THE CASE STUDY FROM AFRILAW

Title: The Gender Perspective of the Impact of Climate Change and Migration to Land Conflicts in Nigeria: A Case Study of The Pastoralist and Farmers Conflicts in Benue State

1. Executive Summary

This study provides a nuanced analysis of land conflict between farmers and pastoralists, focusing on the root causes and their implications for gender relations and intersectionality in Nigeria. It further examines the broader ramifications of these conflicts for the development of gender-responsive frameworks in conflict resolution and climate adaptation strategies.

Nigeria's climate change challenges present a complex web of interconnected issues that alter migration patterns and reshape conflict dynamics. The country has a long history of conflict, which has had significant gendered impacts. Land disputes between herders and farmers pose a range of social, economic, and security challenges, while also presenting opportunities for improved land resource governance and the development of local conflict management and prevention mechanisms.

This exploratory qualitative study adopts a case study approach to investigate the differentiated impacts of climate change and land conflict on women. Using a gender relations and intersectionality framework, the study interrogates the root causes of land disputes and explores how intersecting identities—such as those of women who are pastoralists or farmers—shape experiences of vulnerability. It highlights how these groups are disproportionately affected by climate-induced land conflict and how they navigate these challenges beyond traditional gender roles.

The study established that climate change and land conflict have multidimensional impacts on gender, increasing women's vulnerability and limiting their access to land. It employs a gender relations and intersectionality lens to offer empirically grounded policy recommendations aimed at advancing inclusive policy reform.

2. Introduction

Land conflict in Nigeria and other developing nations stems from complex climatic conditions, migration, and structural inequalities that heighten tensions among agrarian communities. These conflicts in Africa reinforce age-long cultural and institutional discrimination in gender relations and land rights (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020). A gender relations and intersectionality lens is crucial to better understand how systems and practices interplay to aggravate existing structural violence against different genders, ethnicity, religion, and geography in predominantly masculine society (Appiah-Boateng, 2024). This perspective is extremely important to analyze how climate change and migration creates varying levels of vulnerability among women of diverse identities and social backgrounds.

Climate change presents a complex web of interconnected challenges that significantly alter migration patterns and intensify land conflict dynamics in Nigeria. It serves as a trigger for both migration and escalating land disputes (McGuirk & Nunn, 2025). In northern Nigeria, the depletion of water sources, grasslands, and forest vegetations—driven by anthropogenic carbon emissions—has exacerbated adverse environmental impact and may clog the achievement of the 2030 net-zero emissions target (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020). Recurrent droughts and desertification in the Lake Chad Basin have driven large-scale migration of pastoralist communities southward, increasing land competition and conflict with farming populations (Ani & Uwizeyimana, 2020). These conflicts are not driven by environmental factors alone but are deeply embedded in social, economic, and political structures. Gender intersectionality, particularly through the lenses of ethnicity and religion, plays a central role in shaping conflict dynamics (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024; Buhaug, 2016). Notably, land tensions between Muslim Fulani herders and Christian non-Fulani farmers in the Middle Belt and North Central states have resulted in cycles of violence. Economically, Nigeria loses an estimated $13.7 billion annually to these conflicts (Mercy Corps, 2015), with Benue and Kaduna States alone reporting a $2.3 million loss—or 47% of their 2015 internally generated revenue—due to land conflict.

These conflicts have far-reaching gendered implications, disproportionately affecting women by restricting access to land, limiting economic opportunities, and undermining food security (Amaza, 2018). The International Crisis Group reports that approximately 2,000 deaths occur annually from land-related conflicts in Benue State and the broader Middle Belt region (Nwanza, 2018). Before climate change gained prominence in global discourse, land conflicts were less frequent, due to more predictable migration patterns and limited land grabbing.

Climate change is an escalating existential threat and a primary driver of land conflict and many protracted violence in Nigeria, notably the lingering land conflict between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt states such as Benue and Nasarawa. Similar conflicts have been recorded in Kogi, Plateau, Enugu, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Edo, Delta, Ondo, Rivers, Bayelsa, Zamfara, Oyo, Kwara, and Kaduna (Ifedayo, 2023; Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). The communal oil wars in the Niger Delta and widespread intercommunal violence underscore the link between climate impacts and land conflicts. Insecurity from Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, and separatist agitations further compounds these tensions. The intersection of climate change, migration, weak governance, and socio-cultural norms has intensified land-related disputes, though some parts of West Africa have seen these issues catalyze peacebuilding and improved resource governance (Bukari, Sow, &

Scheffran, 2018). In Benue State, however, the land conflict between herder and farmer continues disrupt agriculture and livelihoods, destroy crops, displace communities, and fuel insecurity (Aliyu & Adebayo, 2021; Usman & Musa, 2023; Okeke & Nwakwo, 2020). Despite shared impacts, affected groups—men, women, herders, and farmers, Muslims and Christians—often fail to acknowledge the climate dynamics underlying the conflict. Water scarcity and vegetation loss force pastoralists southward in search of grassland (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). The fertile Benue Valley attracts herders, but the lack of institutional frameworks for land governance and grazing (Ani & Uwizeyimana, 2020) continues to fuel ongoing land conflict between herders and farmers.

Stakeholders—including government, local communities, non-governmental organizations, security agencies, and businesses—have made various efforts to address the persistent impact of land conflict in Benue State. These include the Benue State Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (2017), the National Agricultural Resilience Framework, joint security arrangements, and both local and national multi-stakeholder peace initiatives (Ioryue, Jimoh & Loveth, 2024). However, the conflict is far from over, with continued devastating effects on lives, property, livelihoods, and the economy (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020).

While there is extensive literature on climate change, migration, and conflict (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020; Hermans & Idle, 2019), as well as on land disputes between herders and farmers (McGuirk & Nunn, 2025), previous studies have paid little attention to the gender dimensions of land conflicts in Nigeria—particularly in Benue State (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). A significant gap remains in understanding gender relations and intersectionality, especially how women—specifically women farmers and women in pastoral communities—are disproportionately affected. Furthermore, there is limited insight into how these women experience and respond to land conflicts. This study aims to provide a nuanced gender perspective of climate change and land conflict between farmers and pastoralists, focusing on the root causes and their implications for gender relations and intersectionality in Nigeria.

