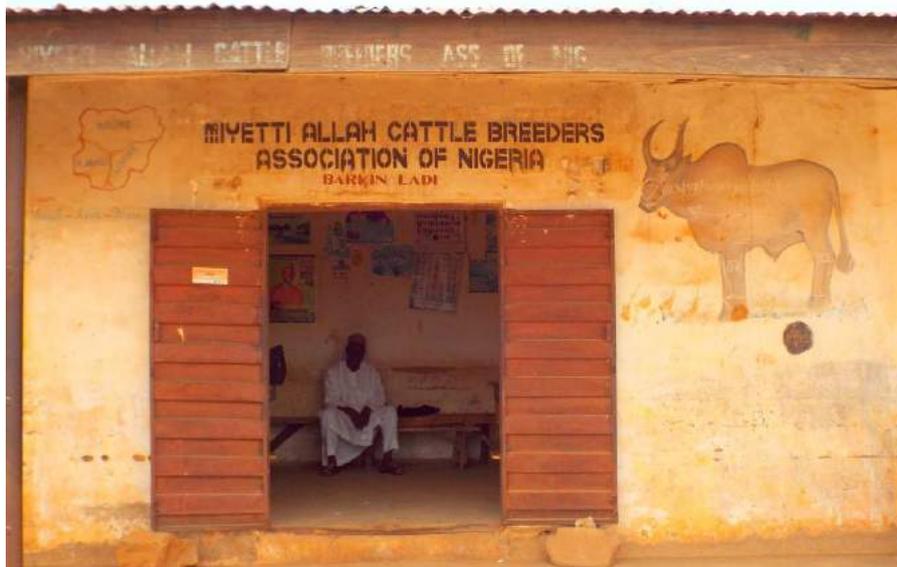


Pastoralist-farmer conflict in the Nigerian Middle Belt 2016: analysis and responses



REVISED FINAL VERSION FOR CIRCULATION

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This version, Cambridge, 12 September 2018

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ACRONYMS

CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
NLPD	National Livestock Projects Department
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Community Support Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ❖ The purpose of the mission was to provide more in-depth information on the farmer-pastoralist conflict in the Nigerian Middle Belt following reports from CARITAS regional offices.
- ❖ The situation turned out to be very serious indeed, far worse than might be inferred from existing reports. Conflict in rural areas has resulted in high mortality of humans and livestock as well as destruction of property
- ❖ Extensive interviews were conducted with both pastoralists and farmer's leaders in Benue, Kaduna and Plateau states, as well as government officials concerned with this issue and relevant NGOs.
- ❖ The report was first submitted to MISEREOR on 23rd March 2016. Following comments and discussions in Aachen, the present version is the final revised version. It includes some discussion of events that took place subsequent to the mission itself.
- ❖ Responses are all effectively after the event, as is government intervention. While reconciliation and trauma healing are obviously necessary, this makes little impact on the root causes of the conflict
- ❖ Impact can only be achieved by more analytic reporting; existing narrative reports contribute little to this
- ❖ This in turn can only be achieved by talking to a much wider range of stakeholders than are currently consulted
- ❖ And by treating the problem as regional, i.e. not confined to dioceses, provinces, local governments or states
- ❖ If the analysis is convincing then more appropriate solutions can be devised
- ❖ Security aspects of the situation can only be dealt with by the Nigerian government although lobbying may achieve changes in policy
- ❖ Nonetheless, there are many areas where NGOs and CBOs can act to improve matters by defusing tension
- ❖ Key areas include;
 - The creation of more effective information sharing systems. The mission found that little was known about events and policy in areas outside the immediate concern of individual projects. However a broader vision is essential in dealing with pastoralists, where remote events frequently affect local interactions
 - The more effective use of vernacular media to communicate analysis and information to all sides in conflict situations
 - A more systematic assessment of the role of traditional leaders in both reconciliation and exacerbation of conflict and dissemination of lessons learnt
 - A more effective use of stock routes and grazing reserves which have long been intended to reduce conflict between herders and farmers, but which have been allowed to fall into disuse in some areas
- An extended effort to contact pastoralist leaders who have been excluded from the process of community dialogue
- ❖ Other important findings include;
 - Lack of consistency between Federal and State Government policy towards pastoralists as well as a lack of awareness of the effectiveness or otherwise of earlier policy
 - Uncontrolled and exaggerated media reporting and social media blogging promoting intergroup hatred
 - Collapse of the Nomadic Education system, intended to provide schooling for pastoral peoples
 - Consolidation of many pastoralists into small areas in the Middle Belt, leading to entrenched positions, greater suspicion and ecological damage

In the light of this, the following proposals are made for a further mission;

- ✚ Visits to a wide range of partner organisations across the Nigerian Middle Belt, especially in the areas west of the Niger, including the Yoruba areas in the southwest

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- ✚ Develop a more comprehensive network of connections with diocesan offices and the problems they are experiencing
- ✚ Expand training in analytic report writing to a wide range of partner individuals as well as developing schedules of reporting
- ✚ Develop a regional database of trusted interlocutors, especially among pastoralists and train offices in the use of this
- ✚ Develop and advocacy strategy based on a more in-depth analysis of the drivers of conflict
- ✚ Develop a media strategy, in particular for vernacular radio broadcasting and social media, to counter exaggerated and untrue claims

enma Babi ana Šārtim	This is what Babi says to Shartum
aṣeḥḥami	I'm very worried
ana mīnim atti u Ibbi ilum	Why do you and Ibbi ilum
in bītīm taša alā	quarrel at home?
ištēniš šibā	Live with one another

The first peacebuilding text recorded
Akkadian, 23rd century BC

1. Introduction: background to conflict

West-Central Africa is one of the major regions of livestock production, globally speaking. A complex zone of pastoralism stretches across the semi-arid and parts of the subhumid zone from Senegambia to the Horn of Africa. Some type of co-operation and conflict has probably been going on since cattle were introduced into the region some four thousand years ago. However, cattle were kept out of much of Sub-Saharan Africa by the tsetse belts and in particular could not enter the high-density subhumid and humid zones. In the Sahel, there has always been a strong basis for cooperation between herders and farmers, with milk exchanged for cereals, and cattle manuring fields while eating grazing residues. However, with the hunting out of tsetse vectors, the disappearance of forest and the expanding demand for meat from Nigerian cities, the twentieth century saw a major migration of herders southwards into the subhumid zone and the northern edges of the equatorial forest.

