
THE IMPACTS OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT ON AGATU OF NASARAWA STATE, 1990-2020

Joseph Ezekiel Obuje
ezezielobuje@gmail.com

&

Anthony Oloye Mamedu
anthonyoloye0022@gmail.com

Department of History and International Studies Federal University of Lafia

Abstract

The paper examines the root causes of communal conflicts in Agatu land of Nasarawa State. It identifies the complex interplay of historical grievances, resource competition, land disputes and ethnic tensions as causative factors. The intricate nature of the conflict has resulted in the destruction of farmlands, loss of livestock, and displacement of farmers, leading to decreased food production and heightened food insecurity. Additionally, the local markets and trade routes have been adversely affected, stifling economic growth and leading to increased poverty rates among the Agatu people. Besides, the ongoing conflict has deterred investment and development projects and further exacerbated the economic stagnation of Agatu. Both primary and secondary sources of data are used. Collected data were qualitatively analyzed. The paper underscores the urgent need for effective conflict resolution and sustainable economic policies to restore and stabilize the Agatu economy, ensuring long-term development and prosperity for the affected communities.

Keywords: Communal Conflict and Economic Development

Introduction

Many countries in the world have witnessed a large-scale impact of communal conflict and insecurity, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. Most conflicts can be linked to economic reasons, resource control, population explosion, historical grievances, illegal migration, land contestation, boundary conflict and fear of dominance, protection of group identity, and religious intolerance of ethnic groups living together. These leading factors led to the destruction of lives and properties, thereby increasing poverty, famine, and starvation, as well as demographic decline, educational stagnation, and a decline in economic activities.¹

¹. J. E. Obuje, *A History of Agatu and Alago Relations in the Lower Benue Region, 1800–1990* (Benue State University, 2013), 199.

The Agatu community in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, has been a victim of communal conflicts for over three decades. These conflicts, fueled by factors like land disputes, ethnic and religious differences, resource competition, political manipulation, and historical grievances, have led to the loss of lives, displacement of people, property destruction, and economic disruption.

Although there have been numerous literatures on the impact of communal conflict on Agatu of Nasarawa State, most of these studies focus on farmers-herders conflict. However, there is a shift in the impact of communal conflict in Agatu land to include inter- and intra-ethnic struggle over both land and water tributaries that formed fish ponds, which prompts this study to interrogate the impact of communal conflict in Agatu of Nasarawa. Thus, the basic questions this paper seeks to advance are: what are the causes of communal conflict in Agatu, Nasarawa State? To what extent has communal conflict affected the socio-economic lives of the people, and what is the dynamic of the communal conflict in Agatu, Nasarawa State?

This paper is further subdivided into four sections and proceeds as follows: Section two provides a conceptual and theoretical underpinning for the paper; section three examines the causes of communal conflict in the Agatu area of Nasarawa State; and Section three analyses the impact of communal conflict in the Agatu area of Nasarawa State.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

According to Horwitz², communal conflicts are violence situation perpetrated across ethnic lines and victims are based on ethnic group membership. This typically takes form of mutual aggression in which members of all ethnic groups perpetrate violence and also serve as victims. International Global Institute (IGI)³, defined communal conflict as a conflict between non-state groups organized along a shared communal identity. They are products of social relations. It involves threat or action of one party directed at a community's rights, interests or privileges because of differences over economic issues, power or authority, cultural values and beliefs. And I argued that, communal conflict should be view as any forms of violence attacks between two communities of different interest.

². I. G. Institute, New Reference Books Catalog Publisher of Timely Knowledge-www.Igi global.com, 2021,

³. I. G. Institute, New Reference Books, 2021.

For Nnoli⁴, communal conflict has a peculiar symbolic nature that affects the numbers, type and quality of displacement they generate. To him, they are violent fought with a great emotion and tend to be difficult to resolve. Consequently, those fleeing from them are often victims of abuse and tend to remain displaced for a long time. J. B. Elfversson⁵, viewed communal conflict as violent conflict between non-state groups that are organized along a shared communal identity. Violent conflict to him, refers to the fact that the parties use lethal violence to gain control over some disputed and perceived indivisible resource, such as a piece of land or local political power.

To Tadjoeeddin,⁶ communal conflicts could be seen as violence that occurs between different communal groups in community based on religion, tribe, sect, race and others. Varshney,⁷ noted that all communal conflicts appear to be based on ascribed group identities including race, language, religion, tribe or caste. In the opinion of Kahl, the concept refers to violence that involves groups with permanent or semi-permanent armed militias which are not directly linked to the government.

