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An Assessment of the Effects of Communal Conflicts on Production and Income Levels of People Living in Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas of Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study has examined the effects of communal conflicts on rural economic activities in Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas of Taraba state. The study aimed to assess the effects of communal conflicts on rural development in Takum and Ussa LGAs, whose aims have been achieved through these objectives (i) To document the rate of damages to lives and residential segregation (ii) To identify the causes of the crisis (iii) To assess the effects on production and income levels of the rural people. In all, the worse affected areas of Takum, Rogo, Lissam and Rufu were grided into 40 squares, 38 of which were directly on the area and in each of the grids, 10 questionnaires were randomly administered on individuals bringing the total to 380 questionnaires designed to elicit information on causes of the crisis, its effects on production and income levels of the people, the extent of residential segregation and damages to lives and property were administered to randomly selected members of the society. The study has identified the causes of crisis to include poverty, chieftaincy tussle, boundary adjustment, youth unemployment, among others. The study found that robbery, vandalism, house breaking and social segregations were perpetrated mostly by the youths and are the aftermath of the crisis which resulted from perceived feelings of marginalization, claims of unequal access to economic, social and political opportunities in the area. This crisis in the area due to its persistence and recurrent nature, has also led to damages of lives and property and decrease in people's economic activities which calls for in-depth study to the problem. Also, the study found that throughout the crisis years, there was a decline in the level of agricultural investment/yield, income levels of the people of the area, and increased the level of social and residential segregation and damages to lives and property amounting to billions of Naira. This research concluded that for any meaningful development, to take place in the area, a number of policies that will check conflicts and address the problems of the people have to be put in place by governments at all levels and even the communities. which should include; provision of basic social amenities, provision of job opportunities, the establishment of skills acquisition centers and the implementation of the various committee reports set up at different times to look into the crisis. These measures, the study posits will bring about lasting peace that will guarantee progress and development of the people and their economy.

1. Introduction

Conflict has been a reality of human existence since pre historic times, due to struggles between various factions of the society to satisfy their interests and needs. According to Alemika (2002), conflict is a product of antagonistic interests between two or more opposing forces or groups within the society.

The last few decades have witnessed a lot of violent communal conflicts throughout Nigeria. Most of these conflicts have a long history and they keep resurfacing at all time, thereby creating conflicts zones all over the country. Integrated Regional Information Net-Work (IRIN) Report, (1999) asserts that thirty-one conflicts areas have developed in Nigeria in the last ten years. Some of them include: Jukun and Tiv Conflicts, in Taraba and Benue States, 1998 and 1999; Ijaw and Itsekiri Crisis in Delta State, 1998 and 1999; Ife and Modakeke Conflicts in Osun States, 1999; The Zangon-Kataf Crisis in Kaduna State, 1992; Ilaje Ijaw conflict in Ondo State; among others.

Several factors have been responsible for conflicts generation, these factors vary with the nature and location of conflicts. But most conflicts in the middle belt region of Nigeria have almost the same causes or sources due to several small tribes who want to identify with their cultures, protect their political interest, religion and ethnicity. It is difficult to isolate which conflict is primarily engendered by economic, ethnic, religious and political competitions (Alemika, 2002). The report of internal conflicts by the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, (FMINO 2002) identify the sources/causes of conflicts to be: (i) perceived marginalization (ii) Improper delineation of boundaries, (iii) Seeming insensitivity and slow response of government to security issues, (iv) neglect of responsibilities by leaders at local levels and (v) Over-dependence on government for provision of basic infrastructure. Others are (vi) Increased pressure on land, (vii) Rising influence of settler population, (viii) Fear of political domination, (ix) Unemployment and (x) Poverty.

The Chamba/Jukun and Kuteb conflicts were generated by the interplay of both remote and immediate factors. According to Girei (1977); Gurin (1985); Yawe (1993); Sam-Tsokwa (1998); Aliyu (1998); Andefiki (1999), Lawson (1999); Ahmed (2000); and Isa (2001), chieftaincy tussle, mutual feeling of political domination and other historical factors were the remote causes while the adjustment of the boundary between Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas (LGAs) was attributed to the immediate cause of the 1997 to 1999 conflict. These observers also noted the role of the elites in the area who spread ethnic sentiments to secure local, state and federal government appointments. The manipulations of people along ethnic and religious differences create suspicion and with that, people are unable to face their common adversaries of poverty and underdevelopment (Alemika, 2002).

