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The Journal of International Politics and Development (JIPAD) is a truly international, bi-annual peer-reviewed journal with a reputation for high editorial standards. It is published by the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Babcock University, Ilesan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria, and has never missed an edition since its inauguration in 2003. The journal is currently in its fifteenth edition and is published in January and June.

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JIPAD seeks to publish original research that advances knowledge about politics, economy, society and development at the global, international, regional and domestic levels. The journal is interdisciplinary in scope and welcomes full-length articles, briefings, book reviews, conference reports and research notes that draw from, or can inform developments across disciplines, and across national boundaries. JIPAD also provides a forum for interaction between policy and practice on questions of governance and development, and thereby informs policy debates among scholars, researchers, policy makers and relevant audiences. The main criterion for acceptance of an article, though, is the high intellectual quality of such a submission, and the clear potential to contribute distinctly to debates in the subject of discourse.

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## Editor's Note

The editorial team of JIPAD is delighted to bring you the volume eighteen of our highly regarded journal, JIPAD in keeping with our tradition of publishing papers that are of the highest quality that are at the cutting edge of their genre.

I am indeed grateful to the editorial committee for their unflinching dedication to maintain our rigorous peer-reviewing tradition, which results to the fact that continually year after year, at a quarter of the papers submitted get published as majority are usually weeded out for not meeting the standards that we have set for ourselves, of not publishing for the sake of publishing, but delivering the highest quality in each volume and each edition of the journal that comes through the press.

This is the first edition of the journal that is being published following my assumption of duties as the Editor of JIPAD. I promise to keep up the tradition of publishing only manuscripts that meet the highest quality.

This edition had been delayed because of the COVID-19 Pandemic and its direct effect on the global economy, of which the educational sector was not immune. In spite of the effects of the pandemic, we have ensured that papers in this edition have been carefully selected to meet the different categories of our readership across the Social Sciences. They address pertinent issues of global and national importance that are at the front-burner of scholarly discourse.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, we once again place on record the fact that we do not take your patronage for granted. We would not have attained our present heights without you and we count on your continual patronage in the years ahead, as we keep our pledge to always offer you the very best that is comparable to any such journal across the globe.

Ngozi Nwogwugwu, PhD.  
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Editor's Note

The editorial team of JPAD is delighted to have your work published in our highly regarded journal. JPAD is keeping with our tradition of publishing papers that are of the highest quality and at the cutting edge of their genre. I am indeed grateful to the editorial committee for their unanimous decision to maintain our rigorous peer-reviewing tradition, which results in the fact that continuously year after year, a quarter of the papers submitted get published. I would like to personally welcome you to our next meeting in the near future. We are not publishing for the sake of publishing, but delivering the highest quality of work to our readers. This is the first time the journal has been published and we are assuming the duties of the editor of JPAD. I promise to keep up the tradition of publishing only manuscripts that meet the highest quality.

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# **An Interrogation of the Management Strategies of the Farmers and Herdmen Conflict in Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

Benjamin Adeniran ALUKO, PhD\*

&

Doutimiye Blenny OGBOFA\*

## **Abstract**

Herdsmen and farmers conflict have become one of the major sources of insecurity and violence in Nigeria. This phenomenon has become widespread as virtually all the parts of the country is experiencing it, though in varying intensity. This paper assessed the approaches adopted in the management of the disabling and destructive conflict by both the state and non-state actors in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The United Nations Guiding Principles in Business and Human Rights was used as a tool of assessment. Findings revealed that the Bayelsa State government's management approach, which was deficient in terms of local ownership was less effective while the Bayelsa State Conflict Management Alliance approach, an initiative of the civil society, succeeded a great deal in reducing the conflict and restoring peaceful coexistence between the herdsmen and the farmers. This study established that the Bayelsa State Conflict Management Alliance approach succeeded due to its employment of the United Nations principles as its fulcrum. Consequently, this paper argued for the need for conflict interveners to involve the local people, as advocated in the United Nations Guiding Principles in Business and Human Rights, in their engagements in conflict.