3. Research Methodology

This explorative qualitative study uses a case study approach to examine the differentiated impacts of climate change and land conflicts on community women with multiple identities such as such as pastoralist and farmers and the systemic causes of land conflicts in Benue state. The dearth of quantitative data in climate-related migration and conflict research makes it essential to start with explorative and qualitative case study designs (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020; Freeman, 2017). Secondary data was obtained through desk research involving a systematic review of 62 selected peer-reviewed journal articles and policy documents. This analysis provided insights into the root causes of land conflict, gender relations, and the intersectionality of how vulnerable groups, especially women, are disproportionately affected. Using Google Scholar, Mendeley, and Sage, the search focused on variables such as climate change, migration, land conflict, and gender, with specific attention to Benue State, Nigeria, and the broader African context. Only credible sources published within the last six years were used, except for necessary historical references. A thematic and comparative analysis, along with policy review, was

conducted to ensure credibility, and the data triangulation and verification used multiple scientific sources and case studies to eliminate bias. Key themes included root causes of land conflict between pastoralist and farmers in Benue state, climate change impact on pastoralist and farmers, gendered experiences, stakeholder roles, and a gender analysis of the Benue State Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (2017) to draw broader conclusions.

Theoretical Framework of Gender Relations Intersectionality in Land Conflict

This study is grounded in gender relations theory and the concept of intersectionality, assessing how climate change and land conflict reinforce structural inequalities that disproportionately impact women in Nigeria. Raewyn Connell (2002) argues that gender relations and power dynamics are socially constructed, while Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) introduces intersectionality as a lens for understanding overlapping identities, including gender, ethnicity, and social status (Carastathis, 2014). These frameworks are crucial for analyzing land conflict between pastoralists and farmers, as they reveal how systems aggravate existing inequalities—particularly for women farmers and pastoralists. Despite women's critical roles in agriculture and community resilience, they are excluded from decision-making on land governance and peacebuilding in patriarchal societies (Tsikata, 2025; Appiah-Boateng, 2024; Doss, Summerfield, & Tsikata, 2014; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Yngstrom, 2002). In Benue State and other agrarian communities, cultural norms prevent women and non-indigenes from inheriting, accessing, or owning land (Okoye et al., 2024; Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020; Clark et al., 2023). Women in these communities face unique and severe consequences of land conflict—interrupted farming, income loss, increased caregiving responsibilities, and sexual violence (Uroko & Obiorah, 2025; Roy, Tandukar, & Bhattarai, 2022; Ylipaa, Gabrielsson, & Jerneck, 2019).

Climate change and migration intensify these vulnerabilities and drive land conflict, especially among pastoral and farming populations (Nagasha et al., 2023; Jerneck, 2018; Djoudi et al., 2016). Although gender relations theory is critiqued for reinforcing patriarchal binaries (Ferry, 2025), and intersectionality for lacking methodological clarity (Esposito, 2024; Bilge, 2013), both offer valuable insights for inclusive peacebuilding and sustainable land governance. Their careful application helps identify differentiated impacts and vulnerabilities among diverse groups of women—such as internally displaced women, indigenous women, and women in settler communities (Fosu & Gordon, 2025; Adelman & Peterman, 2014; Carr & Thompson, 2014). In this study, a gender relations and intersectionality approach provide an extensive understanding of both the root causes and differentiated impacts of land conflict in gendered and intersectional lenses.

● Key Research Question

The study raised five research questions using the Cummings criteria (Cummings et al, 1988) of feasibility, interest, novelty, ethics and relevance. A number of factors were considered in defining the research questions such as feasibility of security and resources, interest on gender and land resource governance, novelty of the gender dimension of the land conflict between

pastoralist and farmers, and relevance of new information on land conflict. The study answered the following five questions:

RQ1: What are the root causes of land conflicts between pastoralist and farmer in Benue state?

RQ2: How does climate change and migration contribute to land conflict between pastoralist and farmers in Benue state

RQ3: How do land conflict between pastoralists and farmers impact women?

RQ4: Who are the stakeholders in the land conflict, and what are their interests?

RQ5: What are the current conflict resolution efforts?

