AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF CONFLICTS IN TAKUM AND USSA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF TARABA STATE, NIGERIA.

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

Keywords: Conflicts, Rural development, Social Amenities, Committee reports.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data for this paper was obtained through the administration of questionnaires specifically designed to obtain information among other things, on the extent of residential segregation and damages to lives and property in Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas of Taraba State Nigeria.

Sources of Data

The sample size of the study was determined based on Educational and psychological measurement Table (Krejcie and Morgan, 1969). As seen in the table, the sampled population size of the study area is 382 sample size.

Probability sampling or scientific sampling was adopted based on its advantages in which:

i) Households or individuals are selected randomly; and

ii) Each household or individual in the population has a known, non-zero probability of being included in the sample.

Two-stage sampling was conducted with grid system constituting the primary sampling unit. The grid squares (1 x 1 cm) were superimposed on the Takum and Ussa Local Government Area topographic map. Each grid square constitutes a zone or subgroups that represent aggregates of individual households in each cell of the study area. From each of the grids, 10 households were randomly selected and each served with a questionnaire. In each of the households, individuals were selected to respond to the questions. Those chosen are spread across all age-grades, occupations and social inclinations because of the spread effects of the crisis on all.

The Study Population

The population of the study area comprises of Chamba/Jukun and Kuteb tribes who are the inhabitants of Takum and who are engaged in communal conflict. Both tribes have segregated themselves in to small enclaves, sharing the same social amenities. Their socio-economic characteristics are the same; any development activity in the area will have almost similar impact on both communities. The population of these communities is put at 247, 619 people by the National Population Commission, 2006). The households surveyed from both tribes are numbered 382.

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

Method of Data Collection

Structured questionnaires were used to elicit information from various respondents comprising of individuals selected randomly to represent the various households, community leaders and some government officials. The questionnaire is structured into two sections. Section one contains information related to the characteristics of respondents such as age, sex, education, residence, marital status, occupation, family size etc. Section two contains information on socio-economic activities before and after the crisis. These include individual and business adjustments to conflicts; amenities enjoyed before, during and after conflicts, nature of business and income levels, causes of conflicts, socio-economic and political effects of conflicts.

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

Oral interviews were conducted by field assistants under the supervision of the researcher for one week after the questionnaires were delivered and followed by personal observations, which were aimed, to complement data acquired from the field through questionnaires. The interviewers sought information on the causes and effects of conflicts on their socio-economic activities before and after the conflicts. This was done to take care of the inadequacies or gaps that the questionnaires were not able to bridge in such areas as: the efforts of the church NGOs and individuals on resolution; whether the respondents’ current expenditures are directed at rehabilitation, food provision or investment in agriculture; and the economic cost of these crisis to families and the entire society.

More so, apart from the questionnaires administered an in-depth interview with some key individuals and stakeholders on the causes and possible solutions to the crisis was undertaken. This was done to enable the researchers come up with the summarized divergent views, opinions and the stance of each of the groups/communities and the way its going to be resolved.

Search for secondary data on causes and effects of conflicts in Takum area was made by the researcher through examination of commission and committee reports and other documentations on conflicts. Data of this nature were obtained from center for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja, National Archives, National Population Commission, Taraba state Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainty Affairs, Ussa and Takum Local Government Councils, textbooks, journals and the internet.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical techniques such as mean and percentages and ratio were employed to determine the characteristics and distribution of each of the parameters found in the questionnaire. Information in these categories was illustrated with pie charts, bar graphs and line graphs, where appropriate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Causes of Conflict in the Area and Main Actors

Apart from the causes of the crisis that are peculiar to the area, the other causes of the crisis identified include but are not limited to intolerance, poverty, youths unemployment, inadequate social
amenities, among other ones. These factors have been responsible for the major crisis in Taraba and other parts of Nigeria such as the ones between Fulani and Jukun, Jukun / Tiv, Mambilla/Fulani, Wurkum/Karimjo, Mumuye/Fulani, Jole/shomo, Mangu/Bokkos, Song/Shelleng, among others.

Table (1) Other causes of crisis by Local Government Areas
Source: Field survey, 2014
From Table 1, it was agreed by all respondents in the two Local Government Areas that all the attributes listed are the causes of the crisis, but that the central underlying causes are poverty and youths unemployment.