**Keywords:** Bayelsa State, Herdsmen, Farmers, Conflict Management

## **Introduction**

The threat of conflict is one of the major problems across the world. Conflicts have threatened peaceful coexistence as well as the economic and political stability of the country since the return of democracy in 1999 (Adeyinka & Akeem, 2010; Omotosho, 2010). The threats are underscored by the increase

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in ethno-religious and political conflicts as well as separatist agitations with their attendants' negative consequences (Alubo, 2006). The conflicts distribution across the country is what Albert (2012) described as the geography of conflicts in Nigeria.

According to Albert (2012) the North West and North East are plagued with devastating violent religious conflicts while the North central zone is bedeviled by conflicts between farmers and herdsmen as well as conflicts between settlers and indigenes. Ethnic conflicts between the Yorubas and Hausa-Fulani underscored by the violent clashes between the OPC and Arewa Youths and conflicts between members of National Union Road Transport Workers (NURTW) prevail in the South West. In the South East violent land conflicts, kidnapping for ransom and separatist agitations have remained unabated while the south-south is home to youth militancy and agitations for resource control and sea piracy. These conflicts have contributed immensely to the level of underdevelopment in the country (Albert, 2002). Similarly, Danjibo (2006) avers that when conflicts rage on, incomes are negatively affected deaths and diseases increase while education opportunities for people especially the less privileged are jeopardized.

The foregoing conflicts distribution and the effects which are not inspiring have changed drastically resulting in greater threats to peace and development in recent times. This is exemplified in the emergence and upsurge of violent conflicts between herdsmen and (farmers) communities in the South West; Ilado in Ondo Town, Ekare Ekiti, South-east; Nimbo-Uzo Uwani, Abi in Enugu State and Ekpetiama in Bayelsa State, Obiaruku, Abraka and Ossisa in Delta State (*Vanguard*, 2018; *PMNews* 2016).

Osiade (2017) captured this upsurge thus:

Many states had recently been in the throes of herdsmen due to a deadly resurgence of the marauders, some of whom are believed to be of Fulani extraction, more worrisome is the fact that some of the states being rampaged by these shepherds are in the Southern part of the country as against the impression that the herdsmen are only operating in the North. States like Bayelsa, Enugu, Delta and Ondo were recently caught in the web of the carnage being perpetrated by these groups of killers (*Sunday Telegraph*, 2017 pp33-34).

The activities of the herdsmen, especially the sacking of communities and destruction of livelihoods in some parts of the country made the Nigerian 8<sup>th</sup> Senate to describe herdsmen as another Boko Haram. They therefore called on the Inspector General of Police to contain the activities and bring culprits to face the wrath of the law (*Vanguard*, s2017).

Some factors have been advanced as causes of the emergence of the conflicts in the Southern states. According to Bambodo, rich pasture in the North Eastern region of Nigeria is no longer available for use because of the Boko Haram crises. The impact has been a downward /Southwards movement by nomadic Fulani herdsmen as they move in search of water and foraging resources for their cows. Conflicts become inevitable as they come in contact with farmers and farmlands because of the destruction of the farms by the cows.

The Fulani herdsmen on their part insist that conflicts between them and communities do not arise entirely due to destruction of farms by their cattle but also due to increased rustling of their cattle by community people. A pastoralist quoted in Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program (NSRP, 2017, p. 2) impact report says that “our herd is our life because to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened?” Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) policy brief attest to the above:

Rural banditry associated with cattle rustling-the practice of stealing cattle and animals from the herders or raiding of cattle from the ranches has become a major concern for public policy in contemporary Nigeria...It has been estimated that in 2013 alone over 50,000 cattle were rustled across the various states especially in the Northern and North Central parts of Nigeria. While it is estimated that over 300 herders were killed in that year, the number of non-herders that have been killed in the frequent deadly confrontations between farmers and grazers is unknown (NSRP, 2015, p. 2).