For Uji,⁸ economic development from the perspective which his lecture adopted means the contribution that migrant groups have made to the economic transformation of land in areas of trade expansion, the growth of markets, the development of small and medium enterprises, health care, etc. As Tella Adewale pointed out, economic development is the massive effort to increase production, create, spread employment and eradicate fundamental causes of poverty, diseases and ignorance as well as improve infrastructure facilities in both urban and rural areas of an economy.

The concept of under-development would help us to understand the subject matter of development. Despite the divergence of views, the essential fact that dominates under-development is the deprivation of economic opportunities and infrastructure, the deprivation of

⁴. O. Nnoli, *Communal Conflict and population Displacement in Nigeria*. Enugu: Pan African Centre for Research, 2002, 19.

⁵. J. B. Elfversson, Communal conflict, civil war, and the state Complexities, connections, and the case of Sudan. *Journal of war*, (2012):9.

⁶. O. Nnoli, *Communal Conflict and Population Displacement in Nigeria*. Enugu: Pan African Centre for Research, 2002, 19.

⁷. O. K. Oyerinde, Design Principles, Common Land, and Collective Violence in Africa *International Journal of the Commons* 13(2) (2019):9993-1002.

⁸. U. W. Terlumun, *Migration, Social and Economic Development in Historical Trajectory*. Nigeria: FULAFIA Press, 2022, 12.

credit opportunities in the commercial sector, the repatriation of capital as well as the practice of price extortion and exploitation of human and material resources. From the Marxist viewpoint, under-development means the exploitation and the oppression by bourgeois class of a given society. To the Marxist⁹ all histories are the history of class struggle which the fundamental and predominant issues are that of economic and material consideration. Underdevelopment is thus viewed as the exploitation and the looting of the human and material capital of a nation by the bourgeois class.

For Todaro¹⁰ the capacity of a national economy whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national income (GNI) at rate of 5% to 7% or more. A common alternative economic index of development has been the use of rates of growth of income per capital to take into account the ability of a nation to expand its output at a rate faster than the growth rate of its population.

Dudley Seers¹¹ posed the basic question about the meaning of development when he asserted that the questions to ask about a country's development are therefore: what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of economic development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result “development” even if per capital income doubled.

This study uses transgression/aggressive theory by scholars such as John Dollar and his colleagues to understand how communal conflict has shaped the Agatu developmental trajectory. Aggression theories, rooted in early 20th-century works, and later in the 1960s and 1970s by Leornard Berkowitz, have been studied across multiple disciplines.¹² Ethologist Konrad Lorenz proposed that aggression is innate, adaptive, and crucial for survival and territory maintenance. This theory provides insights into the biological, social, and cultural causes of violence and aggression, offering strategies for prevention and treatment. The study focuses on the

⁹. U. W. Terlumun, *Migration, Social*, 125.

¹⁰. M. P. Todaro, Stephen C. Smith. *Economic Development Ninth Edition*. New York: Pearson Addison Wesley, 2006, 15-21.

¹¹. Todaro etal, “Economic Development”, 21

¹². Peter Sturmev, *Violence and Aggression: Integrating Theory, Research, and Practice*. USA: Springer, 2022, 456.

competitions for land, water, and powers in the Agatu land, which serve as basic needs for the people hence, making the theory relevant to this study.¹³

Causes of Communal Conflict in Agatu Land

Community conflicts in Agatu land are rooted in various factors, including competition over resources like land and water, ethnic and religious differences, economic disparities, political issues, and historical grievances and population growth. It should be noted that, ethnic groups like Tiv, Bassa, Eggon, and Koro occupied more farmlands, causing recurrent inter-communal conflicts and they worked as rural farmers whose interest would not to interfere with the administration of Agatu land but, to continue to occupy more farmlands during this period. As population grew, struggle for food on the available arable land became a central factor in their recurrent inter-communal conflict. For instance, the Tiv in these territories as citizens of Nigeria asserted their constitutional right to live and work in any part of the country they so wish without hindrance.