Needless to say, this led to conflict between the mobile herders and the crop farmers, many of whom had no experience of dealing with such a different lifestyle. Nonetheless, in an era when human population densities were still very low, the two different groups could co-exist, simply by farming and grazing in separate areas. However, human population in Nigeria has seen a major expansion in the twentieth century and shows no sign of slowing down. As a consequence, more and more land is being cultivated and spaces for grazing are being reduced. The pastoralists and farmers are increasingly clashing over land and with access to more lethal weaponry, these conflicts are becoming ever more violent. However, this is not a simple narrative of resource conflict, since there is strong evidence both of manipulation by politicians to serve local interests and involvement by insurgent groups such as Boko Haram intentionally exacerbating the violence.

In the light of reports from various communities in the dioceses of the Middle Belt, MISEREOR requested the consultant to investigate the situation in two states, Benue and Plateau, with a view to developing a more in-depth analysis of the roots of the conflicts, to evaluate existing initiatives and to make proposals for policy options to improve the situation. The Terms of Reference are given in Appendix 1.

A visit to Nigeria was made from the 15th of February to mid-March 2016¹. An itinerary of field visits undertaken is given in Appendix II. The field research took place over the first month, and writing-up was in Jos, to continue gathering and checking information available on this topic. A workshop was held in Jos on the 15th and 16th of March, gathering the partners involved in field interviews. The consultant stayed on in Nigeria until early May, gathering further information, and this final version of the report includes some of material. Two powerpoints emerging from this meeting are included with this submission. It should be emphasised that Nigeria is a large complex country, and any study can only present a snapshot of the situation. Furthermore, accounts of conflict are the subject of passionate emotion on both sides, and information must be carefully cross-checked before being repeated.

¹ I was accompanied throughout by Mal. Umaru Hassan, a Fulfulde-speaker who has worked on pastoral issues for many years. In Benue State, Valentine Kwaghechimin (JDPC) acted as facilitator and Plateau, Chris Ogbona (DREP). My thanks to all of them. This report consists of my own analyses and they should not be taken as supporting all statements made here.

2. Opposing sides

2.1 The farmers

2.2.1 Benue

The main farming communities in the Benue State area are the Tiv and Idoma peoples (Bohannon 1968). Until the 1960s, these populations depended on rainfed cultivation, growing yams, cassava, maize and oil-palms. Cash crop production was very limited and small numbers of taurine cattle were kept. Fisheries are also important to riverine groups with valuable dry season ponds. However, since the 1960s, there has been a transformation in the production system, with the development of dry-season farming along the Benue and its tributaries. Much of the area along the banks is now given over to high density horticulture, which is problematic for the pastoralists who traditionally grazed the pasture beside the rivers.

2.2.2 Plateau

The Jos Plateau is a grassy upland in north-central Nigeria, originally established in the early colonial era as a centre for tin-mining. It is populated by a complex mosaic of ethnic groups of different origins practising rainfed agriculture. The establishment of the colonial regime made possible access by pastoralists, for whom the higher rainfall, nutritious grass and low disease burden made it an attractive location. Relations between the herders and farmers were initially good, and farmers' children were sent to work for the FulBe in exchange for animals. Both FulBe and Hausa migrants began to establish *shaduf* dry season farms along the banks of the rivers and in some places bought titles to their land.

As in the Benue Valley, at the end of the 1980s, small pumps were introduced which made possible intensive dry season horticulture and the production of vegetables for the market. As the urban population of Nigeria grew, these vegetables became highly profitable. The development of the Federal Capital at Abuja expanded demand for these high-value products. Land along the banks of rivers, previously unused by farmers practising rainfed cultivation, suddenly became valuable. Herders had previously enjoyed free access to rivers, where their cattle could both drink and find good grazing. They regarded this land as theirs by tradition, which in a sense was true. But the farmers, anxious for a profit, simply saw unused land and took it. When the herders came on their seasonal migration, they often trampled the new fields and serious conflicts occurred.

2.2 The herders

2.2.1 FulBe pastoral system

The FulBe [Fulbe] or Fulani are the main pastoral people in Nigeria, along with the Shuwa Arabs and the Koyam in the northeast. They probably entered what is now Nigeria in the fifteenth century and travelled along the Sahel Belt as far as Lake Chad. During the eighteenth century some groups settled in the towns and effectively became urban residents, perhaps owning cattle but not herding them. They were converted to a more zealous form of Islam, and in 1804, Usman dan Fodio initiated a jihad, which eventually created a series of Islamic Emirates across North-Central Nigeria and adjacent Cameroun. This was driven by extensive slave-raiding for sale in the markets of North Africa, and much of the Middle Belt became a wasteland at this period. The pastoral FulBe were not directly involved in the trade, but there is no doubt that the raiding opened up a vast new zone of pasture in the subhumid areas. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century FulBe settlement expanded considerably. Many of these areas were non-Muslim, so much of the understanding between the FulBe and the Hausa farmers based on common religion was absent.

