

REPORT

LIVELIHOODS, CONFLICT AND MEDIATION: NIGERIA

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Key findings

- Inequitable access to land and resources is continuing to lead to land disputes across interview sites. Population growth, government policy favouring crop production, grazing bans, and shifts towards more agropastoral livelihoods were all seen as reasons for a decline in suitable grazing areas.
- In Wuro Bappate, increasing illegal mining activity is also contributing to land scarcity. While understanding who is behind this activity and the extent of its impacts warrants further exploration, illegal mining is taking place on grazing land, resulting in injuries to livestock and further land disputes.
- In Hayin Ade, the decline in land for grazing, as more area is farmed, is forcing pastoralists to move their cattle further afield, exposing them to the increased risk of banditry in neighbouring states. Interviewees reveal that family members had been kidnapped and experienced cattle raiding en route to reserves.
- Although interviewees do not describe high levels of conflict, its historical legacy continues to disrupt livelihoods. In Wuro Bappate, the imposition of grazing bans by the government, as a measure to stop land conflicts, is limiting the movements of pastoralists and placing pressure on the grazing areas that remain.
- Both interview sites have seen the establishment of vigilante groups to protect property and livestock. The establishment of the Yan Sakai in Hayin Ade received a mixed response from interviewees, with some attributing the fall in incidents of cattle raiding to the group's formation and others criticising its conduct. In Wuro Bappate, communities have established a small vigilante group in response to attacks from farmers.



Women interviewees at a school in Hayin Ade – image by Maryam Yusuf Bayero

About this research

This report is the first in a series highlighting learning emerging from a longitudinal study examining the impacts of violent and non-violent conflict on lives and livelihoods, and mediation dynamics in Somalia and Nigeria. This first report provides an introductory snapshot of issues at each of the research sites from the perspectives of those interviewed. It builds on previous SPARC research examining [the impacts of Covid-19 on livelihoods](#) in Nigeria. Each successive report will dig more deeply into issues described by interviewees, and situate these within the broader historical and present-day socioeconomic and political contexts, and crises that shape their experiences.

The overarching aim of the longitudinal study is to document and understand the challenges facing people with different livelihoods, particularly around disputes and conflict of various types, and how these are impacting lives and livelihoods. The research did not initially focus on particular types of disputes and conflict, but rather let the interviewees describe the disputes and conflicts they had experienced in the last five years, including their views on the perpetrators and causes.

The economic, environmental, political and social contexts at the local-to-national levels are continually evolving, and regional-to-global events such as the economic repercussions of Covid-19 are being felt at the local level. We want to capture how people are coping with and adapting their livelihoods to this dynamism. With each subsequent round of research, we will combine analysis of impactful events and trends at local-to-global scales to complement the narratives emerging from individual interviews. We will also be undertaking deeper analysis of some of the dispute and conflict dynamics mentioned during interviews.

Specific questions guiding the research include:

- What are the most significant non-conflict shocks, stresses and constraints currently affecting pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods in insecure contexts in Nigeria and Somalia?
- What types of disputes and conflicts are affecting livelihoods for women and men, and what are their impacts?
- What types of actions have been taken to respond to and/or mitigate the various types of disputes and conflicts? Responses and mitigation strategies of interest may include formal and informal mediation and conflict-resolution initiatives, as well as household- and community-level adaptations to conflict events.

- When non-conflict shocks (e.g. flooding, drought, price increases) and stresses (e.g. dry-season challenges, elections) occur and/or crises develop, how are disputes and conflict incidences affected?
- How, at an individual and community level, are households adapting livelihood strategies in response to disputes, conflict and other shocks and stresses?