Rural places have strategic importance to the nation as settlements, custodians of cultures, sources of food and raw materials and markets for manufactured goods and need social amenities such as water, electricity, educational and health facilities, good feeder roads and telecommunication facilities to avert mass movement of the prolific and potent labour force into urban centers. These facilities cannot be put in place in areas that are not only devoid of peaceful co-existence but have been turned into battle fields (Isa, 2001). Rural development, according to Lele (1975) is aimed at improving the standards of the masses residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining. Thus, it is a process of increasing productivity over time, a rise in income and greater purchasing power of the majority of the rural populace.

The regular conflicts over the years have led to the destruction of lives, property worth billions of naira and destruction of basic infrastructural facilities in place thereby worsening the already bad condition of the displaced inhabitants, hence, negating their abilities to relate functionally with their urban counterparts. This great loss cannot be without having negative effect on agricultural production, income levels and a rise in poverty level of the people, consequently stimulating movement of displaced persons to other areas. It is worthwhile to determine the effects of long history of conflicts on the development and the well being of the people in the study area.

2. The Study Population

The population of the study area comprises of Chamba/Jukun and Kuteb tribes who are the inhabitants of Takum and who are engaged in communal conflict. Both tribes have segregated themselves in to small enclaves, sharing the same social amenities. Their socio-economic characteristics are the same; any development activity in the area will have almost similar impact on both communities.

The population of these communities is put at 247, 619 people by the (National Population Commission, 2006). The households surveyed from both tribes are numbered 382.

Households were considered the most suitable population for the study because of their involvement in family up-keeps, participation in the conflicts and involvement in rebuilding the community after conflicts. They share both positive and negative impacts of the conflicts. These population subgroups have witnessed conflicts for the past decade and have made presentations to commissions of inquiries set up by federal, state, and local governments for fact-finding and resolution of the conflicts.

3. Materials and Methods

Structured questionnaires were used to elicit information from various respondents comprising of individuals selected randomly to represent the various households, community leaders and some government officials.

Because of the large size of the study area, the researcher could not administer questionnaires to all households living in the area but resorted to sampling. In each cell of the 38 grids coverage of the study area, ten households were selected randomly to respond to the questionnaires. This was done in order to give equal opportunity for any household to be selected. A total of 382 questionnaires were administered to respondents by the researchers and after one-week interval, 370 questionnaires were retrieved, representing 97% of the returned questionnaires.

Oral interviews were conducted by field assistants under the supervision of the researcher for one week after the questionnaires were delivered and followed by personal observations, which were aimed, to complement data acquired from the field through questionnaires. The interviewers sought information on the causes and effects of conflicts on their socio-economic activities before and after the conflicts.

4. Discussion of Results

The two Local Government Areas have a significant number of their people engaged in agricultural activities. However, the effects of the conflict have spread across all members of the community irrespective of individual occupations.

The dominant occupation of the people is farming; Ali, (2009) categorized the occupations of people in the area and state that over 38 percent of the respondents indicated they were engaged in agricultural activities. This is because the area is conducive for farming activities. Apart from agriculture, the second type of activity in the hierarchy is civil service, with over 23 percent of the respondents engaged in the activity. This is due to the proximity of the areas to their Local Government headquarters that have attracted public servants into staying in all districts of the area. Farming and civil service activities occupy over 51.9 percent of the

population than other activities of the people which include teaching, artisan and business. About 13.1, 4.8 and 8.3 percent of the respondents respectively are found to be engaged in these activities (Ali, 2009).