This period of expansion is at the root of many of the contentious issues in the Middle Belt today. The FulBe herd mainly cattle, with small numbers of sheep and sometimes goats. The majority are seasonal transhumants, usually moving south towards the river systems of Central Nigeria in the dry season (roughly December-April) and then north when the rains bring fresh grass. Many FulBe keep part of their family further north and the majority of families do some small cropping of cereals. The traditional household economy of the FulBe was based on the sale of surplus milk and milk products, which are exchanged for cereals. However, milk is no longer the prestigious product it was, and its value is now low. In addition,

poor nutrition for the cattle causes a decline in milk yields, so increasingly the herders' economy is based on the sale of surplus bullocks for meat. In addition, farmers valued the manure of cattle as fertiliser, so often would invite the FulBe to camp on their farm after harvest. The cattle ate the cereal stalks and fertilised the fields. All these factors induced herders to increase herd size and to move into previously unfamiliar areas of the Middle Belt. But the problems were;

- Farmers were increasingly not Muslims and had no understanding of FulBe culture. Farmers grew yams and other crops which did not produce edible residues and did not need manuring
- Farmers did not drink, indeed could not digest, dairy products, so were not interested in the main items the herders had to sell

This meant the basis for co-operation was lacking, which tended to decrease trust.

2.2.2 Breakdown of the family and authority systems

FulBe society is based on a strong moral code, the *lawol Pulaaku*, and respect for the older generation and the Ardos, or traditional leaders. The FulBe are divided into numerous clans, the *leyyi*, which traditionally determined marriage rules, migration patterns and access to grazing spaces. Since the early nineteenth century, there has been a conventional division between the *FulBe nagge* and the *FulBe wuro*. The *FulBe nagge* were the nomadic cattle herders, who stayed in the bush, while the *FulBe wuro* lived in towns. The town FulBe may own cattle but they do not manage them on a daily basis.

Traditionally, and in times of peace, the whole family moved, carrying their possessions on pack animals. However, in times of uncertainty, herd-splitting became common, with the older people, women and children at a home site, and the younger men sent off with the cattle. This has disadvantages, since the youth are no longer under supervision, and in modern times have access to the temptations of urban life, including alcohol and drugs. The increasing youth of the FulBe herding is rather visible, and from the point of view of the farmers, this irresponsible behaviour is part of the problem. Their attention is frequently not on the animals and damage to farms occurs.

3. Timeline of conflict

3.1 Timeline

The movement into the Benue Valley by FulBe pastoralists seems to be as early as the 1910s. Many herders interviewed were born there, as were their fathers. There are memories of low-level conflicts going back decades, but both sides agree that the dry season of 2002-2003 was when the current episodes of conflict began. There was another bad conflict in 2005, again in 2014 and in February 2016, further conflict took place in Katsina Ala, with significant loss of life.

However, the most dramatic events took place as the survey was under way in February 2016. Conflict between the Agatu people in the northwest of Benue State was reported to have led to the slaughter of up to ten thousand cattle. Then on the 18th February, a large-scale invasion took place, by a heavily armed group with sophisticated weapons. Hundreds of people were killed, villages burnt, and thousands of people fled (Photo 1, Photo 2). Unlike most of the events, this one

Photo 1. Agatu refugees



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has reached national media. Insurgents held off the Nigerian army in several villages before gradually disappearing into the bush.

It is most unlikely that these events were solely the result of herder-farmer conflict. It is possible that well-funded groups in the northeast are somehow taking advantage of the existing problems to create further trouble and in particular to stir up religious hatred. An alarming possibility, however, is that internal conflicts within the Agatu community have played a role in this. We know that in Nasarawa State in 2014 there were occasions where some indigenous people 'called in' freelance bandits to fight their battles. The Agatu are strongly divided into opposing factions and unfortunately, it is conceivable that recent events were the unforeseen consequence of similar actions.

Photo 2. Burnt houses at Agatu



Similar events were also occurring in Taraba State in February 2016. Refugees were encountered in Makurdi who had fled communal violence in the Wukari area. As with Agatu, the villages were invaded by groups with sophisticated weaponry. There were no reports about these events in the Nigerian media, so exact details are not forthcoming; but this illustrates then difficulties of presenting a comprehensive analysis of the situation.

In Plateau State conflict almost certainly began in earnest after the religious conflicts in Jos town in 2001. Ironically, the FulBe were not directly involved, but immediately after that, several of their leaders in rural areas were murdered in unprovoked attacks. This led to the FulBe fleeing the Plateau, mostly to Bauchi State, where the Governor created a 'safe space' for them. Since then they have gradually begun to return, usually sending young men only, and often armed. Since 2001, there have been periodic bursts of killing, the most serious in 2015, when villages of both farmers and FulBe were burnt down (Photo 3).

Photo 3. Burnt out houses, Gashish area



Relations are particularly bad with the Berom people, who are the dominant group east and south of Jos, and districts such as Fan and Foron have become no-go areas for pastoralists, as well being the focus of sophisticated weapons. Alarmingly, the mission heard direct testimony that the then governor of Plateau State, Jonah Jang, now a senator, was responsible for the supply of semi-automatic weapons to Berom youth.

Since May 2016, there have been additional episodes of inter-communal conflict in Anambra State and Ekiti State, leading to suggestions by the authorities in those states that the Fulani should be ejected, imprisoned or even shot. Clearly, peacebuilding has a long way to go.

3.2 Impact on pastoral populations

The conflicts in the Middle Belt since 2001 have effectively destroyed the trust between the long-resident FulBe households, most of whom had good relations with their neighbours for several generations. The contracts whereby FulBe managed cattle belonging to the farmers or took on their sons as herders are long gone. In interviews, it was said that farmers deliberately burnt their crop residues rather than allow cattle to eat them, which constitutes a significant economic loss to both sides.

The consequence has been that the FulBe live in an increasing state of fear and insecurity, compelling them to consolidate into nuclei for safety. These have become effectively IDP camps in the terminology of the Middle Eastern conflicts. Some of these nuclei are actual or former grazing reserves, such as at Kachia. More strikingly, FulBe have grouped together in areas such as Mahanga, near Gashish, SE of Jos, effectively excluded outsiders. A failure by government to supply basic infrastructure has led them to build their own schools and hospitals (Photo 4). While in some ways this type of enterprise is to be commended, effectively creating an independent zone accelerates the division with the farming populations and may fuel further conflict.