This report highlights the initial findings of the first round of fieldwork conducted with local research partners, the Fulbe Development and Cultural Organization (FUDECO). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in pastoral and agropastoral contexts at two sites in Nigeria: Hayin Ade in Kaduna State and Wuro Alhaji Idrisa Bappate in Taraba State. Interviewees were queried about topics related to the overall research questions in Fulbe (some in Hausa), although the interview guide allowed the field team flexibility in probing deeper on particular issues on an individual basis. A diverse set of livelihoods is represented within the interview sample of 64 women and 60 men ([Figures 1 and 2](#)). The two sites have not previously had any visiting researchers, allowing for a deeper exploration of contexts and responses unconditioned by prior researcher visits.

1. Introduction

A confluence of socioeconomic and political histories and trends within Nigeria and across borders are shaping and challenging rural and peri-urban pastoral, agropastoral and farming livelihoods. In the early 1900s, the British protectorate overruled prior ethnic groups' territorial claims and encouraged inter-group competition for power and resources, with stark socioeconomic development differences between some regions (Conroy, 2014; Falola and Heaton, 2008). Post-independence Nigeria experienced a civil war, several coups and attempted coups and political instability over resources – territory, power and oil (ibid.).

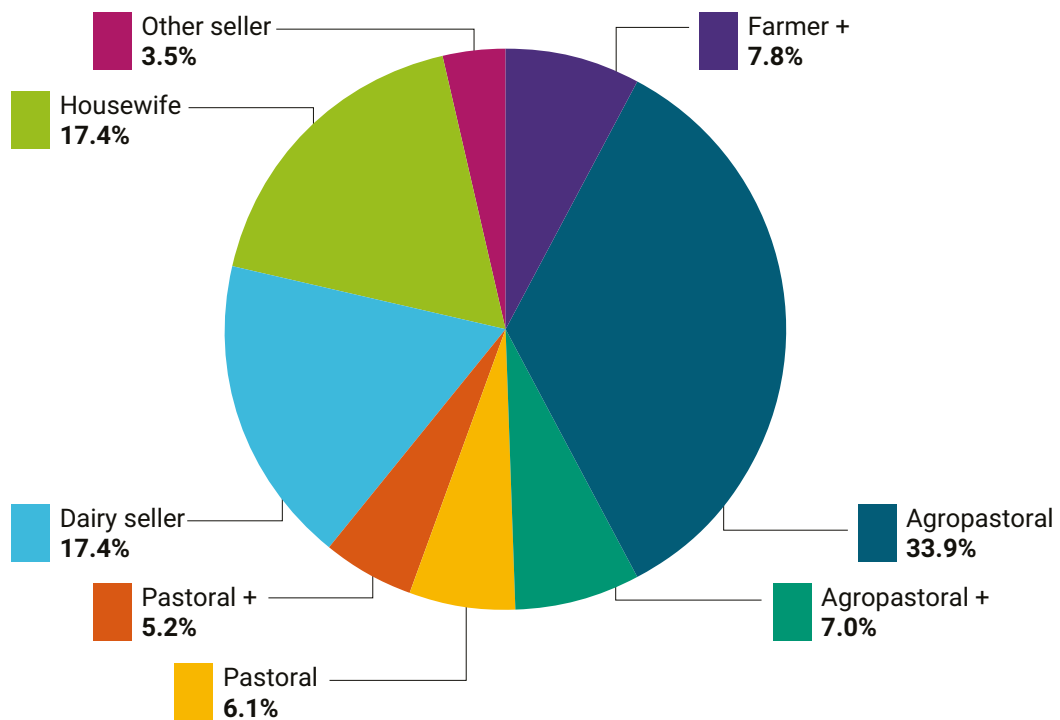
The various governments of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods created the politicisation of ethnic identities and religious affiliation through which resource allocation remains unequal (Usman, 2019; Akume et al., 2011). Although a number of grazing reserves for herders were gazetted under the Grazing Reserve Act of 1964, the Federal Land Act of 1978 marked all lands as belonging to the state and local governments (Ingawa et al., 1989; Milligan and Binns, 2007). This enabled these governments to allocate and reallocate land at discretion, and supersede federal regulations regarding land use. Subsequent land grabs by agribusiness and political elites through land sales, particularly from sales of grazing reserves, has further reduced land availability for farming and herding (UNOWAS, 2018; Ele, 2020).