On the other hand, unemployment and underemployment are relatively high in this area among household heads. Over 8.1 percent of the respondents and most of those orally interviewed indicated they were applicants seeking for employment opportunities. Also, some of the respondents heads are students, about 4.1 percent of respondents indicated so. This group adds up to the number of applicants and it shows a significant number of households that are still dependent in the area. The dependent group makes but little contribution towards wealth creation, though they are known to be engaged in schooling, peasant farming or menial jobs to survive.

Occupation	Before The Crisis		After The Crisis	
	No	%	No	%
Farming	170	45.9	185	50.0
Business	100	27.0	70	18.9
Civil service	33	8.9	33	8.9
Teaching	26	7.0	14	3.8
Artisans	8	2.2	12	3.2
Applicants	15	4.1	50	13.5
Students	14	3.8	10	2.7
Total	370	100	370	100

Table 1: Occupation of Respondents after crisis (Takum)

Source: Field Survey 2012

Oral interviews and personal observations have revealed that so many of the people in the area during the period combined some of these trades as a survival strategy to forestall sufferings in times of failure of a particular trade. Other people whose business infrastructure were razed had to migrate to other trades shortly after the crisis in order to raise the means of resettling themselves back to their main occupations.

As depicted in Table 1, all other trades witnessed a shift downward except that most of the occupations that were worse hit lost their practitioners to farming and artisans at the time, this is because farming needs not much of special skills to practice, those who have more than one skills readily adjusted to the less capital intensive ones which they earlier perceived to be less profitable while the rest were turned applicants by the crisis.

Occupation	Before The Crisis		After The Crisis	
	No.	%	No.	%
Farming	122	33.0	162	44.0
Civil service	100	27.0	96	26.0
Trading	52	14.0	37	10.0
Artisan	22	6.0	19	5.0
Others	74	20.0	56	15.0
Total	370	100	370	100

Table 2: Occupation of Households Heads before and after the crisis (Ussa)

Source: Field Survey 2012

Table 2 shows the adjustment in peoples' activities after the crisis. The aftermath of the crisis was so great that people had to move from one activity to the other to overcome the difficult moment. Comparatively, farming activities increased from 33 percent before the crisis to over 44 percent after the crisis, a percentage change of 11. Apart from farming that experienced increase in activity, trading, artisan and other activities experienced insignificant decline with percentage change of, 1 and 3% respectively. This is because those who were engaged in these activities had lost all they had, including their capital base and had to turn to farming to make "ends-meet." On the other hand, civil service activity has dropped by 1 percent due to insecurity and uncertain situation in the area, which led to the relocation of families of some government officials temporarily to other places.

From Table 2 there is no change in civil service activity in Takum Local Government Area inspite of the crisis compared to the Ussa Local Government Area that recorded a drop of 1%. With large population engaged in subsistence farming, it may be difficult to raise enough income to cater for their needs especially rehabilitation of their homes and as well contribute towards rural development process in general. The crisis itself has retarded and impeded development activities in the area.

4.1. Farmers Output

A severe impact of the crisis was observed in output of farmers. Field Information on output of farmers during the crisis and inter crisis years reveal that farm produce such as rice, maize, sorghum, beans, and groundnut output kept falling during the period. Fig.5.3 shows average annual output of farmers by a combination of major crops over the ten-year period of crisis in the study area.

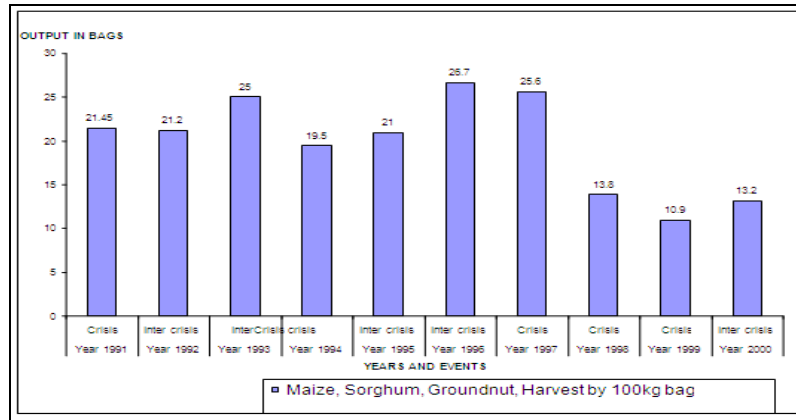


Figure 1: Average Annual Output of Farmers between 1991 and 2000
 Source: Field Survey, 2012