Photo 4. Classroom at Mahanga



3.3 The growth of cattle-rustling

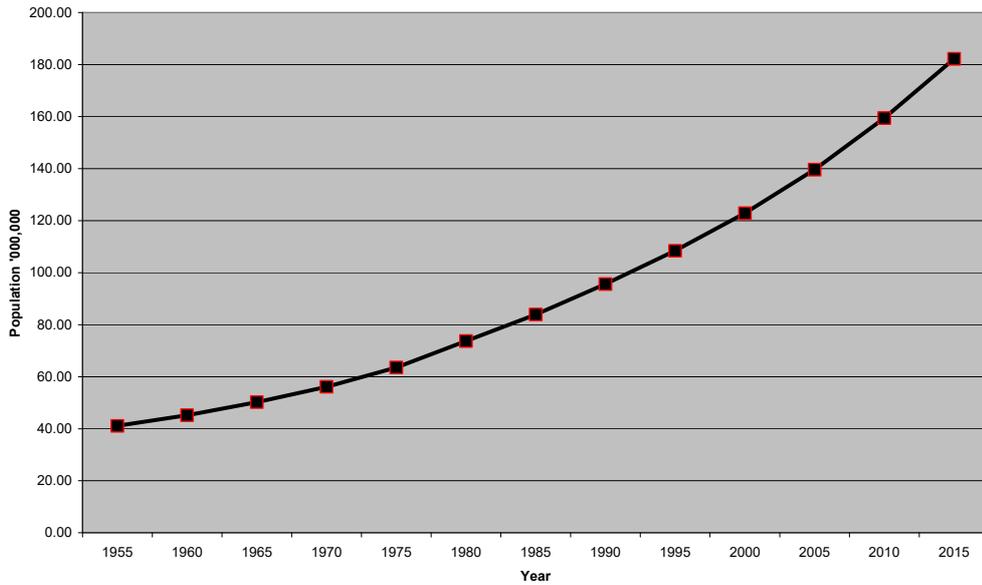
In almost every interview, the increased incidence of cattle-rustling was mentioned. This is often associated with kidnap, where a young herder is snatched and held for ransom. Given the lack of herding skills among farmers, it is credible that the rustlers consist of gangs which include FulBe who have lost their cattle in association with thieves, and connect to networks which can transport the stolen livestock the large markets in the south, where they rapidly disappear. Government response has so far been ineffectual, as the rustlers live in remote areas and are hard to catch by conventional means. Nonetheless, the stolen cattle must be fed into the marketing system and transported past checkpoints. If such cattle can move freely, this does not provide confidence that action is being taken. The unchecked growth of this practice, the suspicion that the powerful people behind it are being protected, all adds to the climate of distrust.

4. Drivers of conflict

4.1 The major issue: human population density

The single most important driver of conflict in the Nigerian Middle Belt is rising human population. In the past, human population densities were low and farmers and graziers each had enough space to operate. From the colonial era onwards, this situation has changed, largely due to improved healthcare. The human population of Nigeria was probably around 5 million in 1900 and is ca. 180 million today. Figure 1 shows estimated Nigerian population growth (1955-2015) and there is no reason to consider this trend will not continue.

Figure 1. Nigerian population growth (1955-2015)



Improved veterinary care has increased cattle survival rates and crucially, allowed them to be herded in subhumid areas where animals formerly died. Cutting down vegetation across the Nigerian Middle Belt has meant that tsetse habitats have disappeared, making available huge new areas for grazing. However, the same drivers cause human population to increase, taking up ever more arable land. Attempts to reserve land for pastoralists have largely failed (§4.2-3) and there is no reason to consider these trends will not continue.

4.2 Grazing Reserves and stockroutes

4.2.1 Grazing Reserves

The concept of Grazing Reserves derives from the colonial model of forest reserves, gazetted zones where settlement was excluded, to act as reservoirs of natural vegetation. After 1960, some of these were converted to Grazing Reserves, with the intention of encouraging pastoralists to adopt a more settled lifestyle, and access services such as schools and clinics. For some decades, government invested in these reserves, putting in roads, water-points and other infrastructure and compensating farmers obliged to move out. However, by the 1990s, this had largely stopped and the process of gazetting reserves (i.e. giving them formal status) ceased completely. A variety of international and national bodies also invested in grazing reserves and ILCA (International Livestock Centre for Africa) conducted numerous experiments with FulBe herders on improved pasture grasses and cattle

Photo 5. Kachia Grazing Reserve

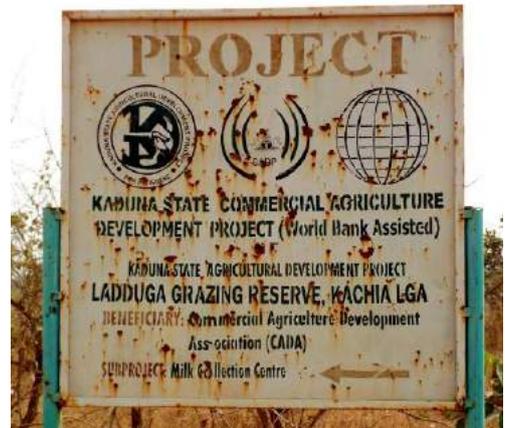


Photo 6. Kachia Skills training centre



nutrition. Most recently (2015), the African Development Bank has invested in a building intended as a vocational training centre, something which was certainly profitable to the Chinese company which built it (Photo 6). Since the road which was intended to allow its trainees to export their products has never been constructed, it has to be surrounded by barbed wire and high walls to prevent it from being looted.