FIGURE 1: MAP OF STUDY AREAS



The map shows the approximate locations of the study areas (Hayin Ade in Kaduna State and Wuro Alhaji Idrisa Bappate in Taraba State).

FIGURE 2: LIVELIHOOD BREAKDOWN OF THE INTERVIEW SAMPLE



Source: Authors' analysis of basic livelihood statistics of interviewees.

Notes: The + indicates that the respondent had an additional income-generating activity, such as motorbike-driving or teaching.

The restrictive land policies also coincide with a number of pressures on land, water and vegetation. Nigeria has experienced significant population growth, from approximately 45 million in 1960 to 211 million in 2021. This growth, in combination with increasing herd sizes and expansion of farm area into the dryland savanna of the northern Middle Belt and northern states, has contributed to ecosystem degradation, with negative consequences for both farming and pastoral productivity (MoE, 2020).

The failure to address inequalities in land and other structural issues has contributed to a rise in various forms of violent conflict across multiple states, with a diversity of conflict actors. Between May 2011 and December 2021, an estimated 73,500 to 85,900¹ people were killed in incidents involving livelihood groups, or by one or more armed groups – bandits, vigilantes, militias and jihadist groups like Boko Haram or the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Lines between such armed groups may be blurred in some areas (Higazi and Hassan, 2022).

The violent conflicts between pastoralists (largely Fulani) and farmers (of various ethnic groups) across Kaduna, Adamawa, Taraba, Plateau and Benue States in particular, have captured national and international attention. The violence is often portrayed as religious in nature – as being between Muslims (Fulani pastoralists and agropastoralists) and Christians (farmers or agropastoralists of non-Fulani heritage), and there are ethno-religious elements to it – but public discourses and policy responses fail to appreciate the multiple factors creating the increased competition over natural resources (Conroy, 2014; Ele, 2020).

Since the Land Act, the federal government has promulgated agricultural and grazing laws, the most recent being the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP): 2019–2028, and the short-lived Rural Area Grazing (RUGA) settlements. The NLTP promotes development of ranches in grazing reserves, private investment in mid-to large-scale agribusiness similar to that seen in Brazil and the USA, and resettlement of people out of conflict zones (GoN, 2019). However, the states retain the power to block implementation by failing to designate and enforce ranches or grazing reserves. States have also been passing grazing ban legislation with the intent of reducing violent farmer–herder conflicts (Balarabe, 2021). Taraba State introduced a law in November 2017 banning open grazing and transport of cattle, except by vehicle.

These large-scale dynamics are impacting the lives and livelihoods of individuals, as will be explored further in both of the case studies. The similarities and differences in how the dynamics are playing out in each area, as well as how people are coping and adapting their livelihood and mediation responses, will be documented as the longitudinal study progresses.

2. Hayin Ade

2.1 Context

Hayin Ade consists of 12 affiliate settlements spread between the Kubau and Ikara Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Kaduna State. The community had been a dry-season grazing and watering area for pastoralists, with a few farms belonging predominantly to Kuli, Bagwiwa and Mirga farmers. About 45 to 50 years ago, some of the pastoralists approached the Kuraye ward head (of Hausa heritage) for permission to construct settlements and farms, but not specifically for grazing. However, at that time, there was sufficient space to support grazing areas and farming, with the settled pastoralists transitioning to agropastoralism.

The initial settlers ‘rented’ their land from local leaders, paying either an annual fee or a portion of their produce. Farmers began selling their land about 20 years ago and some 85% of the long-established pastoralists purchased their land. Deeds have been issued and are signed by the ward and village heads to certify the transaction. More recent arrivals are renting land for farming and grazing, and paying approximately 30,000 Naira per annum for a kadada plot (a plot of land a little less than a hectare).