The last part of the above report concerning the number of non-herders killed in the farmers and herdsmen conflicts being unknown applies to the Bayelsa State experience. In Bayelsa state, pockets of under reported conflicts between herdsmen and farmers have occurred resulting in deaths and

destructions. The activities of the herdsmen in the state became media issue when farmers and community leaders in Ekpetiama clan in Yenagoa Local Government Area of the state protested against the destructions of farmlands by herders and their cows in November 2016. According to King Dakolo the traditional ruler of the clan:

What is happening now is a recipe for disaster. It is very difficult to watch your crops which are doing well being eaten by cows. It could spark some clash some day between farmers and herders (*PMNews*, 2016).

He then called for government's quick intervention to avert violent conflicts. Since conflict is inevitable in human social interaction, it is imperative for scholars to be concerned with how to manage conflicts in order to guarantee peaceful outcomes. In the words of Lyam (2006):

Where conflicts are not properly managed, peace and security which are the necessary ingredients for good governance, interpersonal and communal relations disappear. This can jeopardize the development of the community in question be it at the family or international level (p. 41).

Apart from the need to stop the spread of the conflicts across the states, there is also a marked lack of appreciation of mutual interest farmers and herdsmen stand to benefit through cooperation and collaboration. This lack could only be overcome by proactive conflict management methods and processes. This paper therefore focuses on the management methods adopted by state and non-state actors in managing the emerging herdsmen and communities' conflicts in Bayelsa State. The paper is sub-divided into Introduction, Bayelsa State environment, farming in Bayelsa state and its challenges, conflicts between herdsmen and farmers (communities) in Bayelsa State and management methods: Bayelsa State Government's approach and issues, Bayelsa State Conflict Management Alliance's approach and assessment of approaches and conclusion.

Since the emergence of the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in the country, various methods have been adopted by governments and communities to manage the conflicts in the country, ranging from communities' adversarial approaches to government's commissions of

inquiries. Unfortunately, however, because of the grossly under reported nature of the conflicts in Bayelsa State, empirical study of the management methods adopted by stakeholders in the state have not been carried out. The imperative for this lies in the need to assess the level of success or otherwise of the measures adopted in the state to manage the conflict in terms of meeting sustainable and preventive peace-building principles and enhancing peaceful coexistence.

### **The Study Area**

The environment of Bayelsa State is very fragile and much of it is water (Dickson 2014). The land forms in the state vary ranging from the beach ridge–barrier islands at the Atlantic coast through tidal flats to the fresh water alluvial plains. The beach ridge –barrier island complex forms an outer chain of sediments which help to protect the tidal basins in Bayelsa State from direct impact of breaking swell waves of the Atlantic Ocean (Oyegun, 1999). Not much agricultural activities take place in this area as the soils are made almost entirely of sand.

Bordering the beach ridge–barrier island is the tidal flats or mangrove zone that connects the beach ridges to the tidal fresh water alluvial zone. The tidal flats are intersected by a network of rivers as well as creeks which are kept in continuous existence by the flow of water along them during ebb and flow tide. Much of the land in this zone is under tidal influence and agricultural activities are greatly limited.

The fresh water alluvial plain also called the meander belts cover the upper and lower delta plain that form the relatively low-lying broad and more gently sloping portion of the Niger Delta basin. This stretch comprises small meander oxbow lakes, flood plains, alluvial cones, alluvial fans, natural levees of rivers and creeks and back swamps (Okonny *et al*, 1999). The levee crest soils are those occupying the highest portion of the Bayelsa land and are located near the rivers or creeks. Their heights are above sea level and this makes them the least flooded hence most towns and villages are located on them.

The levee slope soils occur at the back slope of the levee between the levee crest and flood plains. Some are submerged up to two meters or more at the peak of the floods while others are flooded not more than a few centimeters deep during the flooding season. The flood plains are the low-lying stretches of land bounded by levees. When floods start rising, they usually meet several barriers from the levees allowing them to fill the flood plain first and drain

away when the water recedes, making the flood plains to be better drained than the back swamp.