As shown in Fig. 1, the average maximum yield harvest of farmers’ is 29bags of 100kg and the average minimum yield of farmers’ harvest is 10.9 bags of 100kg. There is no significant difference between the harvest during 1991 crisis and inter crisis year harvest of 1992 because the crisis was not too severe and affected only few villages and intensive farming still prevailed in areas not affected by the crisis. During 1993 Inter crisis period, farm harvest was 27bags but increased to 28 bags in 1994 inter crisis year as most people massively went into farming to combat hunger and poverty. Between 1995 and 1996 outputs of farmers dropped from an average of 29 to 26.7bags respectively as a result of the crisis, which was to start the following year. However, resumption of crisis in the later part of 1997 up to1999 shows progressive decline in farm harvest from an average of 26.5bags in 1996 to 13.8bags in 1998 and 10.9 bags in 1999 due to the severity of the crisis. Generally outputs of farmers during post crises years are higher than during crisis years with climatic and other factors held constant.

The crisis was not too severe in the years 1991 and 1992 and people were still able to carry out their normal activities in parts of the Local Government Areas that were relatively crisis-free in spite of the uneasy calm. The efforts put forth by the State Government, the church, Non-Governmental Organizations brought the crisis to an end and people were able to settle down to record better harvests during the inter crisis years of 1993 and 1995.

Sequel to the agitation for the creation of Ussa Local Government Council from Takum in 1996, there was an uneasy calm and power tussle which led to drastic downward trend in yields. In 1997, full-fledged war resumed, and farming and other human activities were very low keyed leading to continuous drop in yields. Fig. 2 gives a graphic illustration of this trend.

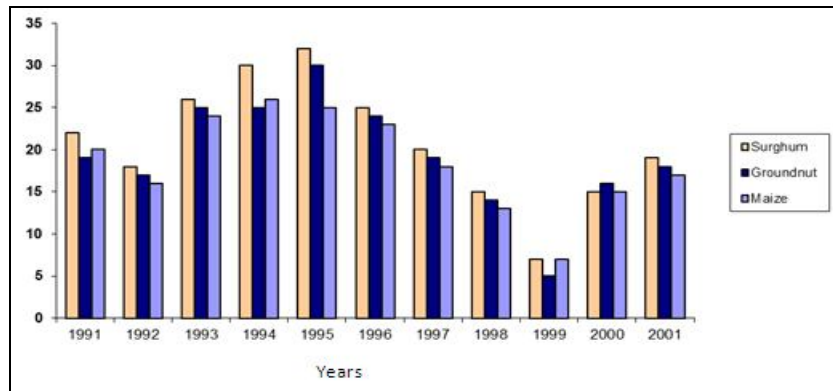


Figure 2: Average yield of selected crops (1991-2000)
 Source: Field survey 2012

From the Figure 2, it can be seen that sorghum yields are better than the other two major crops every year. This is because, being the major staple crop, it is the most widely cultivated. It is better adapted to the soil condition of the area and is able to resist weeds and diseases more than others.

Groundnut recorded the second highest yield for the selected crops because it serves both for local consumption and for income generation, its adaptability to local soils and weather conditions also makes it to be widely cultivated in the area.

Maize is a staple food grown widely in the area too, but has least yield because it needs much fertilizer to thrive and has the least resistance to weeds; diseases, and drought.

The severity of the crisis led to a constant drop in yields of these crops from 1995 until the later part of 1999 when the crisis was halted following peace initiatives of the state government (Bagudu 2003), that yields started picking up again in the year 2000 when most people have been resettled.