2.2 Livelihoods

Currently, a variety of Fulbe, Maguzawa and Hausa tribes cohabit within the affiliation of settlements. The Maguzawa and Hausa are predominantly farmers. Over 95% of the Fulbe interviewed practice agropastoralism and farm during the wet season for household consumption. Less than 5% of interviewees are farmers only, although not by choice. These former agropastoralists lost their cattle due to conflict and banditry while travelling to pastoral grazing reserves in Kaduna or other states and have not been able to restock (as reported by interviewees).

¹ Datasets on conflict fatalities acknowledge underlying data deficiencies and caution that incidences and fatalities should be treated as estimates. Therefore, we present a range drawn from two different databases: ACLED and Nigeria Security Tracker (CFR, 2022; ACLED, 2022).

Male interviewees indicated that livelihood diversification is common. Some have expanded into more commercial farming and sell produce (such as tomatoes, peppers and cotton) at the Ikara, Soba and Pambegua farmers' markets or at livestock markets. Others are engaging in grain trading, working as livestock traders, have shops, or provide phone-charging or motorcycle-taxi services. Others work locally as agricultural labourers. Some males also travel to Benin, Edo State or Nasarawa State as casual labourers on cassava and palm-oil farms.

Many of the female interviewees are also employed, trading milk products (yogurt, ghee and cheese) during the rainy season when there is excess milk. Some women are also petty traders, selling spices, sugar cane and other provisions. Others keep goats and poultry.

2.3 Challenges

According to interviewees, Hayin Ade has not experienced any incidents of violent conflict in the last six to eight years. A few reported that there were some increases in cattle raiding during the Covid-19 lockdown period when markets were closed, but this has since declined. More recent migrants (in the last decade) have been attracted by the relative peace and stability of Hayin Ade in comparison to conflict areas within Kaduna State (e.g. Birnin Gwari, Giwa or Zangon LGAs) and in Katsina, Zamfara and Niger States. Why Hayin Ade has been relatively stable in recent years, despite growing violence throughout Kaduna State, is something that requires further exploration.

Eleven interviewees (18% of the sample in Hayin Ade) had fled there within the last ten years to escape violence in other parts of Kaduna State and Niger State. These individuals related stories of violent conflict – family members being killed, cattle stolen and houses and assets burned – attributed variously to security forces, bandit and vigilante groups or as a result of conflicts between these actors. It is possible that some of the violent conflict actors in the Birnin Gwari LGA (Kaduna State) mentioned by interviewees have links with Ansaru. Jama'at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan (Ansaru for short), is a jihadist group that splintered from Boko Haram (Cummings, 2017). Ansaru has been named responsible for a number of violent clashes with bandit groups, government forces and others in Birnin Gwari, as well as attempting to recruit from the population in the LGA (Zenn, 2013). However, this particular actor was not specifically mentioned by the interviewees who had been displaced to Hayin Ade. Further investigation is needed to map the various militant groups operating across Kaduna and neighbouring states and trace their impacts on those within Hayin Ade.

“Criminals that reside in the forests ... rustle our livestock, kidnap and kill our people. They victimise both the Fulani and non-Fulani ... Security operatives instead of dealing with criminals, they went and burnt all our belongings and killed our relatives.”
(Female provision seller, 20s)

Interviewees reported that, in the last 15 years, challenges have arisen related to the availability of land for grazing, blockage of cattle routes and inability to access water during the dry season. These challenges have been increasingly exacerbated in the last 10 years by shifting priorities within national agricultural policy. The *Agricultural Sector Food Security and Nutrition Strategy: 2016–2025* prioritised crop production, particularly rice and maize, without concurrent policy and implementation to support pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods. Livestock spend the dry season in the settlement grazing on crop residue, with owners relying on dug wells or access to perennial streams for water. These wells are frequently located on farmland and farmers do not always agree to water access. A few allegations were made of farmers fouling the well water with cattle dung to make the water unsuitable for livestock. However, disputes have so far remained non-violent and are resolved through paying compensation when crops are damaged, although interviewees noted that this can be a financial burden.