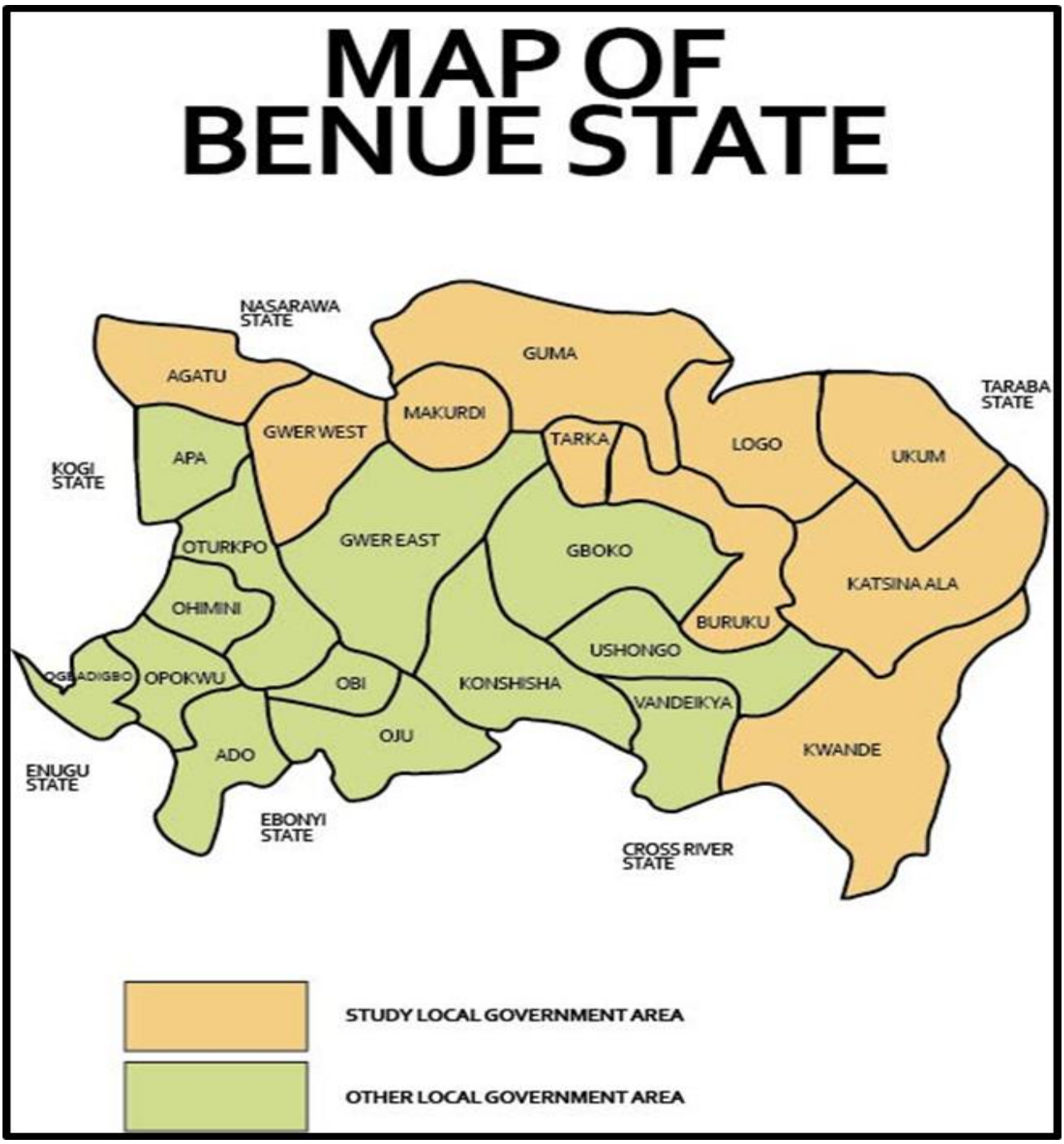
● Research Objective and Relevance

This research aims to generate nuanced insights into land conflict between farmers and pastoralists, with a particular focus on their implications for gender intersectionality in Nigeria. It further examines the broader ramifications of these conflicts for the development of gender-responsive frameworks in conflict resolution and climate adaptation strategies. The study holds relevance for policymakers, scholars, and civil society actors, offering a critical contribution to the growing body of literature on the gendered dimensions of land conflict. The study employs a gender relations and intersectionality lens to offer empirically grounded policy recommendations and serves as a resource for advancing inclusive policy reform that could lead to more stable and equitable society.

● Description of Study Area

Benue State in the middle belt of Nigeria, with Markurdi as headquarters is one of the 36 states that make up the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The state has a landmass of 34,059 square kilometres and lies between latitudes 6°25'N and 8°8'N and longitudes 7°47'E and 10°0'E. Benue is a low-lying terrain with average elevations between 100 to 250 metres above sea level. The state shares common boundaries with Nasarawa state (North), Cross River, Ebonyi and Enugu states (South), Taraba state (East), and Kogi state (West). The state also shares an international boundary with Cameroon (Southeast). Benue is a pluralistic state indigenous to the Tiv, Igede, and Idoma ethnic groups. The state has 23 local government areas, viz; Ado, Agatu, Apa, Buruku, Gboko, Guma, Gwer East, Gwer West, Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Makurdi, Obi, Ogbadibo, Oju, Okpokwu, Otukpo, Ohimini, Ukum, Ushongo, Vandeikya, and Tarka (Benue State Government, 2023). The study focused on 10 of the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) predominantly affected by land conflict between pastoralist and farmers (Okoye, Ezeani, Onah, Ekekwe, Akov, & Agbo, 2024; Apenda,2016).

FIGURE 2: Map of Benue State Showing Location of the Study Areas:



4. Research Results: Presentation of the Case Study

4.1. The General Causes of Pastoralist and Farmers Conflicts in the State:

Nigeria's land conflict between the pastoralists and farmers gained traction in the twentieth century. The conflict is attributed to the remote impact of climate change-related migration of

pastoralists from the far north and Lake Chad region to the riparian areas and shifting crop cultivation patterns of indigenous communities. Several social-cultural factors, exacerbate it, including land resource competition, political and economic marginalization, ethnoreligious tension, and primordial claims. These findings corroborate earlier considerations on the causes of land conflicts (McGuirk & Nunn, 2025); including land resource competition (Ani & Uwizeyimana, 2020), political and economic marginalization (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020), ethnic tension and religion (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024), and primordial claims (Vanger & Nwosu, 2020). The Benue land conflict presents an array of social, economic, and security challenges, with opportunities for stronger institutions, strengthened resource governance, preventative mechanisms , and local conflict management. Some of the major and root causes of herders and farmers in the Nigeria and in Benue State include:

Over Population and Growing Land Pressure: As a result of the dramatic increase in Nigeria's population, particularly the rural population, many herders have seen their grazing lands turned into cultivation, thus making their livelihoods very difficult. Over the past four decades, agricultural land in the northern part has doubled reaching nearly 25 percent of the total land surface, a trend that accelerate alongside population growth (Ofuoku, & Isife, 2010). Thus, the expansion of farms and settlements that swallow up grazing reserves and block traditional migration routes is seen as one of the main triggers of the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria.

Resource Competition: Conflicts often arise over control of valuable resources like fertile land, water, and minerals. In land conflicts, women face multiple exclusions—whether as wives or girls from herding or farming communities—due to cultural norms and institutional practices that favor men and deny women land rights. A study on climate change in Africa links land conflict among pastoralists to land grabbing (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020). Similar findings report recurring conflicts between herders and farmers along the riparian borders of Benue, Nasarawa, and Kogi states, areas rich in vegetation and water resources (Aule & Bello, 2022). Access to land and nomadism are central to Fulani culture, now threatened by the collapse of grazing routes due to expanding crop cultivation. Ethnic Fulani herders have expressed frustration over farmers encroaching on grazing reserves, which disrupts their livelihood and compels self-defensive actions amid increasing confrontations (Ani & Uwizeyimana, 2020). Climate-induced migration, coupled with group solidarity, often brings in herders from neighboring countries like Niger and Chad. Pastoralists sometimes feed livestock on crops, while farmers may retaliate by stealing livestock for protein. Year-round migration, unlike the earlier seasonal pattern after harvests, increases pressure on land resources.

Migration during early planting seasons is especially destructive as livestock trample planted seeds, causing major crop losses and food insecurity. Farmers also compete for fertile grazing routes for cultivation, enriched by cow dung, further intensifying the conflict (Ifedayo, 2023). Major causes include climate change-induced migration, destruction of traditional Fulani grazing routes, irrigation programs in floodplains, and weak governance frameworks. The Benue conflict, linked to scarce land resources and poor governance, highlights the need for designated grazing reserves to reduce herder-farmer clashes (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). The studies advanced that lack of access to grazing land and structural violence promote unhealthy competition over land

ownership and access between pastoralists and farmers, as well as between indigenes and non-indigenes in Benue State and other parts of West Africa.

Political and Ethnic Tensions: Gender intersectionality in the form of political and ethnic identities of pastoralist and farmers, historical rivalries and divisions contribute to territorial conflicts. Nigeria has a pervading indigene and settler ethnic and cultural dichotomy firmly rooted in political and administrative sentiments (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). The gender relations and socially discriminatory culture often favors one group and excludes the other. Studies have found that ethnic Fulani pastoralists feel deliberately excluded in the government Agriculture programs, as it rips off pastoralists of grazing lands to promote farm cultivation of different ethnic groups in the nation's riparian fields through the Fadama irrigation program. In particular, the Nigeria Cattle Breeders Association, otherwise known as Miyetti Allah (MACBAN), has accused the Nigerian government of destroying age-long cattle routes and grazing fields to prioritize farming and commercial interests (Ani & Uwizeyimana, 2020). Ethnic and political marginalization heightens land conflicts in regions experiencing weak land regimes, as the absence of a practical institutional framework for land governance results in new conflicts and the resurgence of existing ones (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020). Structural violence that considers ethnic pastoralists as non-indigenes with little or no rights or entitlement to land is the cause of the conflict in Benue and other parts of West Africa. However, ethnic Fulani herders have opposed political solutions to cattle grazing field development and launched violent attacks to protest the anti-open grazing policy in Benue state (Vanger & Nwosu, 2020). Politicians' privatization of previously owned communal lands also exacerbates land conflict as they leverage political influence and networks to curry favors on land allocation to cause disaffection among different ethnic groups (Aule & Bello, 2022). In another study, ethno-religious cleavages, indigenes, and settler dichotomy were identified as the root causes of the herder's farmers conflict (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024). The study linked the cause of the conflict to unfair and inequitable political and social-cultural systems that exude discrimination.