Places with tributaries forming fish ponds, particularly the Onahah fish pond, have become a source of conflict between the Ayele and Iggah communities.¹⁴ As corroborated by Philip, the pond generates an estimated 2 million naira annually and is used for consumption too. Since 1998, the conflict has deteriorated, leading to assaults on individuals and communities motivating each community sought external support from other villages, with Oshugu, Oseni, Ekpa, Onaka, Ugoboh and Aku supporting Iggah and others like Onogbo and hired Fulani militias supporting Ayele in 2002 conflict.¹⁵

Another cause of communal conflict in Agatu land is the population explosion in Agatu land, driven by trans-human movement, has led to increased competition for resources among ethnic groups. This has resulted in conflicts over land ownership, insecurities, and strained governance systems. However, political instability and weak governance have also contributed to the area's conflicts.¹⁶

^{13.} K. L. Bekelcha, *Conflict Theories Global Journal of Religions, Department of Social Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, vol. (3) (2019):654.*

^{14.} Ladi Edoh, Interview at her Residence, Lafia, Nasarawa, March 15th, 2024.

^{15.} Sani Philip, Interview at his Residence, Lafia, Nasarawa, March 18th, 2024.

^{16.} John B. Idamkue, *Resource Governance and Protracted Conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta: Understanding the Perceptions and Grievances of the People in Oil-Bearing Communities.* USA: Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2021, 132.

Historically, resources like good vegetation and fertile land have been unevenly distributed among the existing ethnic groups. Lingering grievances over land allocation escalate into conflicts when there are disputes over access and utilization. In some cases, historical grievances fuel desires for revenge or retribution. Perceptions of past injustices that remain unaddressed lead to vicious circles of violence, as individuals or groups seek to settle old scores. However, historical events, such as forced displacement or land dispossession, leave lasting scars on people. Displaced populations always seek to reclaim lost lands or demand compensation, leading to conflicts with current occupants. Lastly, long-held grievances become deeply ingrained in the collective memory of people. Oral histories and narratives passed down through generation sustained feelings of injustice and victimhood, influencing present-day conflicts in Agatu land. These grievances, including marginalization and discrimination, create lingering resentments and mistrust, causing inter-ethnic conflicts, such as those between Tiv and Agatu of Okpata, Rukubi axis and Agatu of Agbashi with Udeni Magaji.¹⁷

Conflict was frequently created by hostile political and ideological disparities involving different ethnic groups. For example, the Tiv-Agatu relationship had become more antagonistic, particularly during the First Republic's political era. Agatu was a member of one of the two distinct political parties of then Plateau State supporting the ruling Northern People's Congress (NPC) and so had the backing of the northern regional administration, while, the Tiv of same state were staunch supporters of the Joseph Tarka-led United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). Due to the different interests of the desired candidate, the "Tarka Sawa conflict" broke out between the Tiv and Agatu in 1990. It should be mentioned that this fight eventually took on a new form between Agatu and Bassa as a result of Bassa's alliance with the Tiv, which resulted in Amodu and Egye's deaths.

Also, escalation of conflict in Agatu land especially, between Agatu and Fulani was the consequence of the poor standards for measurement of damages to farmers by Fulani cows. Tore et al¹⁸ aver that, the farmers viewed compensation paid by Fulani as meager compared to the destruction caused by cows while Fulani viewed what they paid as been taxed heavily and out of proportion due to lack of standards to quantify damages. This is what breeds resentment and

¹⁷. P. B. Oromaregahake, Managing Inter-Ethnic Conflict in the Niger Delta: The Case of Warri in A. M. Yakubu, *Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria Since 1980 Volume Two Governance and Conflict Management*. Nigerian: Defense Academy Book Series No. 1, 2005, 756-757.

¹⁸. A. Tore et al, *Understanding the Nature and Dynamic of Herders-Farmers Conflict in the Lower Benue Valley Area 1999-2019*. Nigeria: Aboki Publishers Benue State, 2020, 33-34.

feeling of injustice between the people and breeds unprecedented clashes between the cattle herdsman and farmers who engage in attacks and reprisal attacks to settle scores.

Several investigations carried out in the area to determine the causes of skirmishes have unraveled many causes. For instance, in the course of this research, most affected areas in Agatu crises unraveled these causes: crop destruction by cattle, overgrazing on fallow ground, sexual assaults, harassment of herdsman by host communities, defecation of cattle on roads, cattle theft and rustling by both Fulani and host communities, bush burning and stray cattle.

