



NIGERIA

Farmer–Fulani Herder Violence in Benue, Kaduna and Plateau States

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Key findings

Crisis Impact In 2016 alone, at least 800 people were killed in southern Kaduna, and 1,269 in Benue state, where herders invaded at least 14 of the 23 local government areas (LGAs).

Since 2015, at least 62,000 people have been displaced in Kaduna, Plateau, and Benue states. IDPs have sheltered in poor communities, placing additional strain on scarce resources.

- Priority Needs
- **Food:** Approximately 132, 818 are said to be facing IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) levels of food insecurity in Benue, 167,561 in Plateau and 212,348 in Kaduna states.
 - **Shelter:** IDPs are exposed to harsh weather conditions and in need of shelter due to the destruction of their houses.
 - **Protection:** Rape, abduction and attacks have been reported for years by farming communities against Fulani herders. Many communities in affected states are living under the threat of severe insecurity.
 - **Livelihoods:** Expanses of farmland have been destroyed, although no estimated are available, disrupting the livelihoods of thousands of farmers and farming households.

Outlook The conflict, which was previously limited to the Middle Belt, is spreading. The humanitarian impacts are expected to worsen.

Crisis overview

The longstanding violence between herders and farmers in Nigeria’s Benue, Kaduna, and Plateau states has increased in recent years. In 2016, at least 800 people were killed in southern Kaduna and 1,269 in Benue state, where at least 14 of the 23 LGAs were invaded. The February 2016 attack on 10 villages in Agatu LGA, for instance, displaced over 7,000 people (Reuters 13/2/2017; Premium Times 10/8/2016). With the state government unable to provide or maintain camps and relief, IDPs are unable to meet their basic needs. At least 62,000 people have been displaced in the three states since 2015 (Punch 08/10/2016; Vanguard 17/10/2015).

Attacks are characterised by large-scale destruction of farmlands and property, rape, robbery, abduction, and displacement of farmers. Several farming communities report receiving letters from herders that warn of an impending attack. Reprisal attacks are also very common. Not all incidents are reported.

Driven by competition over resources, mainly land and water, the conflict is aggravated by desertification, climate change, and population growth, as more people compete for diminishing resources (Mercy Corps 07/2015). However, the conflict is also influenced by

ethnoreligious differences. The herders are mostly Muslim Fulani while the farmers are usually Christians, and are made up of a number of different ethnic groups.

The conflict is exacerbated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which come from a combination of a porous Nigerian border, and the conflicts in Mali and Libya, plus a lack of accountability and absence of state security forces (BBC 05/05/2016). Farmers consistently accuse herders of molestation, damaging crops, failing to control their animals, and deliberately acting in a provocative manner (Vanguard 12/02/2017; Vanguard 02/03/2017; BBC 05/05/2016). The herders, through the Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) describe themselves as victims of cattle rustling by farmers and of stereotyping and criminal profiling (Vanguard 01/05/2016; Daily Trust 06/02/2017).

IDPs live in poor conditions with limited access to education, healthcare, food, and WASH. They receive very little or no assistance from the government and face increased vulnerability to numerous protection-related issues.

Report limitations

- This report focuses on conflict between Fulani and herders over the last two years (2015 to 2017).
- While several other states around the country are affected, it focuses on the currently most-affected states of Kaduna, Plateau, and Benue states.
- Data is scarce as many incidents go unreported, as does their humanitarian impact.

Crisis impact

As well as the deaths and casualties described above, states affected by such conflict lost an average of USD 2.3 million – or 47% of their internally generated revenue (IGR) – in 2015. Benue State is producing below its capacity as the food basket of the nation, where everything grows as a result of its fertile soil (VON 17/07/2016). According to Mercy Corps, the average household affected would have experienced at least a 64% and potentially 210% increase in income without the crisis. The conflict hinders market development and economic growth by destroying valuable property, preventing trade, deterring investment and eroding trust between market actors (Mercy Corps 07/2015; Cadre Harmonise 28/10/2016). Nigeria stands to gain up to US \$13.7 billion annually in total macroeconomic progress in a scenario of peace between farmers and pastoralists in Benue, Kaduna and Plateau (Mercy Corps 07/2015).

