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Pastoral Communities in Nigeria: Another Case of Marginalisation

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Abstract

The study which was conducted in rural communities of Kwara State, Nigeria set to uncover how pastoralists' families cope with their livelihoods when their husbands have gone grazing with the cattle. It examined the social and financial coping strategies of their families through Focus group discussions and interviews with pastoralists, their wives and some extension agents. The findings revealed that the pastoralists live in marginalised conditions and they lack access to social services needed to boost their living conditions. The study recommended increased social networks by government and agricultural bodies to improve on the livelihoods of these people.

Keywords: Pastoralists, Community, Marginalisation, Extension services.

Introduction

Pastoralism is defined to mean a situation whereby people herd animals to sustain their livelihoods (Bhasin, 2011). Despite various criticisms about pastoralism and its relevance in modern world, it remains a successful strategy to support a population where there is little access to social, cultural, physical, biological and environmental amenities (Bhasin, 2011). Thus, pastoralists are people whose major source of livelihoods is livestock herding, and the importance of this industry particularly its contribution to food production in the developing world cannot be overemphasised. This has made pastoralism to become a way of guarantying food security in marginalised rural communities.

Pastoralists usually live in areas that are rural and remote so as to be able to access pasture for their animals. This has resulted in marginalisation as no one seems to remember them in any social and economic consideration. It is worth mentioning that through pastoralism, production of milk, cheese, yoghurt, hide, and beef are enhanced which serve as raw materials for a number of industries in the urban areas. Pastoralists also use their animals as beast of burden to work on their farms (e.g camels and cattle) and to a large extent, animal wastes are a good source of organic manure for crop production in the local communities. Despite these, pastoralists live in extreme poverty as it has been noted that people in rural areas are poorer than those in the urban (IFAD, 2001). This could be attributed to low income levels, low access to technology, lack of access to inputs, credit and market facilities in the rural areas (Leeuwis and Pyburn, 2002).

Carter & Barrett (2007) stated that people who are below the marginalised threshold are ruined as they cannot access social facilities due to poverty; on the contrary, people above the threshold are productive and advanced. Would this definition of people below the margins fit the pastoralists and would the contrary opinion fit the elites of the urban areas?

In Nigeria, 90 per cent of cattle are owned by the Fulani ethnic group and they constitute the core of traditional pastoralists. This group of people are settled in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country. They however, migrate from one part of the country to another in search of graze land and water for the animals (Umar, 2006). In

fact, the contribution of the livestock industry to the Nigeria's GDP rose from 37.38% in 2002 to 41.91% in 2006 (CBN, 2006). Why then would such group of community remain marginalised? Furthermore, pastoralism in Nigeria context has marginalisation as a defining characteristic (Umar, 2006). This is apparent because pastoralists do not play any role in decision making in the society and as such lack nearly all forms of economic and social benefits of life. In some occasions they are seen as strangers and sometimes regarded as illegal settlers (Umar, 2006).

Problem statement

Pastoral communities rely heavily on their herds as a means of survival which necessitates that they travel with their animals in search of pasture and water. However, human induced climate change such as desert encroachment makes grazing difficult. As most animal grazing is carried out in dry lands, pastoralists and their families are usually affected by harsh weather conditions such as droughts which have serious ecological and economic effects on rangelands (Nori and Davies, 2007; Vetter, 2009). This is because their animals find it difficult to graze the lands in such weather due to lack of feeds; and the lack of food and water could result in malnutrition, diseases and death of the animals (Carpenter et al., 2001).

Christensen et al., (2007) stressed the fact that global warming is fast becoming an issue; and that Africa is likely to experience as much as 20% drying by the end of 21st century. In a similar submission, Boyd, et al., (2008) emphasized that Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to experience multiple simultaneous droughts and floods with serious consequences for food security as many of the continent's farmers rely on rain-fed agriculture.

According to the Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy in Africa (CEEPA, 2009), it is estimated that food production in Africa would be halved by the year 2020 because the economies of Africa depend largely on weather sensitive agro pastoral systems such as livestock rearing. Despite this, grazing livestock remains an important asset to livelihoods, especially for people of dry region (Dickhoefer et al., 2010) and this industry is an important source of livelihood for both genders (Turner, 2009). Therefore, pastoral agriculture is an integral part of rural economy as livestock serve as a source of cash to the family thereby preventing social depression which

arises as a result of lack of financial resources. Again man made factors like attitude of government put pastoralists' livelihoods in a deplorable state as a result of marginalisation (UNICEF, 2007)

In this paper, we present a section of an on-going research which addresses the marginalisation of pastoral communities particularly their wives. The paper draws from secondary sources as well as qualitative findings from the field. It is a norm for pastoralists of the researched area to herd their cattle while the wives stay back to look after the home. The women in a way become the household keepers because their husbands are not around most of the time. There are times when the men graze cattle for months before returning home and even where the men graze cattle to return home daily, they go from morning till late evenings leaving the women to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining the households. This paper therefore sought to find out the level of marginalisation of pastoralists from other members of their immediate community.