Multiple factors are contributing to these access and usage pressures, with some pressures common across settlements and some within specific villages. In some settlements, not all those who have land deeds are finding them honoured. Some interviewees in Mangawa settlement reported that the village heads had reduced their plot size and sold much of their land without consulting them; in Sarrayia settlement, the village head is demanding additional money for purchased lands on the basis of land-value increases. Some of the interviewees facing land tenure insecurity had sold all of their cattle in attempts to repurchase, and were highly uncertain about both their living situation and their livelihood. Across all sites, livelihood diversification from predominantly pastoralism into agropastoralism has resulted in the conversion of grazing lands into cropland and blockage of routes. The influx of those displaced by violent conflict in other areas has also increased competition for land and water.

Grazing land has been reduced to patches between farms and roadsides; this has increased the likelihood of crop damage and disputes between livestock owners and farm owners (who may be Fulani, Maguzawa or Hausa). One-sixth of the interviewees reported that disputes with Hausa farmers around compensation for crop damage could be acrimonious, with the farmers claiming what was perceived to be disproportionate compensation. Relationships with the Maguzawa were described as peaceful. A potential reason for the perceived discrepancies could lie in some of the village heads being Hausa, and suspected favouritism when mediating and deciding compensation, but this requires further investigation.

One strategy for avoiding dispute and adapting livelihoods is moving herds to grazing reserves away from the area during the rainy season. Some locations to which cattle are moved for grazing include Birnin Gwari in Kaduna, the Falgore Grazing Reserve in Kano State, Bura Reserve in Bauchi State, and Yobe State. However, moving cattle to the reserves is not without challenges. Along the way, herders face kidnapping (and must pay ransom) and cattle raiding by bandit groups. Stock routes and grazing reserves are themselves being encroached upon by farmers and agropastoralists. Finally, permits must be purchased to enter the reserves; and a few respondents reported having to pay additional bribes to the LGA or other officials, including local Fulani leaders. Some interviewees felt they were at an impasse, others felt that the risks of moving herds to reserves outweighed the risk of disputes with farmers in Hayin Ade. We will be further exploring challenges related to grazing reserves and stock routes in subsequent research.

“Cattle are being rustled in those places and our youths who went with the cattle have been kidnapped for ransom. If we leave our cattle here in Hayin Ade during the wet season, crops are damaged and we pay huge compensation. So you can see the problems we face both here and there [grazing reserves of Falgore or Bura].”
(Male agropastoralist, 50 years old)

3. Wuro Alhaji Idrisa Bappate

3.1 Context

The Ardonate of Alhaji Idrisa Bappate – shortened to Wuro Bappate in this report – is in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State. The Ardonate consists of 12 settlements, established more than 40 years ago. The clans inhabiting the area have mixed customary and legal claims to their land through inheritance from parents or grandparents, by acquisition through legal land purchase, or land permits allocated by previous governments. All interviewees claim to have certificates of land tenureship, for which they pay an annual fee to the local government authority. They also pay an annual *jangali* (cattle tax).

The major groups living in Wuro Bappate are Fulani, Mambila and Kaka. Interviewees largely live in homogenous settlements, mostly inhabited by those affiliated with Fulani clans. However, in some settlements, Mambila and Kaka tribes also have farms and homes. Based on the interviews, inter-marriage between the Fulani and non-Fulani is rare.

3.2 Livelihoods

The interviewees (Fulani) mostly describe themselves as agropastoralists, while their Mambila and Kaka neighbours are predominantly farmers. Male and female interviewees indicated that agriculture is mainly for subsistence purposes and carried out during the rainy season. The majority of the respondents lack access to farm inputs, such as fertiliser or tractors, and adequate veterinary services. They mostly rely on cow dung and urine to fertilise crop areas. Veterinary drugs are purchased without expert advice and livestock treated based on experience.