Food: Approximately 132, 818 are said to be facing IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) levels of food insecurity in Benue, 167,561 in Plateau and 212,348 in Kaduna states as at December

2016, with 12,063 in Phase 4 in Plateau state (Cadre Harmonise 28/10/2016). 46,000 are projected to face Crisis food security conditions in Benue, Kaduna, and Plateau states from June to August 2017, according to the report.

The majority of IDPs have identified food as their most pressing need. They have limited food access as their stocks were looted and there is little access to replenish farm stocks. Staple food and cash crop production is below average in Plateau state. Prices remain extremely high around the country and are expected to continue increasing due to current inflation and recession. Conflict affected households thus face additional strain in accessing staple food due to their reduced purchasing power (Cadre Harmonise 28/10/2016). Any food assistance has been inadequate and irregular. Members of the Goska district in southern Kaduna, made up of about 156 households, report receiving food assistance once, and enough for only 30 families (Nigerian Red Cross 01/2017).

Cattle are an important part of Nigerian food security, and Fulani herdsman control most of the cattle in the country (Sahara Reporters 03/06/2017).

Protection: As well as conflict over land, Fulani herders are also reportedly involved in robbery, rape and kidnap for ransom (Punch 24/12/2016; Vanguard 26/02/2016; BBC 01/05/2016). Women and girls frequently encounter abuse and sexual violence in the conflict, with the majority reported in Kaduna state. Sexual assault is under-reported (Fund for Peace 07/03/2017).

IDPs fear attacks and general insecurity as they hear occasional and rapid gunshots – often the sign of an impending attack – which also reawakens their trauma (Nigerian Red Cross 01/2017). Several communities have been attacked more than once (PI 13/03/2017).

Livelihoods: The violence has led to the destruction of properties and farmland. It has ruined harvests, disrupted the livelihoods of hundreds of farmers and crippled economic activities in affected areas. Livelihoods in Plateau state are at a crisis level and households have adopted severe coping strategies as a result of the conflict (Reuters 13/2/2017; Nigerian Red Cross 01/2017; Cadre Harmonise 28/10/2016). 39% of pastoralist and farming community members in Kaduna have failed to pursue their livelihoods over long stretches of time due to fear or insecurity (Mercy Corps 7/2015).

Shelter: According to the Benue state Branch Secretary of the Nigerian Red Cross, IDPs had to leave camps in search of food and healthcare and integrate with host communities due to poor conditions and lack of assistance. Many of these IDPs have still not been settled and continue to move from place to place. The majority of the displaced are taking refuge in schools, churches, mosques, and abandoned buildings within and outside the state. In Kigam, southern Kaduna, where all 350 inhabitants were displaced between November and December 2016, shelter conditions are reportedly very bad. IDPs sleep on

bare floors, in the open, and in houses damaged by attacks that are without roofing, windows, or doors (Christian Aid 06/2015; Nigerian Red Cross 01/2017).

WASH: The few available WASH facilities in host communities and shelters are overstretched by the number of the number of people using them. Availability of potable water is limited. Natural water sources like streams and rivers are avoided as they are likely contaminated by grazing animals and travelling to them puts IDPs at risk of attack by herders. In Kigam, sanitation is a chronic problem: few houses have pit latrines and open defecation is widely practiced. Water storage facilities in Kigam were also damaged during attacks (Nigerian Red Cross 01/2017).

Health: Many children are said to suffer from upper respiratory infections from sleeping in the open under harsh weather conditions like the *harmattan* season of dry wind, as well as rain (Nigerian Red Cross 01/2017).

Humanitarian access

- There have been reports of humanitarian actors being unable to access IDPs as they become targets of attacks. Some have reportedly been blocked, shot at and chased away by herders (The Spectator 04/02/2017; PI 08/03/2017).
- Many communities like Kigam are hard to reach, being in forests or surrounded by hills (Nigerian Red Cross 01/2017).

Migration routes

Migration of nomadic herders follows a pattern that is controlled by variations in rainfall, grazing stock, pasture, and availability of water. Herders move towards pasture, water sources, salt licks, and livestock markets. They try to avoid harsh weather conditions, tsetse flies and other disease-causing pathogens, and hostile social environments. The transhumance route is said to help herders manage the dry season in the north and gain access to more market opportunities (Dimelu M.U et al, 23/02/2017).