Economic Marginalization: Economic disparities, poverty and lack of development exacerbate local grievances as climate impact adversely affects economically disadvantaged people, particularly women and remote communities (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020). The land conflict between herders and farmers has an economic dimension. Economic disparities, poverty and lack of development often exacerbate local grievances as studies in Benue state have found that the upper economic and political class of society have greater access to land for private and industrial development, causing an artificial shrinking of available land resources (Aule & Bello, 2022;). This situation forces herders and farmers to migrate to new territories for grazing and farming, creating further intergroup competition and tension among Fulani pastoralists, farmers and the rich political elites, leading to heightened land conflict and resurgence of violence (Ani & Uwizeyimana, 2020).

Historical and Local Claims and Boundaries: The long-standing claims tied to traditional historical boundaries by Indigenous farmers and pastoralist is another critical consideration in the Benue land conflict, which further underscores effective land resource governance and climate adaptation and mitigation for intergroup conflict resolution and cooperation. Studies have found a strong link between historical and customary claims on land conflict. Vanger and Nwosu (2020) found that in parts of Benue State, Indigenous ethnic groups, including the Tiv, hold strong customary norms on ancestral land ownership and use, which partly explained why the land conflict between herders and farmers has defiled legal solutions and remained intractable. The frequent herder-farmer conflict in certain parts of the state

is essentially a resistance to the institutional land rights provisions in state and sub-regional frameworks, including the Benue State Open Grazing Prohibition Act that seems to displace the age-long customs on land ownership (Okoye, Ezeani, Onah, Ekekwe, Akov, & Agbo, 2024). While the pastoralists and farmers hold divergent opinions on the right to land, access, and use, the existing laws empower the herder access to grazing land and the farmer access to farmland. The indigenous farmers oppose such liberty for grazing activities, fearing losing their rights to own and control ancestral land. In contrast, another study found, as a root cause of the conflict, the claims by pastoralists to traditional grazing routes and natural water sources encroached by migrant farmers. The researchers found that farmers prioritize grazing routes for crop cultivation because the areas are more fertile due to frequent deposits of cow dung – compost manure, but also link the conflict to the inadequate institutional framework and management of green fields and reserves for pastoralist (Ifedayo, 2023). The historical claims further explain how historical claims favors particular ethnic groups and exclude others mostly Fulani herders from land inheritance, access and ownership in Benue state.

Cattle Theft: Livestock is the most valuable resource across many rural communities in northern Nigeria and is a common target of theft. Increased frequency and magnitude of livestock theft is one of the major causes of violent conflict. The increased incidence of cattle rustling is attributed to activities of armed groups who use stolen cattle to fund their activities. For instance, the Boko Haram terrorist group in the northeast considers cattle theft an important source of money fund for their activities. In the northwest, violent bandit groups also engage in massive cattle theft which threatens the herders' source of livelihood (Shehu, 2018). The risk of theft causes herders to arm themselves to protect their animals. On the other hand, aggrieved groups may perceive stealing livestock from communities with which they have been in conflict as a form of revenge. This has raised the stake in the conflict situation and has led to a rapid expansion in the number of community-based armed groups to ostensibly guard against livestock theft. Sometimes, such groups can also engage in reprisal violence as a form of social justice. Incessant cases of cattle rustling in the north has also driven herders southward to Benue state.

Armed Groups: One of the reasons for the escalation of the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria is the activities of armed groups in the communities. Most militias complain of inadequate government protection and insist on a right to protect their communities. Often, militias are backed by ethnic and communal leaders, including politicians, who justify their actions and shield them from arrest and prosecution (Shehu, 2018). Militias and vigilantes are not new phenomena in the Middle Belt. Over the last decade, most communities in the middle belt states of Plateau, Nasarawa and Taraba, all predominantly farming communities formed militias and vigilante groups to keep off Fulani herders from their farms. These groups sometimes attacked herders in retaliation for alleged damage to farms or to force the "strangers" out of their territory. Similarly, as disputes over land resources increased, some herders who initially acquired arms to drive away cattle rustlers have organized and engaged fighters to either avenge real or perceived wrongs by farmers or to gain access to fresh pasture.

Tenure and Transhumance Insecurity: Tenure insecurity relates to conflicts between herders and famers, caused by multiple factors, such as population expansion, shrinking and drying up of water belts, changing agricultural production system and an absence of good governance (Muhammad 2015). In most of the study areas, crop farming in wetland areas has significantly increased, especially along animal watering points. In addition, extensive and excessive grazing

has multiplied in recent times with 21,913.75 km2 in the northcentral states set aside for such. The movement of herders in search of fodder and water for their livestock is a usual practice. This movement often ends in the southern part of the country. As the land in the far north becomes arid and dry between February and May, pastoralists move down south for grazing, water and safety. However, this movement, which involves grazing along the open savanna and farms now creates serious farmer herder tension because of the violent dimension that now accompanies the practice. It instigates perpetual conflicts, particularly in the north central region. The Nigerian state has often accused foreign herders from the Sahel region of invading settled farming communities in the northcentral part of the country (UNOWAS, 2018). The involvement of 'aliens' (i.e. the migratory herders from the neighboring West African countries) in cattle rustling, banditry, armed robbery and kidnapping in the northwestern part of Nigeria provides reliable evidence on the nexus between transhumance and conflict in the region.

Dispossession: The encroachment of cultivated land into grazing areas has deepened pastoralists' grievance that their rights to resources such as land, water etc compared to those of farmers have often been ignored. This has brought about the feeling of disenchantment and has increased their frustration and aggression. It should be noted that the Grazing Reserves Act of 1964, was enacted by the federal government to demarcate certain areas as grazing reserves for the herders. This law was the first official step to regulate the activities of cattle herders. The government designated 415 specific areas for grazing purposes (Shehu, 2018). However, contrary to the provision of the Act, only 114 of the reserved areas were given the grazing land status officially. Even those which were given the status were not properly protected as grazing areas, while the ones without an official status mostly ended up as new construction areas, either for business or housing (International Crisis Group, 2017). Moreover, the Land Use Act of 1978 transferred all land to the government and gave it the decision-making power about land leasing and renting (Okello, 2014). This law also made it easier for the farmers to obtain "certificate of Occupancy" for the use of land. Therefore, herders were gradually dispossessed and excluded from the land use.