Elaiwu¹⁹ specifically pointed out that communal conflicts between Fulani herders and host communities usually arise when grazing cattle are not properly controlled and consequently grazed on the cultivated crops like cassava, maize, rice, and other cereals of host communities. Attempts by the owners of such farms to register grievance on the destruction of their livelihood (food crops and cash crops) are stoutly resisted by Fulani herders thereby degenerating into communal conflicts. Host communities sometimes register their grievance by placing restrictions on movement and grazing of cattle in designated areas and enforcing compliance through coercive measure decreed by the host community. The decree may take the shape of catching cattle or arresting and prosecution defaulters. When the communities attempt to moderate their activities or request their exit, the Fulani herders usually become aggressive and attack the host community sometimes with the assistance of the hired mercenaries. The attack often occurs at midnight making the host communities more vulnerable.

Impacts of Communal Conflict in Agatu Land

Economic Impact

Communal conflicts in Agatu land had significant economic impacts. These include disruptions to agricultural activities, damage to infrastructure, reduced investment, displacement of populations, and decreased trade opportunities. The uncertainty caused by conflict deterred businesses and investors, leading to a decline in economic growth and development. Additionally, resources that could have been allocated to productive endeavors are diverted

¹⁹. V. A. Elaiwu, *The Military and the Management of Civil Crises in Nigeria 1960-1993*. Nigeria: NDA Kaduna, 2003, 149.

towards managing and mitigating the conflict, further hampering economic progress.²⁰

Communal conflict and insecurity in Agatu land have led to farmers being displaced and disrupting farming activities. This has resulted in crop losses and reduced agricultural output, such as yam and cassava and that by 2018 to 2024, rural farmers travel to other villages to borrow or purchase yam and cassava species. Critical infrastructure, such as government buildings and transportation networks, has been damaged. Additionally, livestock loss due to theft or destruction impacts pastoral communities' livelihoods and reduces availability of animal-based products. In 2011, temporary laws were enacted to prevent cow rearing, hindering young men's business.²¹

Communal conflicts in Agatu land often hinder farmers' access to markets, leading to labor shortages and decreased productivity. This uncertainty discourages investments in agriculture, causing food scarcity and higher prices. Skilled farmers and professionals are often displaced, resulting in the loss of valuable knowledge and expertise. By 2013 to 2020, a tuber of yam was sold at two thousand five hundred naira as against the 100 to 200 naira at higher prices.

For Ikpanor,²² Over the past three decades, global food security concerns have increased due to the growing human population. However, efforts to address this have been hindered by communal clashes and violence between communities and farmers. The Tiv Development Association (TIDA) claims that human resources lost due to these conflicts could have aided economic activities and reduced poverty.²³

Equally important is the fact that communal conflict have been responsible for the disruption of food production, processing, preservation and supply as farmers cannot go to farm. There is loss of internal revenues as local agricultural markets cease to exist, income is lost and the circle goes down to affect income taxes and revenue generation, both at the local and state levels. For

^{20.} E.T. Ikpanor, *Impacts of the Herders-Farmers Conflicts on the Development of Benue and Nasarawa States*”, Catholic Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP) in collaboration with Centre for Peace and development Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi with Financial Support from Misereor Germany. Nigeria: Aboki Publishers, Benue State, 2020, 20-23.

^{21.} Ogba Muhammed, Interview at his Residence, Rukubi, Doma, Nasarawa, February 9th, 2024.

^{22.} E.T. Ikpanor, “Impacts of the Herders-Farmers Conflicts on the Development of Benue and Nasarawa States”, Catholic Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP) in collaboration with Centre for Peace and development Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi with Financial Support from Misereor Germany (Nigeria: Aboki Publishers, Benue State, 2020), 20-23.

^{23.} Monday Emmanuel, Interview at Okpata, Doma, Nasarawa, February 9th, 2024.

instance, tax force instituted by local government to generate revenue for the local government in Loko, Rukubi, Agbashi and Idadu major roads ceased for insecurity of lives and I argued here that, there can never be economic, social or industrial development without peace. The rotational local markets in the affected areas like Agbashi, Loko, Udeni, Rukubi had been shut down throughout 2014-2018, thereby crippling the entire commercial activities in Agatu land.

Social Impact

The impacts of conflict on the social life of any conflict torn area, especially on the survivors who are mostly orphans and widows, was always devastating. In addition, man is a social being and any impediment that restricts his freedom to freely express his right to social life violates the essence of his existence. The implication is not different in the area of humanitarian crisis. Communal clashes have taken a substantial humanitarian and economic toll on Agatu communities with potentially serious political and security repercussions. Indeed, conflict, as a consequence of the incompatible motive of individuals and group, is a pervasive phenomenon the world over and its impact is quite devastating, although scholars like Varvar and Uji have argued that the phenomenon has some positive attributes as well. For Uji,²⁴ migrant groups, domestic or national of any kind are prime movers of economic growth that contribute significantly to lives.