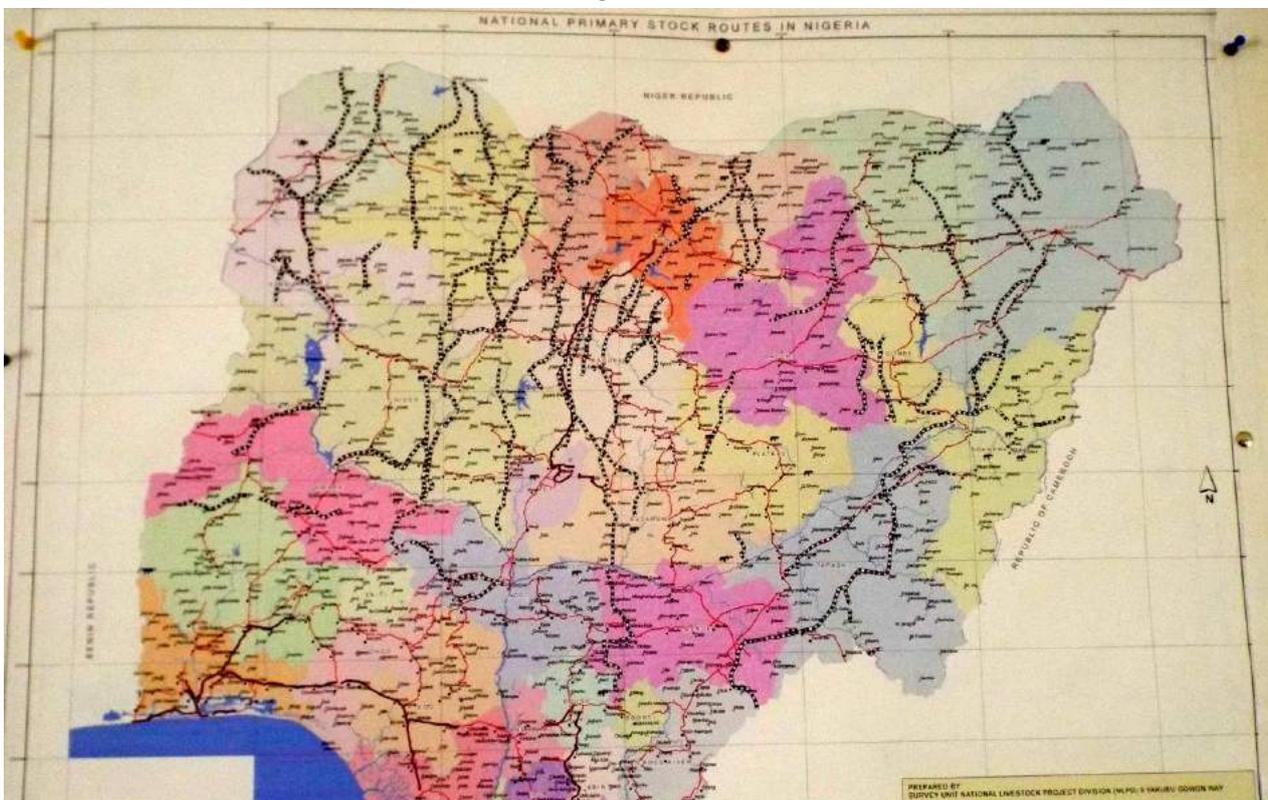
It is safe to say all these have come to nothing. A few reserves, such as Kachia, have managed to prevent farmer encroachment and as a consequence have become the refuges for fleeing herders. This in turn has led to unsustainable pressure on grazing and water. However, in many areas, state and local governments have simply authorised farmers to enter the reserves, effectively throwing out the herders who have been using the reserves for decades. In the case of Kaduna State, herders awoke one morning to be confronted by bulldozers; the state government had sold the reserve to property developers.

4.2.2 Stockroutes

The system of stockroutes, *burti*, dates back to the colonial era, and was designed to formalise existing pastoral migration paths in order to minimise conflict with farmers. This system has been maintained for a long time, and broadly speaking was respected. It was given a further boost with the funding of the National Livestock Projects Department (NLPD) which was to gazette and beacon these routes. NLPD was given additional funding to complete the mapping of stockroutes in 2012, and these are shown in Photo 7. Unfortunately, however, legal responsibility for maintaining the stock routes was given to the states.

It is important to underline that a functioning system of stockroutes is an essential tool in reducing conflict between herders and farmers and with the rise in human population has become more important, not less. If such a network was fully functional it would be a valuable tool in reducing conflict, but unfortunately, these routes exist only in theory in many places. Since the states are controlled by politicians elected by farmers, they have little interest in maintaining the system and in some cases have openly declared they do not accept it.

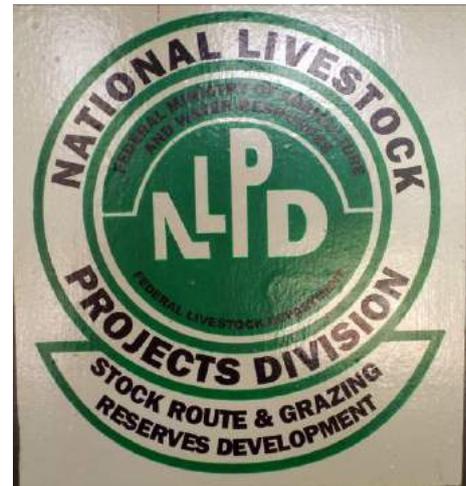
Photo 7. National network of stock routes in Nigeria, 2012



4.2.3 National Livestock Projects Department (NLPD)

The National Livestock Projects Department (NLPD), based in Kaduna, was established as a part of the Federal Livestock Department in 1987. It initially had funding from the World Bank but later has had to depend on direct budget allocations. One of its responsibilities is the demarcation and gazetting of stock-routes (Photo 8). The value of these is admitted by government, but actual funding to manage them is sporadic. As a Federal Government Department, NLPD spends little energy making links with pastoral leaders, but in this case, lobbying would be more effective if both groups were to work together.

