surpassed supply.

"More than 7 lorries of yams are regularly offloaded here in the market but that's not the case any more. So many people have money to buy but the supply is not much."
Grazing Areas - To Be Or Not To Be?

A majority of our respondents in the Middle Belt think that grazing lands will bring about peace, but a smaller number are prepared to give up their own land as part of these grazing lands, a classic example of ‘Not in my back yard-ism’. However, the establishment and enforcement of grazing routes for the migrating herdsmen may be the best chance for restoring law and order to those states in the short term. These routes will have to be agreed upon by all stakeholders and local authorities will have to enforce them and apply necessary sanctions to violators.

However, a lot of soul searching, and honest conversation will have to be done before this can happen. This must also be done with a view to exploring a much longer term solution, else we will return to square one in a few short years after the grazing area solution is implemented.

On February 21, 2014, it was alleged the Tor u Adeke took money from some herdsmen and ran away. The herdsmen came to the village and killed his brother, then took his brother's handset and called him with it. They were later informed that the chief was back and they came and started shooting. People ran, soldiers were deployed, and this particular attack hardened the position of the Tor Tiv, who told then President Goodluck Jonathan that not an inch of his people’s land would be conceded for grazing reserves[4]. With hardened attitudes such as this, grazing areas may end up being taken off the table as a viable solution to this crisis.

It must be pointed out though, that grazing areas are a short term solution that can be speedily implemented, but must be coupled with the restoration of law and order in the region by the government. Following that, and because the herdsmen are nomadic, special, mobile courts will have to be set up for adjudication.

Confidence in the neutrality of authorities, and in their ability to dispense justice is critical for all sides of this conflict.

A More Lasting Solution

This will require vision and investment in infrastructure that must be sustained over a period taking a holistic view of the problem. If properly implemented, it can unlock new industry in the North and contribute significantly to tackling unemployment in the region.

The first step is liaise with traditional rulers in the North to designate land for communal ranches. The government will then have to make the investment to water these ranches via irrigation projects which will ensure that dry season grazing can be done in the region. These ranches can be administered through the cattle-rearer organisations such as Miyetti Allah. It will have the multiple effect of making rustling a lot more difficult as herdsmen and their cattle are concentrated in easily protected locations as well as giving opportunity to do
Better agricultural extension work which will help the herdsmen improve meat and milk yields through improved breeding practices. It will help with integrating the herdsmen into society and also identifying and dealing with those who masquerade as herdsmen to perpetrate violence.

Further infrastructure such as abattoirs, veterinary clinics and transportation services can be sited close to the ranches which the herdsmen can take advantage of to improve the herding business.

All of these will provide employment within the available skill set in the North, ensuring that even those without Western Education can be gainfully employed and schools can then be sited close to the ranches to encourage the herdsmen to send their children to school. Such holistic thinking is important to solving the problem after the current violence has been dealt with.
Conclusion

At SBM Intelligence, we have only thus far, done a tiny bit, and have barely scratched the surface of the problem. A lot more research is needed, and we, like any other Nigerian will like to find out the full extent of what is going on in our country's Middle Belt.

Nigeria's Constitution opens with a phrase placing this responsibility squarely on the government's shoulders. In any decent society, the government must have a monopoly of violence. Where herdsmen see violently wiping out ethnic groups as the only recourse they are willing to pursue for whatever grievances they have, the legitimacy of the government in those areas is called into question. This government must assert itself and respond strongly by mobilizing every security agency in its arsenal to not only protect the lives of the ethnic groups in the North Central but also punish any herdsmen who resorts to violence with the full weight of the government. These herdsmen must be made to know that to live in the Nigerian state, you must abide by Nigerian laws and the only recourse you have for perceived grievance is to appeal to the government via the laid out justice system.

It is also important that the government adopts a holistic approach to resolving the problem. Whilst the violent excesses of the herdsmen are evident, it is also true that there is a real problem of resource management, desert encroachment, cattle rustling and even Boko Haram violence against herdsmen driving them deeper and deeper into the south. These must be addressed too. However, immediate action to stop the violence, restore law and order and ensure security of lives and property of every Nigerian irrespective of tribe and religion in the North Central region must be the chief concern of the government at the moment.

These things can be sorted out at a round-table between the Benue chiefs and the Fulani. With careful investigation and dialogue this can be resolved. On a larger scale, the government has to do something. The Shagari administration started some work around national grazing areas. This work should be continued. The Land Use Act gives the government powers to relocate people and they could do so and compensate them and clear out land for grazing.

It is imperative that the government takes action now for the implications are far reaching. The region being Nigeria’s agricultural heartland is the key to food security. The country cannot be on the path to agricultural rebirth if the lands on which the plants are to be cultivated are not being farmed, or where they are being farmed cannot be evacuated or transported to the big markets in Southern Nigeria. The negative effect is the general price hike in staples such as yam, beans, tomatoes, pepper and onions. In a city like Lagos, where our researchers conduct regular surveys of food prices, we have noted that tomato has witnessed a 300% price increase in just 3 years. With food occupying a significant portion of inflation computation, Nigeria is unlikely to sustain its single digit inflation rate.
Finally, the domestic press has also not lived up to its responsibility to report with accuracy and craft conversation that will put pressure on the government to act. Save for a few, the country’s human rights activists have been silent. The international press has been uninterested so far – the more exciting Boko Haram or Niger Delta has all their attention. This is a call for a searchlight to be beamed on the North Central with such focus that it will force the government to act. A humanitarian crisis is ongoing, as is an ethnic cleansing motivated by a battle for resources. We are one step away from a full blown genocide in the North Central of Nigeria. The time to act to stem this tide is now.
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