Livelihood activities among the interviewees are largely gendered. The men mostly engage in cattle rearing, herding and livestock sales. Herders also travel to eastern and southern parts of Nigeria to access more lucrative markets. Some of the male respondents, especially young men, also undertake part-time jobs as motorcycle riders, taxi drivers and cattle commission agents. The extent of livelihood diversification is lower than in Hayin Ade, and pessimism over incomes and prospects higher.

All the female respondents were either married or widowed. About half of the female respondents describe themselves as housewives without any source of income; this is in contrast to women in Hayin Ade who were predominantly employed. Those with jobs were involved in milking cows, poultry business, and petty trading of items such as milk, soap, groundnut, palm oil and confectionary. Based on the interviews, women who engage in petty trade do not see their businesses as profitable ventures. Their income from sales is often used to augment household expenses.

3.3 Challenges

Lack of land for grazing and farming was identified in the interviews as a major impediment to livelihood activities. Opinions were split as to reasons for lack of land, and are outlined below. However, the local factors have to be considered within broader sociopolitical contexts.

No violent conflict resulting in injury or death was reported by interviewees to have occurred in the last four years. However, previous incidents of violence have had significant impacts on local pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods. Multiple episodes of large-scale violent conflict between various ethnic and livelihood groups over land have led to the deaths of thousands, property destruction and displacement throughout Taraba State between 1990 and 2020 (Agbu et al., 2021). The last incident in Saradauna LGA was with Mambila farmers over land for farming and mining in 2017 and on a smaller scale in 2018, in which settlements throughout the Ardonate were attacked.

The episodes of violence have prompted policy responses to reduce the movement of livestock. Local government laws and the 2017 Taraba State Anti-Open Grazing Ban prohibit the Fulani herders from migrating their cattle to valleys with better forage. As a result, the herders in Wuro Bappate are unable to move their cattle and must contend over the remaining land resources allocated to them. This is concentrating pressures on land and natural resources in the settlements of the Wuro Bappate case study.

These pressures present cultural and livelihood challenges. Some interviewees noted that the Fulani clans prioritise cattle rearing, which limits farming opportunities. According to other interviewees, land scarcity is also interlinked with increased family size. Based on tradition, clans apportion land among families, leaving each household with smaller plots to carry out grazing and farming activities. Increasing population is mainly due to expansion of clans and families already living in the area. The interviewees indicated few new migrants in the area; newcomers are usually women relocating through marriage.

“We are a large family here. If I should farm extensively to satisfy myself, and others should do the same, there is less land for our cattle to graze. Once you use too much of the land, the stress is on the cattle.”
(Male agropastoralist, 40s)

Local land scarcity is also linked with expansion of unregulated mining activities by individuals. Taraba State, particularly the Mambila Plateau area, is endowed with deposits of solid minerals (fluorite, galena, gold and zinc ore) and sapphires (Angye, 2020). In recent times, illegal mining activities in Wuro Bappate have triggered land disputes. According to some interviewees, land reserved for grazing is being excavated in search of gemstones and mineral resources. Several interviewees mentioned that illegal mining activities within and around their settlements have also disrupted grazing activities and led to cattle injuries when the animals fall into mine pits. In future research, we will further investigate the impacts of mining.

Dry-season and extended droughts were also identified as major challenges. During the dry season (October to May), there is both a lack of water and insufficient grass to maintain healthy livestock. This is leading to substantial herd losses and impacts on income. According to the interviewees, cattle with lower body mass have lower market value, leading to loss of income for both cattle owners and traders. Furthermore, malnourished cattle do not produce enough milk. This has a disproportionate impact on the livelihood activities of women engaged in the petty trade of dairy products. A few women indicated that they had stopped trading as the family cattle no longer produced enough milk.

Although disputes between the Fulani themselves, or with Mambila or Kaka farmers, occur throughout the year, a majority of the interviewees assert that disputes intensify during the dry season due to the contestation of scarce local water and grass resources, and access to these – especially given the inability to migrate cattle to other locations due to the ban. The shortages lead to frequent occurrences of livestock trespassing into farm plots and crop destruction during the dry season. Others attributed the disputes to poverty and insufficient livelihood opportunities. A lack of financial resources inhibits the purchase of fodder to bridge the lean season, and could contribute to farm trespassing. Cattle raiding is also a significant issue affecting incomes. Few interviewees were able to recover or replace stolen cattle.