Movement from the north to the south tends to take place from February to August (FEWSNET 07/03/2017). Herders move back to the north, away from the flood plains, during the July to September rainy season – crossing through the middle belt where communities depend largely on farming. With harvesting taking place between June and December, crops are trampled and grazed upon as herders move through them (FEWSNET 05/2014; FEWSNET 07/03/2017).

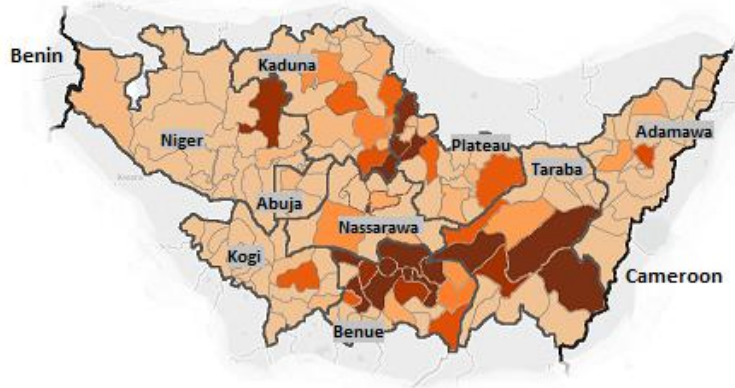
Routes are changing with desertification in northern states like Sokoto, Bauchi, Adamawa, Gombe, Borno and Niger, which historically hosted herders. The herders are likely to continue pushing southwards (Journal of Ecology and the Natural Environment, 07/2015).

The Grazing Reserve Law of 1965 provided for the establishment and management of grazing reserves. However, urbanisation, population growth, and climate change have resulted in such lands being encroached upon. Nigeria’s population in 1965 was 50.2 million and had grown to 143 million by the last census in 2006 (worldometers). The United Nations puts the current estimate at 190 million. Pastoralists wishing to settle or graze their animals have limited options (Mercy Corps 7/2015). The 1988 National Agriculture Policy also earmarked 10% of the total national territory as grazing areas – 9.8 million hectares were earmarked for grazing reserves, and this was later increased to 20 million. However, no land is reserved for farming by law.

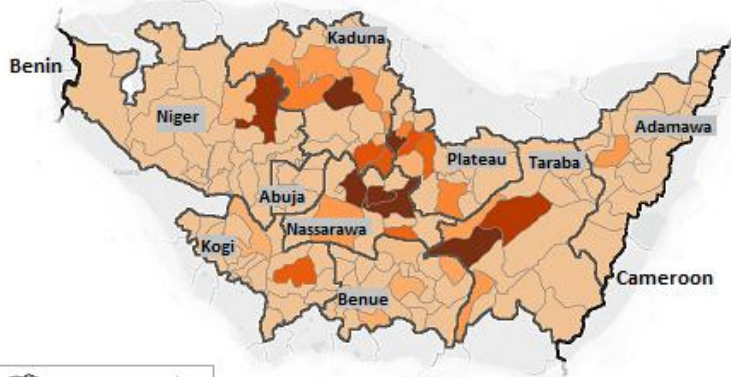
Total Fulani conflict fatalities by LGA and time of year, 2014 - 2016



January - July



August - December



Source: ACLED

Outlook

Farmer/herder conflict will persist in the coming months, especially as the growing season peaks from June to September. The government has blamed attacks on migrant herders from Libya, Chad, Mali and Senegal and is unlikely to tackle transhumance from other countries (Daily Post 14/05/2016; Punch 15/02/2016; Premium Times 25/01/2017; FEWSNET 07/03/2017).

In February 2017, the Nigerian Army established an operational base in southern Kaduna (Sahara Reporters 05/02/2017). While some people have been arrested, the government has been accused of not doing enough to safeguard lives and properties. Soldiers often say they have not received any orders or been commanded not to intervene (The Spectator 04/02/2017).

In 2012, the Kaduna state governor warned that whoever killed a herder will also be killed and in 2016, he was said to have paid herders in the state to stop them from killing (Vanguard 03/12/2016). The Benue state governor has asked for increased security presence as the challenges have become overwhelming (Daily Trust 03/03/2017).

