



NEWS SITUATION TRACKING - NIGERIA

AGRO-PASTORALIST CONFLICT Vol. 2

Location: Benue State in North-Central Zone, Nigeria.

Issue: Armed Attacks by Suspected Herdsmen.

Date: January, 2018

COMMUNITY PROFILING

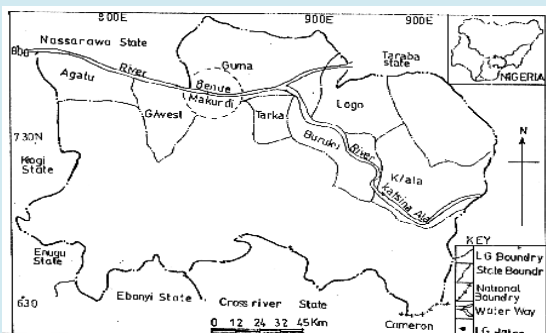
CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS

INCIDENT PROFILING

Population: Benue State has a population of 4,253,641 people (2006 population census). Recent 2017 estimate project a total population of 7,992,784.

Basic Demography and Geography of Hotspots:

The State shares borders with Nassarawa, Taraba, Kogi, Enugu, Ebonyi and Cross State as well as with the Republic of Cameroun. There are 23 Local Government Areas in the State. Most of the communities and Local Government Areas (LGA's) (Agatu, Gwer-West, Guma, Makurdi, Tarka, Buruku, Katsina-Ala and Logo).



Pic 1: Graphic illustration of border Local Government Areas along River Benue.¹

Ethnicity: Ethnic groups in the State include; Tiv, Idoma, Iggede,

Direct Actors:

Suspected Armed Herdsmen

Affected Persons:

Residents of communities in Guma and Logo LGA's, Livestock Guards and Police Officers.

Interested Actors:

Federal Government of Nigeria, Benue State Government, Nassarawa State Government, Taraba State Government, Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Nigerian Army, Nigerian Air Force, State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Red Cross, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Traditional/Religious Leaders, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), Northern Elders Forum, Civil Society Organisations, United Nations, ECOWAS, African Union.

The farmer-herders conflict which spans decades continue to dominate public discourse due to its frequency and geographical spread across the nation coupled with the influx of nomadic herdsmen from neighbouring countries across the Sahelo-Sahara corridor. The North-Central zone- the epicenter of agro-pastoralist crisis recorded huge loss of lives and livelihood with Benue State worst affected in the zone. The quest for territorial control of arable land for grazing activities led to destruction of farmlands. Urbanisation also led to farmers encroaching existing grazing routes leading to communal conflicts. Revenge killings emanating from alleged theft/killing of livestock and sexual violence especially rape, attributed to herdsmen heightened insecurity in the affected States. More so, the conflicts between farming communities and nomadic herdsmen became more intense and destructive with the acquisition of weapons by suspected Herders resulting in high fatality and internal displacement. The farmers' communities have also organized themselves into a Union of armed hunters thereby heightening tension, attacks and counter attacks.

Between 1st - 8th of January 2018, suspected armed Herdsmen carried out coordinated attacks, killing about 90 people including pregnant women, children and two Police Officers while 56 others were injured². The fatality figures are expected to increase as several persons have been declared missing during the incidents. Amongst the deceased were 20 Livestock Guards who were deployed to implement the anti-grazing law. Affected communities in the LGA's include; Nongov, Saave, Tomatar, Tse Akor, Umanger, Nzorov communities in Guma LGA and Ayilamo,

¹ <https://encryptedtbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:AND9GcRbW88UNmGPZI2T6xKEFDqQek19NKDA1VHUvuBrhVhsPW4596YL> (Graphic illustration of border Local Government Areas along River Benue)

² Data generated from WANEP's National Early Warning System with the support from field monitors/Network member Organisation (Civil Organisations Research Advocacy and Funding Initiatives Development (CORAFID) in Benue State.

Etulo, Abakpa, Jukun, Hausa, Akweya and Nyifon. The Tivs' constitute the predominant ethnic group in 14 LGA's, while Idoma and Igede dominate nine LGA's in the State

Significance of the State: Benue State is referred to as the 'Food Basket of the Nation' due to the vast agricultural potential of the State.

River Benue is the second largest river in Nigeria. The economic importance of River Benue is amplified by the fertile land along the bank of the river which supports farming (including dry season farming through irrigation), cattle rearing due to its green vegetation and the extraction of sandy soil for building and construction purposes. Also, an untapped potential of the River Benue include; electricity generation.

Economy: About 80% of the State Population are involved in Agriculture with focus on farming and fishing around the river Benue. Major crops produced in the State include yam, cassava, rice, maize, sorghum, soya bean, beni-seed, groundnut. The State accounts for over 70% of Nigeria's Soya beans production.

Available minerals includes: Limestone, Kaolin, Glass sand, Barites, Brick clay, Lead/Zinc, Coal, Gypsum and Salt.

Politics: All Progressive Congress (APC) is the ruling party while the opposition party is the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the State.

Religion: The major religion in the State state includes Christianity, Islam and Traditional belief.