4.2. The Cause of Climate Change and Migration to Pastoralist and Farmers Conflicts in Benue State:

Climate change is a significant land resource risk contributing to the persistent conflict between pastoralists and sedentary farmers in Nigeria. Underpinned by eco-violence theory, this dynamic links environmental changes to violent struggles over land in Benue State (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). Climate change induces migration and intensifies resource competition. A study on its impact in sub-Saharan Africa found that the depletion of water sources and grazing lands is a key driver of herder conflicts, though effects vary across regions (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020). In Northern Nigeria, environmental degradation has triggered irregular migration into Benue, increasing land scarcity and tensions, with extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, bushfires, and desertification (Ikpe, Sawa & Ejeh, 2017).

Climate change, defined as long-term shifts in rainfall, temperature, and water systems, affects all aspects of life. Its effects—driven by anthropogenic activities like deforestation, bush burning, large-scale cattle farming, and fossil fuel extraction—are linked to the rise in greenhouse gas

emissions. These activities undermine the global net-zero emissions agenda of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) and contribute to growing environmental conflict (McGuirk & Nunn, 2025). Recurrent droughts and desertification in the far north and the Lake Chad Basin have displaced pastoralists, pushing them into the fertile but contested lands of Benue. This movement intensifies competition for water and grassland, exacerbating intergroup conflict. Migration, land grabbing, and weak governance systems further drive violence. Studies link climate-induced migration, food shortages, and loss of soil and grazing fields to escalating conflict (Ani & Uwizeyimana, 2020).

However, the conflict in Benue is not solely climate-driven; ethnic and religious identities also shape tensions (Nwankwo, 2024). Migration patterns correlate with desertification and erratic rainfall in northern Nigeria, leading to water shortages and vegetation loss. These shifts contribute to the collapse of traditional cattle routes and resistance to Fulani settlements in Tivland (Ioryue, Jimoh & Loveth, 2024). While migration is a major factor, the core issue lies in the encroachment of farmlands on grazing routes and inadequate climate adaptation strategies (Soomiyol & Fadairo, 2020). In sum, climate change contributes significantly to land conflict in Benue State. Addressing it requires effective climate adaptation, conflict mitigation, and stronger land resource governance frameworks.

4.3. The Impacts of the Pastoralist and Farmers Conflicts in the State

4.3.1. The General Impacts of the Pastoralist and Farmers Conflicts in the State:

The land conflict between pastoral herder and farmer causes social displacement, adverse environmental impact, economic disruption, human rights violations, and threatens national and human security (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). The herder-farmer violence has been documented extensively. Studies have found that the Benue state herders farmers conflict results in limited access to farms and devastation of farmlands and death (Usman & Musa, 2023; Ibrahim, 2019), internal displacement of farming and pastoralist communities, disruption of supply chain, heightened vulnerability and food insecurity.The dynamics of the conflict cut across multiple sectors, such as education, health and commerce. Schools, health centers and markets are shut down in apprehension of potential attacks (Oni & Ibitoye, 2022). It also has a strong gender dimension that impacts women's psychological health, leading to stress and trauma (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024). This gender dimension underscores the need for gender relations and intersectionality to address vulnerability in the conflict. The land violence impacts economic and livelihood activities; it displaces local farming and pastoral communities, wanes crop cultivation, and threatens agriculture investment and food security (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020). The rising security risk associated with the herder-farmer conflict potentially scares away investors in Benue state (World Bank, 2022). Usman and Musa (2023) found that land conflict has an enduring negative impact on food security due to the reoccurring decimation of farmlands farm animals and agriculture assets.

Social displacement and instability: Land conflict leads to displacement of communities, loss of homes and breakdown of social cohesion. Displacement causes further migration and heightens insecurity and tension. Adebajo and Iseoluwa (2020) found rising internal displacement of persons and communities due to land conflict. In 2013 alone, over 10,000 became internally displaced in Benue state due to herders vs farmers violence. Herders farmers conflict results in the displacement of communities, disruption of the supply chain and heightened vulnerability and insecurity (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024), and most people are forced to stay in designated IDP camps. The pastoral vs farmers conflict leads to devastation of farmlands, internal displacement of farmers and death (Ibrahim, 2019). Pastoral vs sedentary farmers conflict in Benue State leads to the destruction of property and land violence (Aliyu & Adebayo, 2021). Herder vs farmer land conflict displaces communities in Agatu and other areas and denies farmers farmlands access (Oni & Ibitoye, 2022). The direct impact of the conflict and displacement is colossal both on economic and livelihood activities, displaces local farming and pastoral communities (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020), and has an enduring negative impact on food security and agriculture (Usman & Musa, 2023).

Economic disruption: Climate change-related land conflicts, such as the herder-farmers violence in Benue state, lead to loss of livelihoods, restricted economic activity and damage to local infrastructure. It further depletes household income, deprives people of livelihood opportunities and increases security risk (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020; Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020). The impact of the herder-farmer conflict on the economic life of the Benue people is widely documented – studies have found that it exacerbates the loss of livelihood, unemployment, food security, and income-generating opportunities, leading to the high cost of food (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). Herders farmers conflict results in limited access to farms, disruption of the supply chain and heightened vulnerability and food insecurity (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024). It damages farms, disrupts farm-life, and displaces farming communities (Ibrahim, 2019). Aliyu and Adebayo, (2021) found that pastoral vs sedentary farmers conflict in Benue state leads to destruction of property, reduce farm output and crop harvest. Herder vs farmer land conflict denies farmers access to farmlands and displaces communities (Oni & Ibitoye, 2022), this impacts the economic and livelihood activities of the people, diminishes household income, wanes crop cultivation, threatens agriculture investment and food security (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020). Agriculture investment is critical food security, employment generation and industrialization but the rising security risk associated the herder farmer conflict potentially scare away investors and economic development in Benue state (World Bank, 2022). Usman and Musa (2023) found that herd farmer conflict has an enduring, long-term negative impact on the economy and food security due to reoccurring decimation of farmlands and farm animals and agriculture assets.