Photo 8. NLPD Logo



4.3 Culture clash: varying concepts of land ownership

An important reason why conflicts persist is the differing concepts of land ownership and access in farming and pastoral societies. Broadly speaking, when a pastoralist grazes an area every year, and his rights are accepted by other pastoralists he considers he 'owns' the portion of land. However, for farmers, who practise both shifting cultivation on rainfed lands and dry-season horticulture, only clearing and farming the land constitutes ownership. As the need for arable land increases, farmers are clearing grazing land ever more frequently. Inevitably when a pastoralist returns to his traditional grazing land and finds it under crops, he is aggrieved, and the cattle often enter the farm either by accident or indeed intentionally. Needless to say, states are controlled by politicians who represent the interests of farmers and thus inevitably support the farmers in this type of incident.

4.4 Prescription drug abuse

This may seem an extraneous topic, but it was mentioned in many interviews and clearly plays a role in tipping potential conflict situations into actual violence. Nigeria has no prescription system and once a drugseller has a licence, he or she may sell almost any commercial drug to customers quite legally. Both pastoralists and traditional leaders consider this is an important factor in further exacerbating aggrieved youth².

4.5 Political interference

Conflicts that begin over access to resources are easy to politicise. Local politicians seeking the votes of farmers can easily make use of these events to ramp up accusations. Very commonly they seek to frame the conflicts as religious, Islam versus Christianity. This is rarely the case, as the disputes are over access to land, but it is easy to manipulate the media to insinuate this is an attempt by Islam at forcible conversion, something which has disturbing parallels in Europe.

4.6 Manipulation of indigeneity

Nigerian states operate a policy of indigeneity, a certificate which individuals must obtain if they are to be accepted for civil service jobs and other posts as well as preferential access to university places. In theory, this certificate is available to long-term residents of the state, whoever they are. In practice, this is generally refused to Hausa and FulBe, regardless of the period their family has been settled. This has two important consequences; the denial of land rights and the exclusion of appropriate teachers in schools. Many of the Hausa and FulBe are settled in Plateau for more than a century and some hold certificates of occupancy to show they have bought the land they occupy. However, these certificates are being treated as invalid by LGAs on the basis that these individuals are 'not' indigenes. Such behaviour has alarming echoes in European history and should be countered by supporting basic adherence to human rights principles.

Another aspect of this relates what is called in Nigeria, 'Nomadic Education'. This initiative was begun in the middle 1980s with the beneficent hope that FulBe pastoralists would encourage their children to go to

² This may seem a stereotypical complaint by elders about youth, but it is worth remembering that deaths from prescription drugs in the United States now far exceed those from traditional illegal drugs.

school and play a greater part in the wider Nigerian society through literacy. Certainly a large number of schools were built in rural areas and for a while were funded. At first, pastoralists were sceptical, as schools took away labour needed to herd cattle. However, there is no doubt that they became convinced of the value of education and sought to educate their children. But ironically, the growing distrust between the two communities has meant that the states are dismantling the system, either by flooding the schools with non-pastoralists, or refusing to allow teachers of pastoralist background to be employed. As a result, many schools are non-functional³. This type of exclusion from rights in civil society is surely not acceptable.

5. Security issues

5.1 Police

Given that these episodes involve loss of life and property, it might be thought that the Nigerian government would have a role in keeping order and the prevention of further episodes. By and large, the police play little or no role in security incidents, and the army is called in directly. This can be a risky strategy, as the army are not trained to deal with civilian incidents and their current concerns are events in the northeast.

5.2 Army

The Nigerian army has been much occupied in the northeast in recent years although it keeps a small presence throughout the country. In recent times, however, they have been called both to conflicts in the Middle Belt, and to oversee post-conflict meetings. There was a general consensus in interviews that the situation has much improved, at least in terms of response time, since the government of Present Buhari took over. However, interviewees also noted that the skills of local commanders were extremely variable, some being much more adept than others at peacebuilding.

5.3 Informal sector

5.3.1 The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)

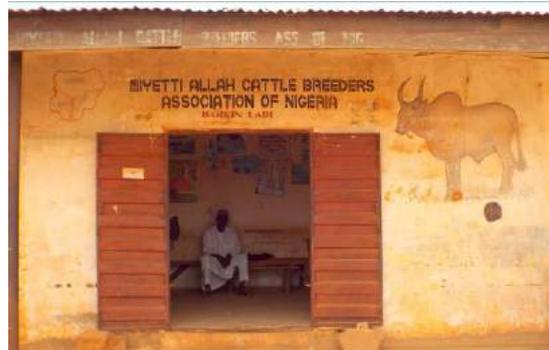
The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) was formed by the Benue state government in 2014, to bring together vigilantes on the farmers' side with pastoralists. The two are intended to work together to bring down tension. How effective it is depends on which side is telling the story. For those who are part of it, CJTF has played a major role in damping down conflict and going in to make peace where clashes have occurred. However, especially for farming communities, they are open to corrupt practices, in particular allocating grazing areas to herders which are claimed by the farmers. Other forms of Joint Task Force operate in different states, but their effectiveness is open to question.

5.3.2 Pastoralist organisations

5.3.2.1 Miyetti Allah

Miyetti Allah (the name means 'I thank God' in Fulfulde) is the oldest and most well-established pastoral organisation in Nigeria and the only one to have branches in every state. It exists to lobby government on issues related to pastoralists, particularly the FulBe. It was founded in the 1960s, but seems to have been moribund, or at least an ineffective talking shop for many years. However, in the 2000s, it was mired in a series of scandals and lost the trust of many pastoralists, which is why alternative organisations were founded. Elections in early 2016 have replaced all the leaders and its members are currently watching to see if reform has taken hold. Miyetti Allah is certainly the main body representing pastoralists in peace-building exercises, but in some states it does not have their trust.

Photo 9. Miyetti Allah office, Barakin Ladi



³ A search on the internet comes up with a whole series of quite untrue publications and discussion documents, from which anyone unfamiliar with the ground situation might conclude the programme was a success.