To Oromaregahakeetel,²⁵ violent communal conflict has historically caused significant hardships on human societies, disrupting education, infrastructure, and socio-economic collapse. It has resulted in injuries, starvation, and death, causing fear and uncertainty in crisis areas. Displaced communities have been forced to flee, leading to beggars, prostitution, and criminal activities. Schools in affected communities have been closed, affecting children's learning. The negative impact of poor education standards due to community distraction and teachers escaping to safer areas is undeniable.²⁶ For instance, Government Junior Secondary School and Primary School Ayele, Government Junior Secondary School and Primary School Iggah were burnt down in community strife of 2003. In Agbashi community, Central Primary School and Junior Secondary Schools were closed down in 2013 conflict.²⁷

^{24.} U. W. Terlumun, *Migration, Social and Economic Development in Historical Trajectory*. Nigeria: FULAFIA Press, 2022, 125.

^{25.} P. B. Oromaregahakeetel, "Managing Inter-Ethnic Conflict in the Niger Delta: The Case of Warri", in A. M. Yakubu et al *"Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria Since 1980 Volume Two Governance and Conflict Management"* Nigerian Defense Academy Book Series No. 1, 2005, 756-757

^{26.} "Land Conflict and Climate Patterns in Nigeria", Pdf. accessed on 28th November, 2008.

^{27.} Sani Philip, Interview at his Residence, Lafia, Nassarawa, 7th February, 2024.

The resultant effect was the breeding of next generation of uneducated folks. Farmers, artisans, men, women, adults, young, children, are displaced by this perennial conflict. There was destruction of both public and private buildings such as the destruction of the oldest “two mud story building” in Agbashi belonging to Enah Sabo and places of worship such as Iggah and Ayele Methodist Church and Assemblies of the Lord Call One Church.²⁸ A general situation of total anguish, pains and sorrows in all places of conflicts, leaving behind memories that can never be erased, culminating into a vicious circle with continuous reprisal. Communities across Agatu land including attackers acquire arms in order to protect themselves which became the basis for the formation of armed militant groups, marking the proliferation of arms, justified by the needs to secure their lives and their properties.

Some positive aspect of conflict includes individuals and communities developing resilience, adaptability, and a strong sense of unity as they worked together to overcome adversity. For instance, in all conflict torn areas, men in groups of ten to twenty went to farm in convoy for fear of insecurity. Additionally, conflict in Agatu land had pushed displaced people to acquire new skills like plumbing, P.O.P, roofing, tailoring, and cosmetics which became explored innovative solutions for survival and integration in new environments. In some selected areas of Agatu land like Agbashi, people developed new ways of crop domestication where new varieties of tuber such as 'Monkey Yam' were consumed for survival. However, it is important to note that these positive effects are not guaranteed and could vary widely, depending on the specific area.²⁹

Displacement Effect

Displaced Agatu people often faced danger and violence during and after fleeing their homes and are at risk of injury, abuse, or death as a result of conflict-related violence. For instance, Mr. Gonah and Abraham (Anger) from Agbashi and Shehu from Okpata were brutally murdered while fleeing from the scene of the conflict.³⁰ Displaced people typically leave behind their homes and belongings due to conflict and individuals often lack access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, shelter, and healthcare leading to hunger and starvation. Many displaced Agatu lose their sources of income and livelihoods as a result of conflict since they are forcefully uprooted from their place of live hood, which leads to increased poverty and dependency.

^{28.} Simon Sabo, Interview at his Residence, Lafia, Nasarawa, January 11th, 2024.

^{29.} R. O. Yusuf, “*Farmer-Herder Conflict in North Central Nigeria and its Implications*”, Society for Peace Studies and Practice, FCT-Abuja Chapter.

^{30.} Suleiman Dinga, Interview at his palace Olegabogy, Doma, Nasarawa, May 11th, 2024.

The influx of displaced people into host communities also strained local resources and services, leading to tensions and competition for limited resources. Sometimes, protracted displacement for extended periods, make it difficult to rebuild their lives and integrate into new communities. Insecurity and ongoing conflict prevented displaced people from safely returning to their homes thereby limiting opportunities for rebuilding.³¹ More importantly the displacement of Agatu people brought about loss of cultural identity connected to the burning and stolen of local cultural attires and regalia such as Obagidi of the people which hindered the overall development of the area as it disrupted social and cultural stability.