The swamp soils are flooded for more than three months in a year. The water level in some back swamps is very close to the dry season river water level making it difficult for the water to flow back into the river, even when the waters recede in October/November. In other situations, the flood plains lack channels connecting them with the river and do not drain easily after flooding. Apart from the back swamps, there is also the permanent swamp, with standing water all the year round which is too wet for even raffia palm to survive. It is under deep water which drains away when flood waters recede but some remain for most, if not all the dry season (Okonny *et al.*, 1999). UNDP (2006) therefore described the Niger Delta (especially Bayelsa State) as lacking in dry and relatively well drained land. This creates impediments to large scale or mechanized farming in the state.

There are natural and man-made challenges to farming in Bayelsa State which include; the Land Use Act, 1978, Flooding, Erosion and oil spillage (Dickson 2014).

**Flooding:** The natural terrain and hydrology of the state have caused certain environmental problems including flooding and erosion that impede farming in the state. Seasonal flooding occurs in the fresh water zone during river floods induced by rains and releases from dams upstream which keep communities and farmlands partially or wholly submerged for months (Dickson 2014).

**River Bank Erosion:** This is another natural challenge to farming in the state which occurs at the end of the annual floods when saturated river bank soils become unstable and collapse into the river due to lack of cohesion. Such affected lands are the fertile and intensely farmed lands as in Agbere, Odoni, Sabagreia and Asamabiri (World Bank, 1995 cited in Dickson 2014).

**Oil Spills:** Perhaps the greatest challenge to farming in the state is the incidents of oil spillage. When oil pollutes land or water it causes unquantifiable ecological devastations. Dickson (2005) confirmed that from December 1996 to August 2005, over 280 oil spill cases were visited by the Bayelsa state ministry of Environment. Thus, the scarce land for farming is severely polluted even as the floods usually transport spilt oil from the spill sites to other places resulting in decreased yield.

Interestingly, because of the absence of employment opportunities in the private and public sectors, most young persons have engaged in farming against the aforementioned odds and challenges (Oguru, Zuofa and Berepubo, 1999). This account for the level of attachment to farms and farmlands by the people as it remains their main source of livelihood. Therefore, any attempt by herdsmen to graze their cattle through farms/farmland is an invitation to conflict and chaos.

### **Understanding the Nature and Character of the Conflicts between Herdsmen and Farmers in Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

The major occupation of most of the people especially in rural areas in the state is farming (BYSEEDS, 2009). Therefore, the need to acquire, secure and maintain farmlands for farming purposes against the earlier mentioned challenges have triggered communal conflicts like intra and inter family and intra and inter community conflicts. Interestingly, such conflicts hardly escalate to violence and crisis stage because cultural practices and traditional methods are used to manage them as land is still deeply embedded in the traditions of the people despite the influence of modernity (Dickson, 2014).

Conflicts between herdsmen and communities in the state which occurs over destruction of farms and farmlands in specific communities are therefore community-based conflicts. Also, because the herdsmen are generally perceived to be of Hausa/Fulani extraction and the communities are Ijons (Ijaws) the conflicts have the potential of taking ethnic coloration. This was manifested by the reactions that followed the management approach of the Bayelsa State government. The conflicts have turned violent and recorded destructions and are heightened by the downward southward movement of herdsmen and their cattle into the state which coincided with the late November planting season. Because the primary and secondary forests are impenetrable for cattle, herdsmen simply lead their cattle to graze along the flood plains, thus destroying crops and triggering conflicts.

Over the years, pockets of clashes between herdsmen and farmers were recorded in the state. These isolated cases were contained by local leaders. For instance, the people of Okordia / Zarama and Biseni clans in Yenagoa local government area of Bayelsa State declared Hausa/Fulani herdsmen 'persona-non-grata' on their lands when herdsmen killed an indigene of Zarama community Mr. Uzeni Owe in Epie Zarama in 2006. The said killing was preceded by the inflicting of injuries on a woman in her farm who protested against the destruction of her farm by herdsmen whose cattle grazed through

the farm. The enraged community mobilized and chased out the herdsmen from their land. The timely intervention of opinion leaders of the community and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) staff in the rural development area of the local government averted counter attacks and crisis (NOA, 2006).