5.3.2.2 Kawtal Hoore

Kawtal Hoore was founded in 2001 in Kaduna State as a response to the perceived ineffectiveness of Miyetti Allah and it currently operates in five states in the Middle Belt. Its centre remains Kaduna state. Unfortunately it has tied itself rather closely with the fortunes of specific political parties, which has the consequence that it is not trusted by other pastoral groups.

5.3.2.3 MOBGAL

MOBGAL was formed, also in Kaduna State, in 1992, after the Zangon Kataf crisis. Like Kawtal Hoore, it presents an alternative to Miyetti Allah, but may not be very effective.

5.3.2.4 CORET

CORET, also based in Kaduna, is a rather different body from these others. Largely donor-funded, it aims to increase co-operation between pastoral organisations throughout West Africa. Its officers therefore spend much of their time at meetings in countries outside Nigeria. It is thus hard to gauge its effectiveness.

5.4 Vigilantes

One of the responses to the increased insecurity has been the formation of vigilante groups (Photo 10). These are informal groups, often including hunters, armed with a variety of mostly antiquated weapons. Members are mostly voluntary and paid only by community contributions, although in some places Local Government contributes to their costs. Such groups have been formed in a wide variety of places in North-Central Nigeria with more or less official sanction. In the long run they are dangerous to peace, since they tend to be armed and consist of younger men.

Photo 10. Vigilantes



6. Media reports exacerbate conflict

The Nigerian media are often praised for their robust exercise of freedom of the press. Since many newspapers are covertly funded by politicians, this often amounts to printing unwarranted accusations concerning their opponents, unsupported by any genuine research. This also means that they print opinion pieces making very unpleasant accusations. The coverage of the conflict in broadcast, print and social media is highly simplistic and rarely informed by investigative journalism. Distorted information is disseminated as facts and images taken from quite different times and places accompany the reports. Slogans such as *Boycott Cattle for Fulani Bullets*, *Fulani worse than Boko Haram* circulate on social media (Figure 2 and Figure 3). In states outside of the

Figure 2. 'Nomadic scourge'



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Middle Belt, such as Anambra and Ondo, state-owned media openly disseminate these prejudices. To achieve personal advancement, politicians characterize the conflict as political or religious, thereby inciting further hate and intolerance.

Figure 3. Unwarranted comparisons

'Fulani herdsmen worse than Boko Haram' — Benue governor

"If I have my way, no one should be eating cow meat again. If this happens, I hope it will stop the killing in Agatu." These were the words of an eight-year-old boy, Aliyu Audu, in Ojantele, one of the three camps designated for displaced persons in the wake of the crisis that rocked Agatu a few weeks ago.

For most farmers, traders and other residents of Benue and Taraba states, "Fulani herdsmen" is synonymous with bloodshed and wanton destruction. Fulani terrorists parading as herdsmen have continued to kill, maim and cause destructions with impunity." - Nigerian Tribune, [Fulani Gun men Shoot at David Mark](#)

It cannot be underlined too strongly that while these hate campaigns persist in the media, exercising rational policy options in this area will remain extremely difficult.

7. Making progress

7.1 Steps towards a solution

To make effective progress requires a series of steps;

Diagnosis. Discover more precisely the situation in each area and the forces underlying conflict.

Circulate analysis for consultation

Testing of diagnosis. The analysis of the issues must be circulated to the stakeholders for comment, disagreement and then revision. This is typically done in workshop format, but this may not work in conflict situations

Training. Local groups empowered to undertake similar analyses themselves

Identification of stakeholders. Local groups must identify all the stakeholders and be able to explain their role in either inciting or reducing conflict, as well as officials at every level

Identification of solutions. Solutions must be region-specific; they must address the problems identified. Generic solutions have proven to be of limited value.

Implementation. Whatever the solution under discussion it has to be tested and implemented. This will take time and resources and these must be budgeted.

Evaluation. Did it work? How well? Is it sustainable?

Write-up/lessons learnt. Often the hardest part; to finalise the process in a report useful to others

Dissemination. If something useful has been learnt, how can it be disseminated? New technology can be useful here; smartphones, short videos, Youtube etc.

Keeping on top of a dynamic situation. Things are constantly changing in Nigeria and there is no guarantee the problems will not recur with new players.

7.2 Analytic versus narrative reports

Long-term solutions require effective analysis and this is often sorely lacking in Nigeria. There is a general assumption that conflict resolution and peace-building are desirable and they have accumulated considerable resources. But the continuing violence argues that they are only temporary solutions. Reporting in Nigeria is

usually narrative; suitable for agriculture but of limited value in a humanitarian situation. Unless reports dig down to the drivers of conflict, proposed solutions are of no proven value. It is better to try and prevent future conflict than simply to keep on trying to patch up the situation after the event.

7.3 The importance of regional solutions

As should be clear from the body of this report, the mobility of pastoralists is such that this is a regional issue. FulBe herders typically move between grazing areas, regardless of administrative boundaries, and the rise of instability has further accelerated this trend. FulBe also split their herds and families, so that part of the herd may be in one state, while the young men are with the larger group of animals somewhere else. In recent times, the mobile phone has become an indispensable tool in co-ordinating these dispersed activities. Any effective solution to the issues outlined in this report will therefore depend on the development of a more regional perspective, not confined to the boundaries of diocese, province or state.

8. The importance of information

8.1 How should we disseminate information?

Both farmers and pastoralists entertain wrong information about one another and tend to propose highly impractical solutions to current problems. Most typical are plaintive comments that we should return to the former period of collaboration, co-operation and peace. Such days will never return and only realism is a practical response for fixing the problems.

In addition, rumours and false accusations have a tendency to circulate rapidly, exacerbating distrust between the two communities. There seems little doubt that insurgents and bandits play on this by using what must be quite exaggerated versions of FulBe dress to give the impression the herders are the attackers. Government plays no role in correcting this unchecked propaganda. It is therefore of considerable importance to use whatever media is most effective in countering some of the more exaggerated claims.