Prostitutions

Conflicts and insecurities in Agatu Land increased the rate of prostitution due to several factors. In conflict-affected areas, economic hardships and the breakdown of social structures left many Agatu people, especially women and vulnerable individuals, with limited livelihood options. As a result, some viewed prostitution as a means to survive or to provide for their families. Another scenario was the inability of youth to pay dowry but to seek the opportunity to be given wives for later fulfillment of traditional rites when the economy improved. This new but heartbreaking practice ushered many young ladies into broken homes in the post-conflict era after giving birth to one or two children. Olodu,³² a victim of the circumstances, narrated her ordeal after being given to her husband with the consent of her parents in marriage on a promise to come later for the traditional rite if the economy improved. She ended up being divorced with one child. In 2019, she went further to argue that “almost all her friends who had been given to their men in what she referred to as “marry on loan” ended up being divorced with either one or two children, and that the situation continued to repeat itself.” Displacement and instability in Agatu land also caused the influx of outsiders, including armed personnel and unidentified individuals, creating more demand for commercial sex services and further driving the prostitution industry. Moreover, conflict areas in Agatu land lack law enforcement and adequate protection for women and girls, making them more susceptible to sex exploitation. Onyegbinu³³ shared her experience of an armed robbery attack that nearly subjected all victims (women) to sexual assaults but was averted by the courage summoned by women in 2001.

³¹. M. A. Bakoji, Military Professionalism and Conflict Management in Nigeria: A Case Study of Tiv-Jukun Conflict since 1980 in A. M. Yakubu et al *Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria since 1980 Volume Two Governance and Conflict Management*. Nigerian: Defense Academy Book Series no. 1, 2005, 757-776.

³². Olodu Mike, Interview at Loko, Nassarawa, Nasarawa, October 11th, 2024.

³³. Onyegbinu Akoshi, Interview at Agbashi, Doma, Nasarawa, April 18th, 2024.

Skill Acquisition

Conflicts pushed individuals in Agatu Land to acquire new skills out of necessity for survival and adaptation, either to the new environment or after they return home. This was due to the fact that when traditional sources of income and stability are disrupted by conflict, people often explore alternative ways to support themselves and their families. This, however, heightens motivation to learn new skills that are relevant to the changing circumstances. For example, individuals seek out vocational training or education programs to develop skills that have helped them find employment in sectors that are still functional despite the conflict away from the immediate environment. These skills include trades, crafts, agricultural techniques, and building techniques such as plumbing, POP, glazing, tilling, soap making, and cosmetics, which revolutionized Agatu communities.

Ese³⁴ argues that, his decisions to learn tilling helped him to cope up the post-conflict era. "Our ability to coped with the post-conflict situations was due to the wisdom of learning the new skill, which had fetched us more money to cater for the needs of the family, and we can categorically say that, for now, we are just a few that have learned the skill from our community, and our services could be needed at all times." In some cases, conflict and insecurities in Agatu land also brought people together in communal efforts, fostering the sharing of knowledge and skills among displaced or affected populations. This exchange of expertise has helped individuals navigate challenges and build resilience.

Cultural Impact

Bennett, et al.³⁵ Communal conflicts in Agatu land resulted in the destruction of cultural and religious sites, erasing historical and cultural connections. This also leads to the fragmentation of communities along ethnic or religious lines, weakening social fabric. The post-1990 and 2013 conflicts in Agatu societies experience lingering distrust and animosity, limiting movement and impeded cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Valuable artifacts of ancient pots, utensils carved from wood, mats, and traditional regalia were lost.

For Edoh,³⁶ dominant groups suppressed the cultural expressions of minority groups during and after conflicts. This includes banning languages, religious practices, traditional dress, and

^{34.} Abu Ese Interview in Doma, Nasarawa, May 11th, 2024.

^{35.} Jim Bennett, Michael Bleeker, and Frank Möller. *Art and Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture, and Community*. London: University of the Arts, 2023, 320.

^{36.} Ladi Edoh, Interview at her residence, Lafia, Nasarawa, April 15th, 2024.

festivals, effectively marginalizing certain cultures. For example, Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups were for a long time not allowed to live in various Agatu communities because they believed that they were the root cause of the various communal conflicts in Agatu land. Tivs are also often neglected to live in parts of Okpata and Rukubi areas for the same reason that they have been the cause of the existing crises. In some places, like Ayele and Iggah, their hostility has continued even now, as evidenced by pockets of skirmishes.