However, in recent times, reports of farmers and herdsmen conflicts have become more frequent with an equally increased casualty rate. According to the Bayelsa State Conflict Management Alliance's conflict tracking reports (2016) on herdsmen and community conflicts in the state, several communities had clashes with herdsmen over destruction of farms by cattle. According to the report, in November 2016, Biogbolo, Etegwe, Okaka, Onopa, Okutukutu, Yenizue-Epie and Yenizue-Gene communities engaged herdsmen in violent conflicts over the destruction of their farms by cattle. The youth president of Ikibiri reported to the BYSCMA that indigenes of Ikibiri community killed a cow as it was destroying their farms and the Fulani herdsmen went berserk. It took the intervention of the police to avert crisis (BYSCMA, 2017).

The conflict between herdsmen and Agbura community in November 2016 attracted the Joint Task Force (JTF) in the state who was bent on effecting mass arrests in the community but for the astuteness of the traditional ruler of the community His Highness E. N. Daufa. According to the traditional ruler, the incessant destruction of farms by cattle and the level of impudence demonstrated by herdsmen in his community prompted him to declare that any cow which strayed into the community or farm be killed. A cow strayed into to the community after the proclamation and was chased by youths and killed at Otuokpoti community (Agbura, 2017).

The Fulani herdsmen reported the matter to the Joint Task Force (JTF). Tension rose as the JTF laid siege on the community for days in search of the killers of the cow. In the words of the secretary to council of chiefs, Mr. Senior Andrew "We were traumatized, only God knows what we went through in the hands of the JTF officials, I cannot tell how much it cost the community apart from the payment for the cow" (Agbura, 2017). Herdsmen and community conflicts in Bayelsa State which is usually around resources and livelihoods have the potential for easily taking on the colouration of ethnic conflicts between Izon and Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups in Nigeria. This much was demonstrated by the protest of Izon at home and in the Diaspora against some measures taken by government to manage the conflict. The conflict therefore posed potential threats to lives and livelihoods of the Izon and the Hausa/Fulani within and outside Bayelsa State.

## **An Interrogation of the Management Approaches of the Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

As the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers (communities) spread in the state and became media issue, the state government and other stakeholders came up with various management approaches to manage the conflicts.

### **The Bayelsa State Government Herdsmen and Farmers Management Approach (Track One)**

The Bayelsa State government approach was borne out of a desire and necessity to contain the spread of the conflicts across the entire state. The state Governor Dickson Seriake, made a policy statement in November 2016, designating the Bayelsa State palm land owned by the government as grazing /ranch area. Accordingly, the government provided 1,200hectares of land for this purpose and set up a committee on the control and management of cattle ranches on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 with the responsibility of relocating all cattle dealers and herdsmen with their cattle to the palm estate. The committee swung into action and effected relocation of cattle to the state Palm Estate at Elebele.

The government approach engendered certain issues which escalated the conflict credentials in the state and heated up the polity as it has become a source of conflict between the state government and the citizens, including members of the political class and opinion leaders. The concerns pertain to the following:

#### *Fears of Host Communities*

The likelihood that the policy may end up shifting the herders-farmers (communities) conflicts from the scattered points in the state to the host communities of the grazing/ranch area (Elebele, Otuoke, Okaka, Azikoro, Agbura, Otuokpoti). Two factors underlie this fear, one is that the boundary of the proposed grazing/ranch area has not been clearly defined and fenced. Consequently, the host communities reasoned that the herdsmen may encroach on their lands and destroy crops. Secondly, due to the fact that the area is an oil palm plantation, large part of it has no reasonable grasses to sustain grazing for too long. Consequently, the communities fear that the herdsmen may be forced to move further into the land/forest and consequently result in the destruction of farmlands and associated conflicts.