Clashes, reprisal attacks and displacement are likely to continue, despite measures like curfews (up to 24 hours in some locations), peace deals between various factions, and increased security presence. Ethnic militias have been formed in several communities. With the recent increase in the number and intensity of attacks, the country may be heading towards a potentially deadlier insurgency (SB Morgen Intelligence 30/10/2015). While such attacks were previously confined to the middle belt, similar attacks have been reported in Abia and Enugu states in the South East zone, Delta in the South South and Ekiti and Oyo states in the South West. Many travellers, including high-profile individuals like a former director general of the Department of State Security (DSS) and a former minister of finance have been kidnapped for ransom by herders (Daily Post 17/02/2017; Premium Times 28/09/2015; Daily Post 08/04/2016).

With the large-scale destruction of farmland, farm products and disruption of the livelihoods of hundreds of farmers, the level of food and physical insecurity is likely to grow in the coming months, with desertification potentially pushing the herdsman further south (Journal of Ecology and the Natural Environment, 07/2015).

Contextual information

Also known as the North Central geopolitical zone, Nigeria's Middle Belt is originally made up of six states – Nasarawa, Plateau, Benue, Kogi, Niger and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). It divides the north from the southern part of the country and runs from the Cameroon Highlands on the east to the Niger River Valley on the west. Today however, it has come to include people that are found within the areas of geographical landmarks that have similar cultures different from the Hausa-Fulani of the core north. This means Southern Kaduna, Southern Kebbi, Southern Borno, Southern Yobe, Southern Gombe, Adamawa and Taraba states could also fall under the Middle Belt. It contains over 80 languages and ethnic groups (Global Security; Vanguard 18/08/2013).

Benue state

With an estimated population of 5.2 million, this north-central state covers 34,059km² and has 23 LGAs. It is inhabited predominantly by the Tiv and Idoma who practice Christianity. It is a rich agricultural region where potatoes, cassava, soya bean, guinea corn, flax, yams, sesame, rice, and groundnuts are grown (Ngex).

Kaduna state

Located in the northwest of the country (North West zone), Kaduna state has a total population of 6 million and covers 46,053km². It has 23 local government areas (LGAs). The Hausa and some immigrants from other states practice Islam while the majority of people in the southern LGAs are Christians (Ngex). Approximately 60% of Kaduna are Muslims and 40% are Christian (Cities in Transition 2016).

Plateau state

With an area of 26,899km², Plateau State has a population of 3.2 million, over 50 ethnic groups are predominantly farmers and have similar cultural and traditional ways of life. It has 17 LGAs (Plateau State Government).

Fulani herders

The Fulani have become synonymous with grazing and cattle ownership and rearing. They are an ethnic group of people across the Sahel region who share similar customs, language, and Islamic identity. In Nigeria, their population is 7 million, one-third of whom

are pastoral nomads. This population is open to fluctuations as nomads frequently cross country borders. (Levinson, 1996; Kays, 2011).

Summary Indicators

Indicator	Benue	Kaduna	Plateau
Household Size (2010)	5.3	5.3	5.5
Child Labour (5 – 14 years) (2007)	24.3%	48.7%	24.4%
Literacy rate (adult) (2010)	67.7%	58.1%	55.1%
Households with Advanced water sources (2009)	11.6%	40.6%	22.7%

Source: Nigeria data portal

Information gaps and needs

- Data collection, coverage and reporting of humanitarian needs have been low as this is considered a very sensitive issue both for the government and the citizens. Many attacks and deaths go unreported, making it difficult to determine the extent of the damage and impact of the conflict. Assessment on recent developments and humanitarian needs is lacking.
- Most publicly available information on needs assessment are out of date, with the most recent gathered in 2015.
- Due to the longstanding and widespread nature of the conflict, organising information often proves challenging, as does agreeing casualty figures.
- Those displaced are usually absorbed by host communities, friends, relatives, and religious groups. It is more difficult to track, ascertain, assess and mitigate humanitarian needs among people living in these settings.
- Unlike the response to the Boko Haram crisis in the northeast, there is very little coordination among the few humanitarian responders in the Middle Belt.

Lessons learned

- Information sharing among intervening partners needs to be more proactive, systematic, and deliberate.
- Contingency plans help to ensure more proactive and sustained response to displacements and other humanitarian needs.
- Neglect of IDPs and host communities has resulted in self-help, which has exacerbated the conflict in some cases.
- There is potential for the problem to escalate as IDPs continue to crowd together and compete for already scarce and dwindling resources.
- The conflict is a complex and multi-dimensional issue, where motives and objectives are not clear, which hampers any resolution.