

Chapter 57

Nomadic Terrorism, Displacement, and Food Insecurity Challenge in the Food Basket of the Nation

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ABSTRACT

The Middle Belt region of Nigeria, comprising significant parts of Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Adamawa, Plateau, Kogi, and Kwara, has been a battle ground for the nomadic terrorism in the past few years. Through the inspiration of Boko Haram, the nomadic terrorists have been able to infiltrate this part of the country impossible for the conventional Boko Haram to penetrate, leading to destruction of lives and livelihood, and displacement of thousands of people, with Benue State, referred to as the “Food Basket of the Nation,” the worst affected in the zone. While much attention is given to its impacts on human insecurity, what has been less observed, at least from an academic point of view, is its food insecurity impacts. Using phenomenological qualitative research, the study examined the impacts of nomadic terrorism on food insecurity in the Food Basket of the Nation in Nigeria. The study has implications for policymaking to address the state of IDPs in new location and militate against nomadic terrorism and conflicts in the Food Basket of the Nation and tackle food insecurity.

INTRODUCTION

Since independence on 1st October 1960, Nigeria has experienced series of coup d'états, a civil war and persistent ethno-religious conflicts (Suleiman, 2015; Dembele, 2015). The current situation in the country, with the Boko Haram and nomadic terrorist activities, however, is more problematic than in previous years (Dembele, 2015). Although both national and international attention were given to Boko Haram insurgency, the resurgence of nomadic terrorist activities has again brought to the fore the challenge of governing or maintaining law and order across the country (Oginni, Opoku & Alupo, 2018).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5352-0.ch057

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Nomadic terrorist activities has attracted condemnation from within and outside the country because of the devastating impact of its activities across the country (Abbass, 2014). The North-Central zone- the epicenter of agro-pastoralist crisis recorded huge loss of lives and livelihood with Benue State, referred to as the “Food Basket of the Nation”, worst affected in the zone (Amadi & Anokwuru, 2017; Fajonyomi, Fatile, Bello, Opusunju, & Adejuwon, 2018) . There is much discourse on the impact of nomadic terrorism on human lives and property in Nigeria. However, little attention has been given to its food insecurity impact, especially on those that were forced to move out of their villages and homes. In the midst of limited food production and economic activity in the region, it is important to understand the food insecurity impact on the internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by the nomadic terrorist activities.

The violent activities by the nomads has resulted in huge death of thousands of people, destruction of property, and massive displacement in the region (Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). Already, seven out of the 23 local governments in Benue state, namely Guma, Gwer-West, Agatu, Logo, Kwande and the Northern part of Makurdi mostly affected by the nomadic terrorism have tale of woes to tell (Eme, Onyishi, Uche, & Uche, 2014). As a result, the state is faced with the ongoing challenge of responding to fluctuating but large numbers of IDPs. While the camps are not prisons, the IDPs live in a state synonymous with that of prisoners (Adewale 2016). Some of the IDPs in Benue state confessed to having fled their homes without taking anything. They have no money; they have nothing but hope and the will to survive. In a study, Mercy Corps (2017) highlighted the food insecurity crisis in an area considered to be the “Food Basket” of Nigeria, as IDPs lack sufficient, stable and access to food supply.

BACKGROUND

The state of household food insecurity is an evolving concept that is wide spread in both the developed and developing countries (Adebayo, Olagunju, Kabir, & Adeyemi, 2016). As noted by Smith and Subandoro (2007), food insecurity continues to be a major developmental problem across the globe, thus undermining people’s health, productivity and often their survival. However, the potential for, and impact of, food insecurity will vary by location (Lloyd’s, 2016). In sub-Saharan Africa, the phenomenon is most felt (Adebayo, et al 2016). In general, developed countries are at lower risk of food insecurity than developing countries (Lloyd’s, 2016). In the words of Kuku and Liverpool (2010) and Amalu (2002), conflict, terrorism, drought, famine, degradation, deforestation, land tenure system, water stress, global climate change, extension gap, and low agricultural productivity are some of the factors restricting access to food or constraints to food production and food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the Food Basket of the Nation, the current situation is characterized by massive displacement and food insecurity. The presence of large number of displaced households continue to strain local resources and exacerbate food, relief commodity, shelter, livelihood, and protection needs, among others (Fajonyomi, et al 2018). Conceptually, the World Bank (2001) identified the three folds of food security. These are (1) food availability, in the form of sufficient quantities and qualities of food for the households through their own production and markets, (2) food accessibility, is about resource needed to obtain sufficient quantity and quality of food, and (3) food stability, which is explained by a condition to ensure a population, households or individual have access to sufficient quantity and quality of food at all times. This study uses all these components to investigate the links between nomadic terrorism, displacement and food insecurity in Guma and Makurdi areas of Benue. For instance, nomadic activities not only have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved, but they also disrupt and threaten the avail-

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