This fear was confirmed by the secretary of the state ranch /grazing committee that there are logistics and technical problems with the state government policy. One such issue he mentioned was the inaccessible state of



the palm estate, that most of the 1,200 hectares of land are in a state of primary forest and a good part is waterlogged and unfenced. It follows therefore, that even if the committee forcibly relocated all herdsmen and their cattle to the designated ranch and grazing area, the possibility of confining them at the palm estate in order to forestall contacts with farms and farm-lands and averting conflicts is rather slim.

This fear has informed the traditional rulers of the host communities who have met several times to strategize on how best to counter the government policy. According to the traditional ruler of Elebele community, they have resolved to take legal action against the state government. His counterparts from Azikoro and Agbura confirmed their readiness to pursue the matter in court for the interest of their lives and livelihoods.

#### *Ceding of Izon Land to Fulani*

Another concern was that the land in question was provided for use with the intent to make it a market but an announcement by the chair of the grazing /ranch management committee and head of Miyeti Allah Alhaji Shittu that, the land was a donation to the herdsmen has made people to conclude that the government has ceded the land, and fear that it could become a Fulani enclave that may create further security problems in the state. The foregoing is informed by the deep seated inter-ethnic and religious suspicions in the country which appears to underlie this. It was further heightened by the stories of the Fulani taking over any land giving to them for grazing in other parts of the country with the use of fire arms.

This story which went viral in social media is a reference point of the antagonists of the government policy exemplified by a coalition of Ijaw groups across the Niger Delta region, the Ijaw Peoples Development Initiative (IPDI), and the group known as Mothers of Ijaw Nation (MIN) led by Niger Delta activist, Ms. Ann Kio Briggs. The groups organized a mass protest in Yenagoa on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2016 asking Dickson to rescind his decision on the establishment of a ranch to the herdsmen. The group opined that the act of the state government was treacherous and a clear betrayal of Bayelsans who voted the governor into power. They emphasized:

this is a critical period in our nation. We do not want our women raped and killed, we do not want our children defiled and we do not want our kings kidnapped and killed, we do not want AK47 wielding herdsmen within Bayelsa state. We want to

unequivocally state that Dickson is inviting terrorists to Bayelsa State by allocating grazing land to killer squads under the guise of herdsmen. If we may ask, how many free fishing rivers and farmlands have northern governors allocated to southerners to carry out fishing and farm businesses in the north (*Saturday Telegraph* 2017, pp 32-34).

### *Lack of Legislation*

The last issue is the lack of legislation which clearly defines the policy or addresses the concerns of the people. Legislation is highly instrumental to the regulation of human activities in every society. The result of lack of legislation in response to the problem is speculations and confusion which heightened fears and escalation of the conflicts. While the communities and indigenes of the state are concerned with future conflicts linked to tussles over land ownership and encroachment on lands/farms, the herdsmen are worried that the location is not yet suitable for cattle breeding due to lack of water and the low land nature of the place which may be flooded during the raining season. This they fear, may result in clashes as herdsmen are either reluctant to move to the designated location or those who have moved in may be forced to lead their cattle to graze outside of the area.

### **Bayelsa State Conflict Management Alliance Approach (Track Two)**

The Bayelsa State Conflict Management Alliance (BSCMA) is a platform of the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) of the British Council raised in 2014. The platform and the activities are anchored by the Center for Niger Delta Studies, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Amassoma. Membership of the platform is drawn from civil society groups, the press, security agencies, representatives of government functionaries, faith-based organizations, government agencies and community representatives. The overall purpose of NSRP mission was the application of improved policies and practices that help manage conflicts non-violently within NSRP target states.

The BSCMA received complaints of herdsmen's harassment and conflicts between herdsmen and communities from representatives of communities and through her conflict tracking tools. Following the receipt of complaints from the various communities, the convener, Prof. S. Ibaba made herdsmen and communities conflicts a priority issue and mandated the Conflict Resolutions Committee of the platform to do a proper analysis of the

conflicts. The committee identified stakeholders, trends, nature and dynamics of the conflicts and presented a report to the convener who on the basis of the said report convened a meeting of stakeholders on May 10, 2016 in Yenagoa on peaceful coexistence between pastoralists (herdsmen) and agrarian communities (farmers) in Bayelsa State and raised a conflict alert.