Objectives

The general objective of the study is to investigate the level of marginalisation the pastoralists in the rural communities in Kwara State, Nigeria are subjected to while the specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the livelihood or living standards of the pastoralists.
2. Analyse the level of marginalisation imposed on the respondents.
3. Investigate the level of access to extension agents and facilities among the pastoralists.

Methods

The Study Area

The study was conducted in Nigeria which is bordered by the Republic of Benin to the west, Niger and Chad to the north as well as Cameroun to the east. Pastoralists are largely located in the northern region of Nigeria. The field work was carried out in Kwara State, one of the thirty six states in Nigeria, and is located in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The State is a border state and shares international boundary with Benin Republic to the West and other states within Nigeria to the South, East and North. Kwara State lies within Latitude $7^{\circ} 55^1$ and Longitude $2^{\circ} 20^0$

East and was created in 1967, the State has a population of 2,365,353 (NPC, 2006). The state is referred to as state of harmony because it inhabits people of diverse cultures and ethnic groups such as: the Yorubas, Hausas, Fulanis, Nupes and Barubas. Agriculture is the mainstay of its economy and a lot of pastoralists have settled there.

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria highlighting Kwara State



Populations of the Study

Populations of the study comprise pastoralists and their families in Kwara State, Nigeria. The research also elicited information from extension agents of the Kwara State Agricultural Development Programme.

Data Collection

This study employed a qualitative approach to data collection. The qualitative approach was used to elicit information from the pastoralists' households and extension agents and this included focus group discussions, observations and key informant interviews. One reason why we used qualitative method of data collection is because McNeely and Pitt (1985) stated that this approach enables a researcher to

penetrate the minds of their informants. The data was collected from sixteen pastoral settlements in Kwara State while twenty-five extension agents were surveyed.

Results

The research found out the following:

- ❖ Poor and extremely low living standards
- ❖ Obvious marginalisation of a culture
- ❖ Ignorance of methods of improving output
- ❖ Zero access to extension agents and facilities

Discussions

Poor and Extremely Low Living Standards

The pastoral communities sampled were discovered to be lacking basic infrastructure like schools, hospitals, portable water and good roads. They also live in huts with thatched-roofs. Top on the list of their concerns is the lack of schools for their children. Where schools were provided, their children have to walk long distances to nearby villages. Again, if the children managed to go to school, there were no teachers to teach them. A report by Tahir (2006) emphasized that it was not easy to recruit teachers who are suitable for the harsh conditions that nomads live in. The author went further to state that even if it were possible to recruit such teachers, retaining them would be a herculean task.

This position was confirmed during the fieldwork as we actually saw a school with only two classrooms, deserted and in a deplorable condition. Domestic animals like dogs and goats had taken over the classrooms as the building had obviously not been used for a long time. The schools also lack tables and chairs for the students and nearly all lacked toilet facilities for pupils and teachers, a condition which portends dangers for their health. Pastoralists are marginalised by all standards; socially, culturally and economically by the bigger society and little wonder that the Global Monitoring Report (GMR, 2010) stated that pastoralists are left far behind in terms of education for all. One of the many factors which could be responsible for this deplorable condition is lack of motivation or incentives for teachers deployed to these rural and remote areas. It could be that the teachers are not motivated enough by government; as such they do not see reason to go far into the woods to teach children

of nomads. Of all the sixteen settlements of pastoralists visited, none has adequate provision for schools for their children. Teachers of nomads are even doubly marginalised in the sense that primary school teachers are seen as low ranking job and secondly as teachers of children living within margins (Umar, 2006).

Further to the above was the lack of primary health care facilities in the pastoral communities. The researchers witnessed the case of a woman with a three year old child who cannot sit, stand nor even crawl. The child was reported to have been sick since he was a year old but the mother was not able to take him to hospital as she has to travel several miles to get one. All she relied upon were local herbs. The future of this child and many others in similar conditions are probably doomed. Omotayo et al., (2005) also confirmed the poor health status of children of pastoralists in Nigeria. This could be due to the poor and extremely low living standards among pastoralists. It was observed that the pastoralists rely heavily on plants and herbs as curative agents for their illnesses. They argued that they would have made use of modern health care if they had access to it.