Also, from the Table 1, 37.3% and 39.4% respectively in Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas claimed that apart from other causes of the crisis, high poverty rates in both local government areas contributed immensely to the crisis. This is followed by youth unemployment which prevails in the area as corroborated by Mamman (2005) which revealed their roles as war executors by their communities due to lack of gainful employment opportunities for a stipend. The same Table 1 revealed that 30% of respondents in Takum and 35% in Ussa Local Government Areas asserting to this, with more of this influence on Ussa than Takum Local Government Area.

Table (2) Respondents perceived causes of the crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundary adjustment</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chieftaincy tussle</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization / lack of trust</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political oppression / suppression</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribalism/ nepotism</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty / unemployment</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land dispute</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elites/Government</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey, 2014

In Table 2, three major causes of crisis were mentioned; The largest causes is political oppression/suppression with 94 (25.4%); secondly chieftaincy tussle 73 (19.7%), a larger number of respondents strongly believed that chieftaincy tussle is the major cause of the crisis. This position was further reaffirmed during an in-depth interview with leaders of the two contending ethnic groups:

Question: What do you think is responsible for the prevalence of these crises? Respondents of Chamba claimed that Takum witnesses violent clashes more often than other chieftdoms in the state because of the refusal on part of some of the indigenous Kuteb people to share their political and traditional rights with them.

Kuteb man on the other hand claimed that Takum witnesses violence more often than other chieftdoms in the state because the immigrants into Takum refused to accept the truth that only Likam and Akante ruling families should administer the Takum chieftdom and the traditional institution.

The position between the two tribes over the Ukwe throne is so firm that none is willing to shift ground. The third largest cause is boundary adjustment with 71 (19.2%) respondent, these causes are triggered by tribalism and nepotism forms, leading to marginalization and lack of trust. Elites/Government is held responsible based on the fact that the 1975 gazette on Takum chieftaincy introduced the Chamba people who are completely alien to Kuteb culture into their affairs (Yoroms 1998).

More so, the re-composition of Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas as contained in government circular No. GHQ/228/PM of 12/3/1997 and the second with No. GHQ/228/PM of 28/4/1997 contradicting each other makes the government responsible over the violent clash, which together constitute 7.7% and 5.8% respectively. In both Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas, about 85.5% of the respondents respectively indicated that the implementation of various committee reports on the crisis will go a long way in resolving the crisis. On the other hand, 8.1% of the respondents suggested that implementation of various committee reports on the crisis will go a long way in resolving the crisis.

Table (3) Main actors of the crisis

Mostly, as noted earlier, the youths carry out these acts of violence individually or in groups in order to make a living (Mamman, 2000). In both Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas, about 85.5 and 87.5 percent of the respondents respectively indicated that the youths are the main perpetrators of this act as against the old and the children, which together constitute 7.7% and 5.8% respectively. This could be due to the high rate of poverty and youth unemployment in the area, which makes them to resort to violence to earn a living (Mamman, 2000).

In a nutshell, all the factors advanced and analyzed above, which include political oppression/suppression, Chieftaincy tussle and boundary adjustment have been revealed to be the major causes of the crisis generating to other causes.

Table (4) Suggested solutions to the crisis

Source: Field survey, 2014

About 19.7% of the respondents suggested that implementation of various committee reports on the crisis will go a long way in resolving the crisis. On the other hand, 8.1% of the
respondents are of the opinion that continuous and institutionalized dialogue and consensus remain the veritable way towards managing and resolving the crisis between the warring parties. While, 23.8% of the respondents that see unemployment, poverty and absence of adequate social amenities as a cause suggested that for this crisis to be resolved, jobs should be created and basic amenities be provided in the area. Over 48% of the respondents see all these attributes to be the solution to the crisis and suggested that efforts be geared towards putting all of them in place for lasting peace to return. It is clear that the people want lasting solution to the crisis but how that will be achieved is still a contestable issue by both parties.

CONCLUSION

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

References
16) Northern Nigeria Gazette No 24 vol. 12 11th April 1963, Supplement P.E.