Environmental Harm: Climate change continues to impact the Northern environment, leading to a rapid decline in land resources and migration. The associated migration leads to loss and over-exploitation of land resources, destruction of natural habitats and negative impacts on biodiversity. Land violence further weakens state institutional capabilities and private initiatives led by non-government organizations in climate change preparedness and response to inundations (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020). The increasing loss of grassland, vegetation and natural water sources in Northern Nigeria primarily influences the migration of herders

southward (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020); government initiatives such as water retention ponds and tree planting through the Great Green Wall Initiative are yet to address the extreme weather conditions in Bornu, Kano, Sokoto and Katsina states. Empirical evidence of the environmental impact of the Benue herder Famer violence is mainly limited to farmlands. Ibrahim (2019) found that floods, disease outbreaks, migration, drought and food insecurity are linked to adverse climate impacts in Nigeria, and the pastoral vs farmers conflict leads to the devastation of farmlands. Similarly, traditional farming practices such as bush burning, burning of crops, indiscriminate forest clearing, nitrogen-based fertilizer application in farms, and large-scale herding cause adverse environmental impact and climate risk (Ikpe, Sawa & Ejeh, 2017). Sometimes, farmlands, crops and vegetation are burned down in retaliation for livestock theft by farming communities (Aliyu & Adebayo, 2021). Land violence impacts agriculture investment and the environment (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020). Usman and Musa (2023) found that herd-farmer conflict has an enduring negative impact on the environment due to the reoccurring decimation of farmlands and agriculture assets.

Human rights violations: The Benue herder-farmer conflict greatly impacted the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. It affected both moveable and immovable rights, including the right to life and to own landed property, clearly negating constitutional provisions. It displaces farming communities and herders and denies victims the right to justice (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020). Human rights violations and abuse precipitate Nigeria's landscape and exacerbate violent conflict, such as the intractable pastoral vs farmers conflict in Benue state. The conflict also impacts child rights, the right to education, and decent economic activities. Herders farmers conflict results in limited access to farms, displacement of communities, unlawful killing and insecurity (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024). Depriving farmers of their right to access farmlands and herders from accessing grazing land is a significant infringement on the right to freedom of movement. The pastoral vs farmers conflict leads to the devastation of farmlands, internal displacement of farmers and death (Ibrahim, 2019), destruction of property, and land violence (Aliyu & Adebayo, 2021). It dehumanizes and impacts the dignity and psychological well-being of agrarian and herder communities, resulting in psychological stress and trauma - it heightens insecurity. It often overwhelms state security architecture, sometimes forcing communities to organize local vigilante groups that mainly exploit and abuse citizens' rights, causing more conflict in Benue communities (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024).

4.3.2. The Impacts of the Conflicts on Community/Rural Women and Women Farmers in the State:

The Benue pastoralist and farmer conflict has a multidimensional impact on gender as it affects women, men and children differently. The conflict increases vulnerability for women as it limits their access to farms, displaces them from communities, disrupts the supply chain and heightens vulnerability and food insecurity. Research on the gender dimension of the herder-farmer conflict is limited, contrary to UNSCR 1325 mandate on gender lens on conflict and peaceful resolution (Appiah-Boateng, 2024). The impact of the conflict on women amplifies a patriarchal society where women suffer economic disempowerment with no land access. Women and girls are the

most victims in the violent herder-farmer conflict. They suffer rape and gender-based violence as weapons of the conflict. They suffer disproportionately, enduring the general impact on the populace in addition to discriminatory patriarchal customs and used as weapons of war. A study in Nigeria found that land conflict between herder and farmer denies women their main economic activities centered around traditional gender roles such as livestocking, crop processing and small-scale trading. Sometimes women as widows are evicted from homes and farmlands by relatives of their dead husbands who lost their lives in the conflict (Emerald & Nwafor, 2024). Insecurity and apprehension limit women farmers from engaging in crop cultivation and harvesting, which results in low agricultural yield, inflation and food insecurity (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024); the conflict impacts women's psychological health, leading to stress and trauma. It also affects women disproportionately in that the ripple effects of the herder's farmers conflict, such as reduced harvest and crop yields, reduced flocks and deserted farmlands, decimate women's economic and livelihood support base, further heightening their vulnerability and poverty. The pastoral vs farmers conflict leads to the devastation of farmlands, internal displacement of women farmers and death (Ibrahim, 2019). Pastoral vs sedentary farmers conflict in Benue State leads to the destruction of property, reduced farm output, food insecurity and land violence (Aliyu & Adebayo, 2021). Herder vs farmer land conflict displaces communities and denies women farmers access to farmlands (Oni & Ibitoye, 2022).

Land conflict impacts economic and livelihood activities; it diminishes women-headed household income, displaces local farming and pastoral communities, including their wives, mothers and daughters. It wanes crop cultivation, and threatens agriculture investment and food security (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020). Usman and Musa (2023) found that the Benue land conflict has an enduring negative impact on women and food security due to the reoccurring decimation of farmlands, farm animals, and agricultural assets.

The dynamics of the conflict cut across multiple sectors, such as women's education, sexual and reproductive health and commerce. Schools, health centers and markets shut down in apprehension of potential herder’s vs farmers' violence and attacks. The Benue land conflict impacts women's mental health and psychological well-being, resulting in psychological stress and trauma.The rising security risk associated with the herder-farmer conflict potentially scares away investors in Benue state, further relapsing women's socioeconomic development and empowerment (World Bank, 2022).

4.3.3. The Impacts of Climate Change and Migration on Pastoralist and Farmers in the State:

Climate change-induced migration adversely impacts land conflict in Benue state (Adebajo & Iseoluwa, 2020); the impact of unmitigated climate conditions in the far north and Lake Chad border countries leads to remote land conflict arising from migration and land resource competition in Benue state. The impacts range from negative economic, social and environmental ramifications, including land resource competitions and conflicts. Climate impact adversely affects economically disadvantaged people, including herders, farmers and women; it increases resource challenges state capabilities and propels irregular migration that triggers land conflict in new destinations (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020).

On the pastoralist, climate change impacts both human life and the ecosystem. Its impact results in drought, irregular rainfall, desertification, loss of grassland, water sources and migration and heightened resource competition and conflict (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024). Similar studies on the impact of climate change on farmers found unprecedented changing rainfall patterns and reduced farm yields, land degradation, and decimation of farmlands resulting from conflict and displaced farming communities (Aliyu & Adebayo, 2021). Climate-related herders' migration recorded in Mali, Niger, Chad and the Lake Chad region to Northcentral Nigeria – rich in arable land and natural water sources. Pastoral vs sedentary farmers conflict in Benue state leads to destruction of property, reduced farm output, food insecurity and land violence. The dynamics of the conflict cut across multiple sectors, such as education, health and commerce. In the wake of the climate crisis, schools, health centres and markets are shut (Oni & Ibitoye, 2022), and communities and farmlands displaced.The conflict impacts economic and livelihood activities and food security (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020). Usman and Musa (2023) found that climate change-induced herder-farmer conflict has an enduring negative impact on food security due to the reoccurring decimation of farmlands, farm animals, and agriculture assets, and climate change-related insecurity potentially scaring away investors (World Bank, 2022).