“I was selling dairy products and it was helping economically. But since the crisis, some of the cattle were stolen. I had four or five cows for milking; presently I have only one.”
(Female diary trader, 45 years old)

4. Mediation

Mediation activities are handled by an array of actors. In both study sites, minor disputes within households are resolved by heads of the family. Intra- and inter-group disputes may involve community leaders and elders, although trust in such mediators varies.

In Hayin Ade, interviewees indicated that elders were often consulted in disputes, but also mentioned going to the ward or district heads (local government). A few interviewees in some settlements expressed a belief that community leaders and elders often favoured the farmers in disputes over crop damage and restitution payments. In these instances where trust is lower, individuals seek redress with the heads or with police.

In Wuro Bappate, some interviewees expressed concerns about leaders and elders receiving gifts before conflict mediation, which was believed to influence the dispute-settlement and decision-making processes. Others accepted the mediation activities of the community leaders as fair, irrespective of payment. Local government institutions are rarely used, because officials are perceived to be biased against pastoralists in policies and practice, as reflected in the anti-open grazing bans.

Although religious leaders have mediation roles, the interviewees in both study sites observed that they are more likely to rely on traditional leaders and elders for dispute settlement. Several interviewees mentioned that religious leaders take part in some reconciliation processes. More commented that religious leaders play roles in preaching about peace and using discussion to resolve differences.

Vigilante groups exist in both communities to protect livestock and property, although the organisational and fighting capacity differs between the groups. A substantial number of interviewees in Hayin Ade credited the Yan Sakai, a pastoral vigilante group created after the height of the cattle raiding incidents, with reducing local incidences of cattle raiding and banditry in the past few years. However, perceptions varied among the settlements in the study area. While some have a positive view of their local Yan Sakai, others were highly critical of their mode of operation. Wuro Bappate established a small vigilante

group following the attacks by Mambila farmers. However, the few interviewees who were members of the group complained that they were not armed with guns and could not always protect against armed cattle raiders.

5. Our learning so far

The longitudinal design of this SPARC research provides an overview of the evolving household-level livelihood impacts of various shocks and coping mechanisms against the backdrop of historical issues. It is intended to provide information, for humanitarian and development actors with programmes in Nigeria, on the immediate coping strategies of various livelihood groups in the two areas within the context of longer-term challenges related to access to land and water for farming, pastoralism and agropastoralism.

There are multiple evolving factors at play in both of the study sites. Interviewees were not explicitly asked about access to land or water, but rather about challenges they faced as herders or agropastoralists. Nonetheless, access to resources was a primary challenge raised by most. On the face of it, competition and disputes over land and water resources between those with livestock (Fulani) and with farms (Fulani and non-Fulani) is increasing in both sites. Some of this competition is related to local population growth. In Hayin Ade, there has been an influx of people seeking relative stability, whereas in Wuro Bappate increasing family size and the inability to further expand or sub-divide plots were cited as reducing the area available for grazing and watering livestock.

However, this competition must be situated within the broader challenges facing Nigeria around identity politics, divestment of power from federal to state governments on issues of land management, and environmental pressures. The two sites, the grazing routes and reserves used by pastoralists in Hayin Ade, and the job-destination choices for young men seeking to diversify incomes all face different conflict dynamics shaped by these deeper issues, which in turn impact livelihoods. The environmental state of drylands, and climate trends and projections are also different, with implications for individual strategies for disaster risk management and climate adaptation.

As the research continues, we will unpack each of these challenges, and the similarities and differences in how they are playing out in different locations. We will explore aspects that humanitarian, development, disaster-risk-reduction and climate-adaptation actors need to consider when developing programmes and projects, to avoid adding to tensions and to ensure that no one is left behind.

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