4.2. Impact of Crisis on Income Levels of Households

Individuals or households have greater role to play for a successful rural development through their financial contributions, labour and other material resources. The degree of participation therefore, depends on whether the individuals or households have enough resources or ability to meet their needs. The World Bank measures poverty in two ways; the first is by income or expenditure level capable of sustaining a minimum standard of living. The Bank, in its recent report, gives \$370 U. S dollars per capita as the cut-off point for absolute poverty. Human resources development as a dimension of welfare constitutes the second means of measurement. Under stable political environment individuals easily mobilized meager resources towards community development but where crisis are recurrent it becomes impossible to realize this goal. More so, investments in various businesses can only thrive and yield higher effort in a peaceful atmosphere (Kormedi and Merquire 1996).

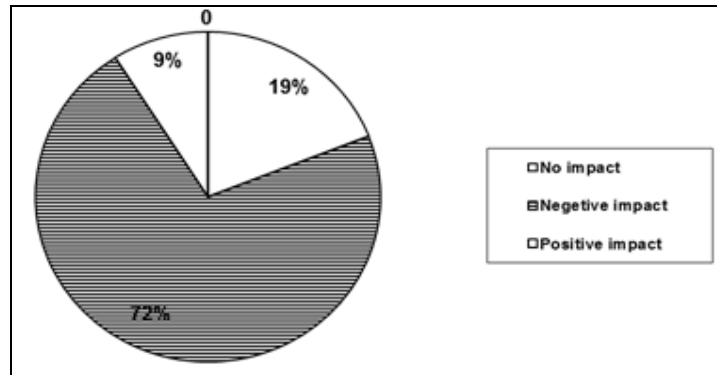


Figure 3: Perceived Impact of crisis on income levels of respondents
Source: Field survey, 2012

Fig. 3 shows the perceived impact of crisis on income levels of households in which about 72 percent of the respondents claim the crises brought a negative impact on their incomes. The consequence of these is that of low standard of living, low investment in business, agriculture and other activities.

The average annual income of households remained low through the instability period. Almost all households' incomes were below poverty level of 1\$Dollar (about ₦135) per day United Nations standard.

Over 72 percent of the respondents claimed that the crisis brought about negative impact on their income levels. They claim that, during the crises they were unable to go on with their normal business activities due to insecurity situation. However, 19 percent of the respondents indicated that the crisis brought some positive impact on their income partly because they were not affected by the crisis. However, 9 percent of the respondents indicated that the crisis had no impact on their income. They are mostly of the group who are capable of moving from one occupation to another.

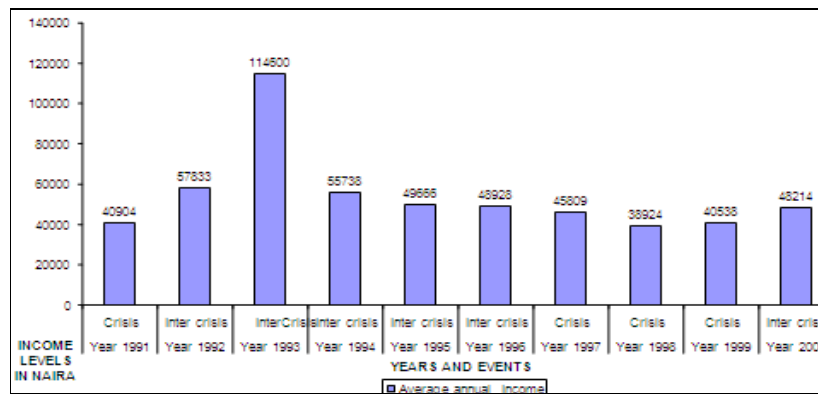


Figure 4: Average Annual Income of Households between 1991 and 2000
Source: Field Survey 202 2012, 2005

As shown in Fig.4, apart from 1992 and 1993, household incomes were below poverty level. But in inter crisis years, incomes were higher. This implies that participation in rural economic activities can be very difficult when crisis prevail. The crisis has therefore, impeded the prospects of rural development by impoverishing the people.