The objective of the meeting was to aggregate various suggestions and recommendations from stakeholders as solutions to peaceful co-existence between farmers and herdsmen in Bayelsa State and to use such consensus framework as an advocacy tool to relevant authorities for early warning and early response. According to Prof. Ibaba the convener of BSCMA, while the Imam of the central mosque was represented on the platform, the various cattle dealers were not represented. The task before the convener was how to reach such groups. The non-representation of herdsmen and other cattle dealers on the platform underscored the level of importance attached to conflicts between herdsmen and communities before the current upsurge.

The conflict resolution committee therefore paid an advocacy visit to the Chief Imam of the Central Mosque in Ekeki, Yenagoa who brought together leadership of the Arewa Community in the state, representatives of the Butchers Association of Bayelsa State and other cattle dealers and got commitment from all to attend the enlarged stakeholders meeting on peaceful co-existence between farmers and herdsmen in Bayelsa State. They also expressed their appreciation for the convener for providing a platform for farmers and herdsmen to meet to find solutions to their problems. The enlarged stakeholders meeting of the BSCMA held on 10<sup>th</sup> of May, 2016 on peaceful co-existence between farmers and herdsmen agreed on long term, immediate and interim measures to manage the crisis.

**Long Term Measures include:**

1. Government should designate an area far from the city centre for grazing and cattle owners/herdsmen can either buy or lease land within this area for their activities. Cattle breeding should be restricted to the designated area.
2. Legislation should be made by the State House of Assembly to regulate cattle breeding in the state.

### **Immediate / Interim Measures**

1. No child should lead cattle for grazing alone. They should be accompanied by an adult.
2. There should be no night grazing / movement.
3. There should be no grazing in cultivated and residential area.
4. A Header-Farmers Peace Committee, initiated by the Department for State Security (DSS) should be strengthened. The committee should be established at both state, local government and clan/community levels, and is to receive complains from parties and handle or channel such to state security committee and others as may be appropriate.
5. Herdsmen should report to the herders-farmers committee on arrival to any community. Such herder(s) should then be taken to the community chiefs and other community leadership structures before the commencement of grazing.
6. Farmers and herdsmen should refrain from attacking one another when they are aggrieved. They should rather report to the appropriate channel/authority for appropriate interventions.

It is pertinent to state that the BSCMA intervention started before the State Government's announcement designating the state palm estate as a ranch/grazing area. Interestingly, it was after the government's policy announcement and the ensuing conflicts that the BSCMA's Conflict Resolution Committee met with the State Government's Conflict Resolution Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2017 where both agreed to work towards peaceful co-existence between herdsmen and communities in the state. Consequently, the BSCMA was requested to nominate a member each into the State Conflict Management Committee with the Deputy Governor as chairman and the Committee on Ranch Management and Control.

The BSCMA also proposed a bill for a law to provide for Bayelsa State cattle breeding area/market, the regulation of same and other related matters having realized that the resolutions of the meeting could only become effective with a legal backing. The presentation of the bill to the state house of assembly has been followed up with advocacy visits by the conflict resolution committee of the BSCMA to the majority leader and the chief whip of the State House of Assembly. The BSCMA also organized a training workshop for stakeholders on early warning and early response. Participants were drawn from host communities of the palm estate, members of government committee on cattle ranch, members of the State Conflict Resolution Committee, butchers

and members of other cattle dealers' associations and representatives of herdsmen.

It also took another step to reduce the conflicts caused by contacts between herdsmen and farmers by launching 'no grazing' sign posts with the message: No Grazing Area in Yenagoa and erected them along major roads/streets and other strategic places where grazing used to take place. There were also radio talks on peaceful co-existence between herdsmen and communities facilitated by the convener of BSCMA. The radio programme offered opportunities to the public to contribute during phone-in time.