Turan, Agba Uko, Tse Aga, Meeme, Akenawa, Tse Toradi, Ukemberagya and Tsarev communities in Logo LGA. The January 2018 attack led to massive internal displacements of about 80,000 people who are currently taking refuge at Daudu, Gbajimba, Agasha in Guma LGA and Tse-Ginde, Ugba and Anyiin in Logo LGA respectively.

The attack was the first major incident after the enactment of the "Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law" on the 1st of November, 2017 in Benue State. It was described as a 'retaliatory attack' by the leadership of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) for the alleged theft of 1000 cows, while Herders migrated from Benue to Nassarawa State. Following the killings in Benue State, series of demonstrations were conducted, one of which degenerated into violence resulting in an alleged death of 3 persons with 7 others injured by stray bullets from security operatives deployed to disperse the protesters. More so, in a bid to prevent widespread carnage, security operatives successfully prevented attempts of reprisal attacks by Benue youths on Hausa/Fulani communities in the State. Eight (8) suspected herdsmen in connection with the January 1st attack were arrested and being investigated.³

The spill over effect of killings in Benue State was witnessed in neighbouring Nassarawa State resulting in the displacement of about 18,000 people for fear of possible attacks in the State. Additional reports suggest that nine persons were murdered in Nassarawa State by suspected herdsmen fleeing from Benue State. This has triggered series of accusations between the Benue and Nassarawa State Governors, on the identity and location of the masterminds of the recent attacks.

The inability of security operatives to prevent repeated attacks by suspected armed Herders have fuelled doubts on the effectiveness of both National and State security apparatus to curtail the menace of the attacks in the State.

The crisis attracted diverse reactions and consultations among varied interest groups, State Governors and security agencies aimed at tackling reprisals and spill over effects to other States in the nation. The proposal by the Federal Government put forward for the creation of cattle colonies as a means of containing the pervasive crisis was opposed by the Benue State Government.

However, in compliance with the Presidential Order, the Nigerian Government has deployed security agencies including Military Personnel and Police to Benue, Nassarawa and Taraba States with recent experiences of similar attacks. Following the 13th January 2018 attack by alleged irate Hausa/Fulani youths in Wurukum and Wadata areas, Markurdi LGA of Benue State, during which 3 persons were killed, several others injured with vehicles and houses destroyed and burnt down respectively, the Benue State government has imposed a dusk to dawn curfew to prevent further killings. Reports however reveal that violence started after a Fulani man was hit dead by a vehicle in Wurukum market.

Chronology of attacks by suspected Herders in January 2018 includes:

- 1st January 2018, attack by suspected Herders that killed 2 persons including a Traditional Ruler in Southern Kaduna and his pregnant wife and injured another at his residence in Arak town, Sanga LGA of Kaduna State;
- 3rd January 2018, attack resulted in the death of one female farmer with over 200 acres of farmland destroyed in Arodaye community, Akure-South LGA of Ondo State. The attackers also reportedly destroyed and set ablaze several nearby farmlands (Cocoa, Cassava, Cocoyam and Vegetable) in the LGA;
- 5th January 2018, attack in Lau LGA of Taraba State, reportedly

³ <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/benue-killings-police-confirms-arrest-of-8-herders.html>

killing about 60 persons;

-7th January 2018, violent clash between suspected Herdsmen and a female farmer following an alleged destruction of crops on a farmland belonging to the female farmer at Upper Agbarho area, Ughelli LGA of Delta State. The female farmer and suspected herders allegedly engaged in stone throwing, which resulted in the death of the herdsman;

-7th January 2018, attack on suspected herdsmen for allegedly raping 2 women on their farm in Ughelli axis in Delta State. This resulted in the death of one herdsman with another injured in the incident;

-12th January 2018, attack by suspected herdsmen that killed 10 persons in Dangaji and Ungwan Gajere villages, Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna State. Several persons were allegedly injured with undisclosed number of houses set ablaze.

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OPPORTUNITIES/RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Federal Government should work with the National Assembly to strengthen its strategy to establish cattle colonies to curb farmer-herders' crisis in Nigeria. This effort would complement existing State laws that mitigates the cycle of farmer/herder conflict in Nigeria.
- The security agencies such as the Police, the Nigeria Civil Defence Corps and other appropriate security agencies should provide work towards providing an integrated security framework that promotes civil-security relationship to forestall further attack or crisis.
- Appropriate Civil Society Organisations and security institutions should work with the Police and Nigeria Civil Defence Corps to improve existing community policing strategies at the community and Local Government levels across the country to enhance informed response to risks of agro-pastoral conflicts in Nigeria.
- The National Orientation Agency should work with CSOs and corporate institutions to develop, disseminate peace messages in local languages and English on tolerance, respect for existing National and State laws on transhumance as well as community dialogue to forestall a recurrence of herders attack in Benue State and other high risk areas in the country.
- The Federal Government and Development Partners should provide appropriate humanitarian assistance to affected families including trauma healing and rehabilitation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).
- Consideration should be given by Government towards the creation and empowerment of a 'North Central Development Commission' as a post-conflict rehabilitation strategy to discourage further reprisal attacks.
- The Federal Government in partnership with Development Partners and Civil Society should develop and implement a comprehensive program on arms control with a view to manage the proliferation of illegal arms and production of locally made firearms and light weapons in Benue state and the country.