According to Funmi,³⁷ in some cases, dominant groups imposed strict controls on cultural production and dissemination, using propaganda to promote a singular national or cultural identity at the expense of diversity. Despite the negative impacts, cultures often adapt and transform in response to conflict. This leads to syncretism, where new cultural forms emerged from the blending of different traditions, leading to communities finding ways to preserve, revive, and revitalize their cultural heritage post-conflict through cultural preservation projects and festivals celebrating cultural diversity such as the yam festival (Ishi), the fishing festival (Kwebe), and the hunting festival (Ogendi).

Conclusion

The paper examined the impact of communal conflicts on the social and economic development of Agatu, highlighting competition over natural resources such as water and fish ponds, differences in political ideologies, religious and ethnic tensions as inimical to the social, political, and economic development of Agatu societies.

Other factors such as climate change, desertification, population explosions, and historical grievances contribute to the conflict in Agatu land, causing significant losses, humanitarian crises, and increased food insecurities, resulting in both negative and positive transformations.

The Agatu economy, primarily based on agriculture, hunting, and fishing, has been severely impacted by recent conflicts. Damage to agricultural infrastructure, closure of schools has led to significant humanitarian and economic harm. Agatu people often face violence and risk of injury, abuse, or death. The study uses transgression/aggressive theory to understand the role of communal conflict in shaping the Agatu's development trajectory, focusing on competitions for land, water, and power to meet basic needs.

³⁷ Funmi A. Olonisakin, *Cultural Impacts of Communal Conflicts in Nigeria*. Nigeria: Port Harcourt, Rivers State University Press, 2024, 310.

Prioritizing conflict resolution mechanisms and building critical infrastructure, such as schools, markets, roads, clinics across Agatu land, could help minimize the impact of communal conflict on socio-economic development of the area.

Bibliography

Primary Source

Oral Source

- Abu Ese (Manson/tiller), Interview, Nasarawa, May 11th, 2024.
- Emmanuel Sebu (Senior Special Assistant), Interview, Nassarawa, February 9th, 2024.
- Isu Adamu (Farmer-Farming in Agbashi), Interview, Nassarawa, 2024.
- Ladi Edoh (Civil Servant from Ayele), Interview, Nassarawa, April 15th, 2024.
- Monday Emmanuel (Former chairman TIDA), Nassarawa, February 9th, 2024.
- Ogba Muhammed (Civil Servant, Benue Baisn), Interview, Nassarawa, February 9th, 2024.
- Odey M.O. (Staff Nigerian Army University Bui), Interview, Kaduna, March 6th, 2024.
- Sani Philip (Civil Servant), Interview, Iggah, Nasarawa, February 7th, 2024.
- Suleiman Dinga (Local Chief Olegabogye), Interview, Nasarawa, 2024.
- Simon Sabo (Civil Servant), Interview, Nasarawa, January 11th, 2024.

Secondary source

- A. A. Idrees and Y. A. Ochefu (ed). *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area* (Vol. 1). Lagos: CSS Limited, 2002.
- A. Bur. "Communal Crisis and its Impacts on Community Development" in A. Bur, (ed) *Communal Relations, Conflicts and Crisis Management Strategies*. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2002.
- A. I. R. Abubakar. History of A. I. Ker and S. I. Ugbeigili, *Pre-colonial Dispersal in the Niger-Benue Confluence and its Implications for Intermixture...* 2003.
- A. C. Egbunike "Linguistic Behavior in Conflict Management: A Study of Ethno-Religious Conflict in Nigeria Since 1980" in A. M. Yakubu, R.T. Adegoye, C. N. Ubah, B. Dogo, *Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria since 1980* vol. Two, "Governance and Conflict Management". 1980.
- B, Folarin "Theoretical Perspective on the Management of issues, Conflicts and Crises in Nigeria" in A. M. Yakubu, R.T. Adegoye, C. N. Ubah, B. Dogo, *Crisis and Conflict*