Climate change and desertification have resulted in a colossal loss of arable land vegetation in Nigeria's northern fringes. Nigeria loses an estimated thirty per cent of its landmass to desertification annually, resulting in massive loss of farmland. The desert encroachment spreads southward at half a kilometre every year. Deserts encroachment constitute an existential risk to pastoralists and farmers as farmers and herders adopt a migratory strategy that often leads to encroachment on traditional grazing routes and infringement on farmlands, compounding the feud (Ikpe, Sawa & Ejeh, 2017).

4.3.4. The Impacts of Climate Change and Migration on Community/Rural Women and Women Farmers in the State:

Climate change-induced migration leads to conflict with remote impact on women, including women farmers in Benue state. Women play crucial roles in food production, and once they are displaced, it creates a ripple effect on social stability and food security. The impact of climate change, such as desertification, rising sea levels, irregular rainfalls and flooding, is not evenly distributed across regions and states. However, the impact, especially on women, is devasting everywhere. Most times, men leave their female family members behind in the initial migration, leaving women to deal with the harsh climatic conditions and burden of caring for the home as wives and mothers while still struggling to sustain the family livelihood activities (Ahmed & Eklund, 2021). A similar study by Oni and Ibitoye (2022) found that climate change migration and conflict displace communities and deny women farmers access to farmlands and economic and livelihood activities. It displaces local farming and pastoral communities, wanes crop cultivation, and threatens agriculture investment and food security (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020). Climate change impacts reduce crop production and processing, limit access to resources, increase

women's workload, and cause hardship, and poverty as women spend extra hours reaching land and water sources and often go into debt due to harsh economic conditions.

The impact on community women ranges from social displacement, rape and gender-based violence to reproductive health challenges and limited access to education for the girl child. Climate change - droughts and desertification heighten resource competition and conflict (Ioryue, Jimoh, & Loveth, 2024), leading to the internal displacement of women and farming communities and further pushing women into vulnerability and poverty (Ibrahim, 2019). Women are the biggest casualty of climate change impact in Benue state (Aliyu & Adebayo, 2021). Climate change has an enduring negative impact on women and food security (Usman & Musa, 2023).

5. Stakeholders and Their interests

The land conflict in Benue State between pastoralists and farmers involves multiple stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, security forces, cattle breeders' associations, community vigilantes, civil society organizations, and international bodies such as ECOWAS. Each stakeholder adopts positions shaped by their interests. Farmers seek protection for farmlands and livelihoods, while herders demand unhindered access to grazing lands. Traditional leaders and elders play key roles in de-escalating tensions, but their roles are often marginalized by government authorities, despite support from civil society and NGOs (Thalheimer & Webersik, 2020). Some customary approaches to conflict resolution have proven ineffective or adversarial in addressing the entrenched nature of land conflicts (Ioryue, Jimoh & Loveth, 2024). To foster peace, the Nigerian government—at federal, state, and local levels—must strengthen traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms and collaborate with civil society actors. Policy safeguards are also needed to mitigate the impact of national and global economic shifts on rural livelihoods.

While the government is responsible for law enforcement and peacekeeping, its National Agricultural Resilience Framework (NARF) has focused on supporting farmers through security and alternative livelihoods. However, such efforts often overlook or undermine the varying levels of vulnerability and crucial role women play in community resilience and local peacebuilding (Ioryue, Jimoh & Loveth, 2024). Community security groups also play a role but are frequently associated with extortion and human rights abuses, further escalating tensions.

Private sector actors in mining and agribusiness have economic interests that complicate the conflict. In contrast, NGOs contribute positively by supporting women, promoting peacebuilding, and facilitating IDP returns through collaborative, multi-stakeholder approaches in communities like Agatu.

FIGURE 3: The Table Represents the Herder Vs Farmer Conflict Stakeholders and Their Interest in Benue State

Stakeholder	***Interest***	***Position***
Local community farmers	increased protection of farmlands, crops and economic activities	Anti-open grazing and wants stronger state response to prevent attacks, and economic loss
Fulani herders	Unhindered access to water and grazing land	Protest against anti-grazing legislations and ranches but prioritizes cattle routes and reserves
Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN)	Protect ethnic pastoralist rights and business interest.	Protest against anti-grazing legislations and ranches but prioritizes cattle routes and reserves
State government	Peace, security and economically viable state	Pro anti-open grazing and want federal government support for the enforcement of the state Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (2017).
Federal government	National security and stability	Proposes multi-pronged culture sensitive approach including ranching and grazing reserves to douse ethno-religious tensions.
State security including the Nigerian Army and Nigerian Police Force	Protect life and property and maintain law and order	Neutrality in the conflict but often suffers trust and reputation damage from local communities
Local community security group and vigilante	Protect communities and farms from Fulani herdsmen and cattle attack and destruction.	Work to support state led initiatives, abuse human rights and sometimes exacerbate the situation
Civil society groups	Conflict prevention, peacebuilding and humanitarian response	Humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution for displaced victims and rights violations.
International organizations and ECOWAS	Peace and development in the sub region	Support sustainable solutions including mediation, socio-economic empowerment and ranching.

SOURCE: Adopted from (Akujuru & Ogele, 2022).

6.Current Conflict Resolution Efforts by Various Stakeholders

Over the years, successive Nigerian governments have introduced various measures to mitigate the land conflict between farmers and herders, but these efforts have largely failed due to absence of a gender relations and intersectionality framework. Allegations of bias—either towards herders or farmers—have undermined the legitimacy of these initiatives. The federal

government, alongside states, has made policy declarations, formed committees, and deployed military forces to conflict zones (Ifedayo, 2023). For instance, the Nigerian Working Group on Peace Building and Governance proposed solutions such as climate-smart pastoralism, expanded grazing reserves, digital cattle tracking, and harmonized policies. Another federal initiative, the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP), is anchored on six pillars including economic investment, law and order, and strategic communication.

Stakeholders in Benue State have employed traditional mediation, legal mechanisms, and civil society efforts to address the conflict. Among Tiv communities, age-grade groups traditionally mediate disputes, resolving many conflicts outside formal legal systems (Adom & Ugal, 2025). In 2017, Benue and Nasarawa states formed a joint committee that facilitated the return of IDPs to the Agatu area (Akujuru & Ogele, 2022).

The legal foundation for land and livestock governance stems from the 1964 Grazing Reserve Act and the 1978 Land Use Act. The latter has enabled state-level laws like Benue's 2017 Anti-Open Grazing Law, granting governors control over land use (Osuchukwu & Enemuoh, 2020). However, initiatives like the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) were rejected by many Nigerians. The NLTP aims to modernize ranching, but its implementation faces bureaucratic and community resistance, especially over land access and ownership rights.