Nigeria is a quite connected society, where the internet and smartphones play a role in social interaction among urban populations. However, this technology is almost useless in rural areas, where the problems recur. It seems then that radio is the only way to reach such populations, and that broadcasts must be in the vernacular, and in a style that convinces hearers of the sympathy of the speaker. Peacebuilding organisations have so far made little use of this cheap and effective method of countering false assertions.

8.2 The role of the mobile phone

Mobile phones began to be widespread in Nigeria from 2005 onwards, and they remain relatively cheap and practical, with good national coverage. Smartphones are common in urban areas, and Nigerians are enthusiastic adherents of social media. However, in rural areas, perhaps surprisingly, a lack of literacy among both herders and farmers has meant that the importance of mobile phones is restricted to voice calls. Even so, access to a phone now plays an important role in herders' lives. The primary use of the phone is for information concerning grazing and water, something individuals previously would travel long distances to find out. Market prices are an important secondary use, since FulBe economy depends on the sale of small stock for meat. The potential of the smartphone for circulating security information as well as correcting exaggerated claims in the media, as well as linking together pastoral leaders in widely dispersed places has yet to be realised.

9. Current issues

9.1 Security

Security issues in other parts of Nigeria can and do affect the situation in regions very remote from the problems. Pastoralists are by definition mobile and their herds are vulnerable, so they inevitably flee conflict areas. Although the Boko Haram insurgency is the major problem for the Nigerian government, trouble on the Jos Plateau has also affected pastoralists. A typical response to attacks on the herds and camps is to move the family unit to a place of safety and to send the herds with young men or hired herders. As a consequence, this does reduce control over the herds, and they are more vulnerable to rustling. Especially since 2010, there has been a major expansion of cattle rustling and associated with kidnapping, which probably reflects a

combination of youth unemployment and pastoralists who have lost their herds. The response has been to increase the power and scale of weaponry carried as well as the willingness to use it.

The forces that underlie the growth of conflict between herders and farmers in the Nigerian Middle Belt have been allowed to develop unchecked due to a weak policy environment. NGOs and CBOs can use advocacy to try and change the situation, but can this involve security issues over which they have little influence. Nonetheless, they can engage in several key arenas, most notably in-depth regional conflict analysis, forward policy thinking, advocacy for pastoralist-friendly policies. Probably the most difficult conceptual problem is convincing the established farmer blocs that resolving these issues is in their own interest, especially in the new Nigeria that is developing. Non-formal institutions have the freedom to try new technological solutions which government will never implement.

9.2 Collapse in the price of oil

Nigeria has historically had a highly skewed economy, based heavily on oil exports. The price of oil has been high for a long time, allowing the import of both food and manufactured goods on a large scale. By some estimates, as much as 50% of food in Nigeria was imported until recently, including most milk and meat⁴. As a result, both agriculture and small factories have been allowed to fail⁵, and the government has no policy support for these industries, since many individuals have grown rich on import licences. However, in the last 18 months, the price of oil has fallen some 70% and few analysts think it will recover soon or at all (Figure 4).

As a consequence, lack of confidence in the capacity of Nigeria to find alternative sources of revenue has led to a fall in the value of the Naira. Since the end of 2014, the Naira has nearly halved in value. There is no reason to consider it will not fall further still, as oil prices are likely to remain low. The consequence is that both imported food and manufactured goods will become correspondingly more expensive. This might ultimately be good for local farmers, but in the short term will create problems, as to increase food production they will need government support.

⁴ The import of frozen meat is technically banned, but nearly all the fresh meat sold in the major markets of southern Nigeria is from outside its borders, typically Niger, Mali and Chad.

⁵ An excellent summary of this problem is at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35785426>

Figure 4. Oil prices since 2000, showing collapse in the last 18 months



However, their likely response is to bring still more land under cultivation, which will further exclude herders from grazing, especially along the banks of rivers, where dry season farms are now established. The obvious policy response should be to consolidate water access and stock routes while it is still possible, as pressure to turn these over to agriculture is only likely to increase. Civil insecurity in rural areas will act a major deterrent to farmers seeking to invest in improved agricultural productivity.

10. Where next?

On the basis of the findings of this mission, the following recommendations can be made;

- More effective information sharing systems need to be created. The mission found that little was known about events and policy in areas outside the immediate concern of individual projects. However a broader vision is essential in dealing with pastoralists, where remote events frequently affect local interactions
- A more effective use of vernacular media to communicate analysis and information to all sides in conflict situations
- A more systematic assessment of the role of traditional leaders in both reconciliation and exacerbation of conflict and dissemination of lessons learnt
- A more effective use of stock routes and grazing reserves which have long been intended to reduce conflict between herders and farmers, but which have been allowed to fall into disuse in some areas
- An extended effort to contact pastoralist leaders who have been excluded from the process of community dialogue

The first four are areas where MISEREOR and its Nigerian partner organisations can undertake practical activity; the last item can be the subject of policy work, together with other bodies.

In the light of this, the following proposals are made for a further mission;

- ✚ Visits to a wide range of partner organisations across the Nigerian Middle Belt, especially in the areas west of the Niger, including the Yoruba areas in the southwest
- ✚ Develop a more comprehensive network of connections with diocesan offices and the problems they are experiencing

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- ✚ Expand training in analytic report writing to a wide range of partner individuals as well as developing schedules of reporting
- ✚ Develop a regional database of trusted interlocutors, especially among pastoralists and train offices in the use of this
- ✚ Develop and advocacy strategy based on a more in-depth analysis of the drivers of conflict
- ✚ Develop a media strategy, in particular for vernacular radio broadcasting and social media, to counter exaggerated and untrue claims

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Photo 11. Meeting in Barakin Ladi



Photo 12. Crossing the Katsina Ala



Photo 13. Meeting in Makurdi