### **An Assessment of the Approaches (Track One and Track Two Diplomacy)**

The UN guiding principles on business and human rights provides a tool and process for non-judicial grievance settling. The process emphasizes among others, building stakeholders trust to ensure legitimacy, providing adequate assistance to individuals or groups to access information, providing clear procedure and timeframe, providing individuals / groups with advice on how to engage in a grievance in respectful terms. It also emphasizes transparency, accordance to internationally recognize human rights and continuous dialogue.

It is pertinent to state that the herders/farmers conflicts in the state is over resources and border on certain human rights such as right to life, right to own property, right to engage in lawful business. Interestingly, both farmers and herdsmen are engaged in lawful business hence the appropriateness of the principles to evaluate the approaches in this assessment. This is done by assessing the level of compliance to the principles by the approaches.

Secretary to the Arewa community in Bayelsa state Ali Maiwada was emphatic when he said "the government policy cannot work for now, the place is not safe" (Yenagoa, April 24, 2017). The paramount ruler of Azikoro community confirmed the above when he said "the government announcement of turning the palm estate to a ranch and grazing area came to us as a surprise" (Azikoro, 24 April, 2017). It follows that they were not consulted as critical stakeholders whose farmlands share boundaries with the palm estate. In terms of inclusion the government ranch committee does not have representatives of the host communities. These expressed concerns and reactions clearly underscore the absence of basic principles of preventive peace-building such as monitoring of early warning signals, proper analysis, wide consultation, inclusion and participation of all critical stakeholders in the management process.

From the peoples' reactions to the state government policy and the ensuing conflicts, it is pertinent to state that the government approach was devoid of trust building which raised the issue of legitimacy as stakeholders did not identify with it. The approach was also bereft of adequate information dissemination channels to empower stakeholders on the processes and never engaged in consultations and dialogue. It also failed to factor in the approach Castro (2010) contention that resource management and livelihoods cannot be separated from peace building which heightened fears of stakeholders in terms of their resources and livelihoods. The foregoing underscored the weaknesses of the approach hence its failure in successfully managing the conflicts.

The BSCMA approach followed the United Nations guiding principles on business and human rights. By identifying and going to the stakeholders BSCMA was able to build the trust and confidence of parties in the conflict which guaranteed legitimacy of the process. It started by a proper analysis of the conflicts and brought together identified parties to seek solutions thus, provided adequate information on the process to the stakeholders. This was reinforced by the radio talks on peaceful coexistence between farmers and herdsmen as well as the launching and erection of 'No Grazing Sign Posts' at strategic locations. Through the workshop it organized for stakeholders it also provided them with knowledge on how to engage with respect in a conflict situation. The meetings and consultations ensured continuous dialogue that enhanced peaceful coexistence and dousing of tensions.

The success story of the BSCMA approach to the conflict was echoed by the Deputy Governor Rtd. Admiral John Jonah. He expressed happiness that BSCMA has succeeded in not only bringing representatives of farmers and herdsmen together but reduced tension and built trust amongst various stakeholders. Corroborating the above, the paramount rulers of Azikoro and Agbura communities confirmed that BSCMA has provided them the opportunity and platform to dialogue with leadership of herdsmen and other cattle dealers which has reduced mutual suspicion and fear that characterized their relations before the intervention.

According to HRH Amadoko, C. and HRH Daufa, N: "we now know where to channel our complaints when our women come crying to us for the destruction of their farms by herdsmen and their cattle" (Yenagoa, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

## Conclusion

This study has examined the management of Herdsmen and communities' conflicts in Bayelsa State. Two major approaches have been identified, namely, tracks one and two diplomacy. Put differently, the government management approach and the civil society management approach. Though both approaches were aimed at curtailing the spread of the conflicts across the state, the Bayelsa State Government's approach was top-down, non-consultative and adversarial which resulted in escalating the conflicts. The BSCMA approach which was characterized by wide consultations, trust and confidence building, capacity building and reliance on continuous dialogue legitimized the processes which encouraged active participation of all stakeholders that enhanced peaceful co-existence between herdsmen and communities. It is recommended that conflict interveners must ensure that their approaches are in conformity with recognised human rights and best practices for purposes of achieving desired outcomes.

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