The government often deploys military forces to protect vulnerable communities, while civil society groups empower locals with nonviolent conflict resolution strategies. However, these efforts face institutional limitations. Ioryue, Jimoh, and Loveth (2024) recommend community-led mediation, improved infrastructure, and stronger social protection to resolve conflicts. Several states have passed laws to curb open grazing. Ekiti introduced such a law in 2016, followed by Taraba, Edo, and Benue in 2017. These laws aim to deter herders from encroaching on farmlands and promote regulated livestock management. States have also developed local peace infrastructures. Adamawa, Plateau, and Nasarawa have reconciliation committees and peace agencies (International Crisis Group, 2018). Benue established a Peace Commission in 2022 to manage disputes and integrate conflict-sensitive development planning.

Other notable initiatives include a peace agreement between All-Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) which formed a joint committee to build peaceful coexistence (Gursoy, 2021). In 2022, the UN-supported Peace Project in Benue and Nasarawa aimed to reduce vulnerabilities, support livelihoods, and promote community-based peacebuilding in high-risk local government areas namely: Agatu, Guma, Logo, Kwande and Buruku; mainly from the Tiv and Idoma ethnic groups in Benue State, and the predominantly Fulani herder community in Nasarawa state.

Previous studies established that climate change and migration intensify vulnerabilities and drive land conflict, especially among pastoral and farming populations (Nagasha et al., 2023), and gender relations and intersectionality offer valuable insights for inclusive peacebuilding and

sustainable land governance as a gendered lens helps identify differentiated impacts and vulnerabilities among diverse groups of women—such as internally displaced women, indigenous women, and women in settler communities (Fosu & Gordon, 2025). A significant limitation of the current peacebuilding initiatives lies in their inadequate engagement with the climate-related root causes of the conflict and the absence of an analytical framework grounded in gender relations and intersectionality.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The gender dimension of the land conflict between herder and farmer in Benue state underscores the adverse impact of climate change on women and land resource governance in Nigeria. The study found that:

- The Benue land conflict between pastoralists and farmers has a multidimensional impact on gender, affecting women, men, and children differently. Women are particularly vulnerable, as the conflict restricts their access to farms, displaces them from their communities, disrupts food supply chains, and exacerbates food insecurity. However, research on the gendered aspects of the conflict remains limited. The conflict is primarily driven by climate change-induced migration, alongside socio-cultural factors such as land grabbing, political and economic marginalization, ethnoreligious tensions, and local territorial claims.
- Despite various government strategies to mitigate the conflict, clashes continue to occur regularly, with no resolution in sight. These management efforts are often reactive rather than preventive, and they suffer from implementation gaps, particularly due to the absence of a gender-sensitive framework. As a result, the conflict causes significant social displacement, economic disruption, environmental damage, and human rights violations, which, in turn, pose threats to national and human security.
- Climate change impacts, such as desertification, rising sea levels, and erratic rainfall, exacerbate land resource competition and migration, triggering new conflicts. These effects disproportionately affect women and other marginalized groups, particularly in northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad region. Women, who play essential roles in food production, bear the brunt of these environmental and social upheavals. Displacement due to conflict and adverse weather conditions undermines social stability and food security, with long-term consequences for rural communities.
- Addressing the conflict requires strengthening socially inclusive people-centered natural resource governance, particularly to protect women's land rights. This will help rebuild trust, encourage cooperative resource use, and promote sustainable socioeconomic development.
- The land conflict between herders and farmer involves various stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, security forces, cattle breeders' associations, civil society groups, and international organizations like ECOWAS. Each group maintains positions shaped by their interests. Approaches to resolving the conflict include

traditional mediation, negotiated peace accords, legal frameworks, physical security, and civil society-led collaborative efforts. Peace education and advocacy should be prioritized to foster constructive peacebuilding efforts, including creating platforms for regular land resource dialogue between farmers and herders.

- Women and children are especially affected by the conflict, with reports of violence, including killings, rape, abductions, and the creation of widows, orphans, and homeless individuals. These impacts exacerbate existing systemic violence against women and significant socio-economic challenges in both rural and urban areas, contributing to the growing number of vulnerable populations.

The land conflict presents complex and deep-rooted challenges, from primordial territorial claims to structural inequalities among groups, and ineffective solutions. The challenges present ample opportunity and meaningful entry points for policy advocacy, collaborative peacebuilding, and inclusive land governance.

Recommendations

Policymakers and other critical stakeholders, such as local community leaders, researchers, and development practitioners, should promote gender response, peacebuilding, and climate adaptation and mitigation strategies to address the impact of climate change and land conflicts on women and vulnerable groups in line with UNSCR 1325.

- Policymakers and stakeholders must prioritize an intersectional approach to create more inclusive and equitable land systems by addressing gender relations and power dynamics that shape land conflicts. This approach should recognize cultural and systemic factors that either favor or exclude individuals based on gender and identity.
- States should adopt practical, locally driven mediation strategies to prevent and resolve the persistent land conflict between herders and farmer, focusing on community resilience and rapid recovery. Dialogue and trust-building among stakeholders, emphasizing shared interests, and investing in long-term stability are crucial.
- The National Livestock Transformation Plan (2019-2026) should be effectively implemented, addressing all components of the livestock sector and ensuring acceptance among cattle owners and herders across the country. Additionally, integrating traditional mediation into formal conflict management systems is necessary to collaborate with local and state justice systems and utilize traditional methods for resolving communal disputes.
- Effective enforcement of laws and government programs aimed at peacefully resolving conflicts, fighting impunity, and ensuring accountability is essential. The Federal Government should operationalize the 415 designated grazing reserves, as only 115 have been developed, with only a few operational.
- Addressing climate change and desertification, which threaten the livelihoods of farmers and herders, is also critical. Combatting desertification, promoting reforestation, and preventing environmental degradation in the northern regions will help restore lost land and water resources for agriculture. Herders and farmers often migrate irregularly in response to climate change, resulting in violent land conflict.
- Women should be involved in peace negotiations, where they are currently underrepresented, and given leadership roles to address their vulnerabilities and

influence over families. Empowering rural women, particularly women farmers, with entrepreneurial skills and support for victims of conflict is crucial. Younger victims should be encouraged to pursue formal education.

- Land reform and strengthening land governance are urgent to promote community and indigenous people's rights, secure land tenure, and improve climate adaptation strategies. Sustainable resource management and equitable access to resources will reduce competition between herders and farmers. The government should establish community peace and security architectures to detect and resolve conflicts early, with inclusive platforms for dialogue and conflict management.
- The Anti-Open Grazing Law in Benue State should be reviewed to eliminate discriminatory language and ensure its effective enforcement. Public education on grazing laws, climate change adaptation, and community land rights, including women's land rights, is necessary to reduce conflicts.
- More research on the impacts of climate change on rural women and effective climate adaptation strategies is needed to protect and support them.

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