- Management in Nigeria since 1980 vol. 2, *Governance and Conflict Management*. 1980.
- E. T. Ikpanor. *Impacts of the Herders-Farmers Conflicts on the Development of Benue and Nasarawa States*. Nigeria: Benue State, Aboki Publishers, 2020.
- E. John, Murry M., and Peter N. *Social Economics; the New Palgrave*. 1989.
- G. J. Adanu. *The Fight for Fatherland: A Case of Agatu People*". Nigeria: Adoka Unit-G Press, 2016.
- Funmi A. Olonisakin, *Cultural Impacts of Communal Conflicts in Nigeria*. Nigeria: Port Harcourt: Rivers State University Press, 2024.
- H. Abdul, "Ethno-Religious Crisis in Kaduna: Impact on Women and Children" in *Ethno-Religious Conflict and Democracy in Nigeria Challenges Kaduna Human Rights Monitor*, by Alemika, E. E.O and Okoye, F. (eds), 2002.
- I. Mu'azzan, "Religious Identity in the Context of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria" in *Identity Transformation and Identity Politic Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, by Jega A. M. (eds). Sweden: ElandersGotab, 2000.
- J. Brosche E. Elfversson. *Communal Conflict, Civil War, and the State Complexities, Connections, and the Case of Sudan*. 2012.
- Jill Bennett, Michael Bleeker, Frank Möller. *Art and Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community*. London: University of the Arts, 2023, 320.
- J. Richard. *State Government and Insecurity in Africa: in Democracy and Development: Journal of West African Affairs, Harmattan Edition vol.3. No.2002*.
- J. A. Ajayi and E. J. Alagoa. *Nigeria Before 1800: Aspect of Economic Development and Inter-group Relations in Groundwork of Nigerian History*, by in I. Obaro (ed). Ibadan: HEB 1980.
- K. O. Mbadiwe, "Rebirth of the Nation", (Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria, 1991, 201-204 in *Communal Crisis and its Impacts on Community Development*. By Asur Bur (ed). Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2002.
- K. Nnoli. *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa; a Comparative Analysis*. Senegal: CODESRIA, 1998.
- M. E. Tedheke "The National Question versus Micro National Chauvinism: Issues in the Dialectics of Conflicts in Nigerian Federalism" in *Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria since 1980 vol. Two Governance and Conflict Management*. By A. M. Yakubu, R.T. Adegoye, C. N. Ubah, B. Dogo. 1980.
- M. M. Tukur. *The Imposition of British Colonial Domination on the Sokoto Caliphate, Borno and Neighboring State 1897-1914: A Re Interpretation of Colonial Sources*. (ABU Zaria: PhD thesis, 1979.
- N. E. Aboki. *Conflict Resolution and Social Control in Africa*. Nigeria: Evans Press, 2014.

- Nasarawa State Emirate: Report by Central Working Committee for the Installation of the 10th Emire of Nasarawa. 1992.
- O. S. Adesina. Unemployment and Security Challenges in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2013.
- O. Nnoli. *Communal Conflict and population Displacement in Nigeria*. Enugu: PACREP, 1980.
- O. S. Ajiye. Communal Conflicts in Benue and the Herdsmen Conundrums. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5(12), 2018.
- O. E. Erim. *Idoma Nationality 1600-1900, Problems in studying the Origins and Development of Ethnicity*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1984.
- O. B. Isaac. "Is Conflict not Resolvable?" in *Crisis and Conflict Management in Nigeria since 1980* vol. Two Governance and Conflict Management, by A. M. Yakubu, R.T. Adegoye, C. N. Ubah, B. Dogo 1980.
- O. E. Joseph. *A History of Agatu and Alago Relations in the Lower Benue Region 1800-1990*.
- O. O. Okpeh, Jnr, M. U. Ikoh, T. B. Partick, I. Ukase. *Poverty and Social Policies in Africa. Nigeria*: Lagos Integrity Publishers, 2019.
- R. Shawulu. "The Socio-economic and Political Context of Ethnicity and Religious Crises in Nigeria" in *Victim: Impact of Religious and Ethnic Conflict in Women and Children in Northern Nigeria*, by Okoye, R. (eds). Kaduna: HRM, 2002.
- S. D. Onu. *Ethno-Religious Conflict in Northern Nigeria: Implication for Democracy*. Lagos: Freeman Books, 2004.
- T. T. Gyuse and O. Ajene (ed). *Conflicts in the Benue Valley*. Markurdi: Benue State University Press, 2012.
- T. Tseror. *Tiv and their Neighbors: A History of Relations in the 19th and 20th centuries*. Jos: PLHA Printing Press, 1992.
- T. Falola, et al. *History of Nigeria I: Nigeria before 1800 AD*. Ibadan: Longman Group Ltd, 1989.
- Uthman. *Memo submitted to the Panel of Investigation of Kano Disturbances*. Nigeria: October, 1991.
- Y. A. Ochefu and T.A Varvar. *A History of the People of Benue State*. Markurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007.
- Z. M. Umar. *The Problems and Prospect of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*. 2002.