4.3. Impact of Crisis on other Business Activities

Business activities have suffered major setbacks during the crises periods and these have negative impact on economic activities of the area. About five years of reoccurring crises destabilized most businesses and the Local Governments have lost large share of revenue they would have generated from business ventures. For example, the average annual internally generated revenues for the Local Government Areas were as reported in Table 3. Individuals on their own part have experienced low levels of profit in their businesses This has equally reflected on the Local Government revenues adversely

LGAs	Crisis 1991	Inter Crisis 1992	Inter Crisis 1993	Crisis 1994	Inter Crisis 1995	Inter Crisis 1996	Crisis 1997	Crisis 1998	Crisis 1999	Post Crisis 2000
Takum	210, 005	273, 303	3, 333, 575	4, 143, 115	4, 232, 121	5, 011, 171	403, 000	404, 132	3, 412, 117	4, 612, 279
Ussa	-	-	-	-	-	-	355,157	305, 305	3, 106, 309	3, 200, 309
Total	210, 005	275, 303	3, 333, 575	4, 143, 115	4, 232, 121	5, 011, 171	578, 159	709, 632	6, 518, 426	7, 812, 588

Table 3 Revenue Generation for the two Local Government Areas (Naira)

As shown in Table 3, between 1991 and 1996, Ussa was still part of Takum Local Government Area so all revenues generated by Takum had part of it coming from what is now Ussa Local Government Area. Table 3 presents the internally generated revenues for the two Local Government Areas. During the crisis year 1991, the revenue generated for both Local Government Areas was N210, 005 only and increased to 275, 303 and N3, 333, 575 during the inter-crisis years of 1992/1993. They increased to about N4 million Naira in 1994 crisis year could be attributed to the late resumption of the crisis that started almost at the tail end of the year which efforts at massive revenue generation was almost concluded. Data from the two Local Government Areas (1991-2000) as seen in the Table 3 show that the internally generated revenues for the council were generally low throughout the crisis years. Though revenue from taxes, rates and fees, were impeded and adversely affected by the crisis incomes on fixed assets and rates from market in districts that were not badly affected by the crisis were still collected. This forms the major source of income to the councils during the crisis periods. Notwithstanding the circumstances of the crisis there is a need to transform the socio- spatial and economic structure of the area to minimum living conditions

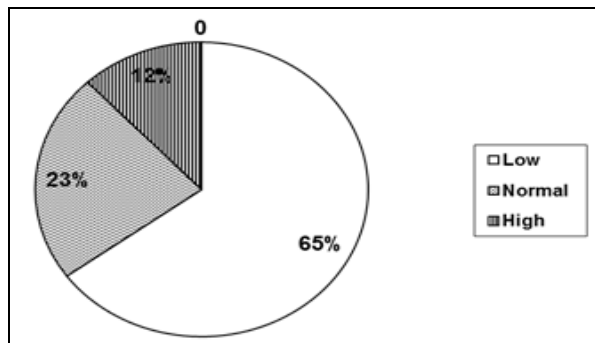


Figure 5: Levels of Profit on Business Activities in the Study Area (1991-2000)
Source: Field Survey 2012

As shown in Fig. 5, 65 percent of those engaged in business activities claimed to have experienced low profit margin while 23 percent of the respondents claimed they experienced normal profit. These are those that deal mostly in essential commodities and services like private health care delivery, petroleum black-market dealers. Only 12 percent of them indicated they enjoyed high profits. The conflict has therefore led to poor performance of business activities as evident in Fig. 5. This poor performance of business activities could lead to people’s inability to pay taxes, as the authorities cannot be effective in carrying out this duty during the crisis periods.

5. Conclusion

The reoccurrences of conflicts between Chamba/Jukun and Kuteb in Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas for more than a decade have increased the poverty level of the people and hence falling standard of living. Though, the causal factors are known, the inability of stakeholders to resolve the crisis has made people to live in fear and mutual suspicion. In this state of insecurity and lack of trust no meaningful rural development programme can succeed.

6. Recommendations

Government should put in place various programmes and policies that will enhance quick resettlement of affected persons and communities by provision of basic social amenities, provision of job opportunities, the establishment of skills acquisition centers and the implementation of the various committee reports set up at different times to look into the crisis. These measures, the study posits will bring about lasting peace that will guarantee progress and development of the people and their economy.

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