Obvious Marginalisation of a Culture

It is rather more unfortunate that wives of pastoralists are further marginalised within their community. This is evidenced in the fact that they are prevented from accessing socio-cultural benefits such as inheritance. An example is in the area of land ownership. Typically, it is the male child that inherits lands from their fathers. It is also the male child that automatically owns the fathers cattle. The females are left with almost nothing as they are believed to move to their husbands' houses in due course. A woman had this to say: 'I inherited six cattle from my father as an only child of my mother but whatever I have is for my husband. Hence, the six cattle had been joined to my husband's herd'. Devereux, (2006) also found out that Somali parents favour their sons over their daughters when accessing health care and education.

Various governing bodies from across the world usually hide under the pretext that pastoralists are not only small in number, but are scattered and prone to high mobility, as such there is difficulty in reaching them with basic amenities and infrastructure (Devereux, 2006). Similarly, Hagmann (2005) offered that government hesitate to

extend their magnanimity to pastoralists because of the high rate of conflict and civil insecurity amongst them. Are these not pointers to an obvious marginalisation of a people?

Ignorance of methods of improving output

Education is an important tool when it comes to technology. Pastoralists also want an easier way of doing things but they do not know how. The facilities are not there for them to use. They are aware that there are machines that could help them milk their cattle in a faster way but they cannot afford such equipment. It is frequently stated that agricultural growth would go a long way towards reducing poverty (Colli, et al., 2006).

Due to the migratory nature of the pastoralists, their wives are left to fend for themselves as well as their children. Despite the fact that their husbands rarely fend for them, they are also not allowed to engage in formal economic activities as a result of cultural constraints (Meagre, 2000). The wives of the pastoralists produce cheese from cattle milk. They do this manually and it takes a long time to complete the process. These women depend on the proceeds from cheese as a means of sustenance. Bear in mind that the pastoralists are not always there for their families. They leave their families behind while they go in search of pasture for their cattle. When the women make their cheese, they cannot keep it beyond one day. The shelf life is this short because they lack storage facilities.

Pastoralists live in areas where they do not enjoy electricity supply. How then would they be able to use storage facilities such as freezers? A way out of this is for government to facilitate a learning process through the use of extension agents. When the men have gone grazing, the women could engage in a series of learning processes where they could be taught how to cope with different economical and environmental conditions (Twomlow, 2008).

Zero access to extension agents and facilities

Agricultural extension was traditionally described as the services to extend or transfer new technology to rural people so as to improve their lives (Davis, 2006). Such services included non formal education and management skills which aimed to train

farmers on how to improve yields and increase production. In more recent views, agricultural extension goes beyond training farmers and technology transfer. It has been described as including: facilitation, learning, partnering with other agencies and agricultural advisory services (Davis, 2006). Thus agricultural extension in today's world can be defined as a set of efforts that support people who are involved in agricultural production to improve their livelihoods (Birner, et al., 2006).

Surprisingly, the pastoralists had never been visited nor contacted by any extension agent in the past fifteen to twenty years. The pastoralists are aware that they could improve and increase their output if they have opportunity to utilise modern equipment. For example, a milking machine will do a neater and faster job than the conventional hand milking. If their outputs are increased, there would be an increase in their incomes and possibly an improved livelihood. Therefore, poverty could be reduced through agricultural growth by investing in extension services. Romani (2003) stated that if extension is properly designed and delivered, it would lead to agricultural productivity. This can be achieved by helping rural people and pastoralist to have adequate access to agricultural extension services. Extension services in this context are understood to mean advisory and other services that help rural families to make the best use of resources at their disposal (Katz, 2002).

The majority of the extension agents that were sampled testified that they rarely visit the pastoralists partly because they live in the boundaries of the state. It was also revealed by the agents that pastoralists are somehow hostile to visitors. Let us assume this is true, the extension agents are suppose to be agents of change. They could adopt a variety of methods to engage pastoralists in a manner that they can be trusted. Or could the case be that the extension agents do not have the requirements to extend to the pastoralists? It was uncovered by Twomlow et al., (2008) that the understanding of coping and adaptive strategies is insufficient among researchers, extension workers and pastoralists. This might probably be a reason why extension agents decided to ignore pastoralists' settlements when discharging their duties.

Conclusion

The study acknowledged the presence of pastoralist in large numbers in most parts of the developing world. In Nigeria for example these category of people are found in the arid and semi arid regions. The survey identified lack of necessary social and economic amenities within the communities where the pastoralists live. The pastoral communities lack medical facilities, schools for their children, roads and portable water. Most worrisome is the fact that pastoralists also lack access to agricultural extension agents and facilities which could help them boost value-chain addition in their production and improve their livelihood.

As a substantial proportion of the population of the developing world reside in the rural areas, the situation as observed in the study area may be adopted as probably what obtains in most rural communities in Nigeria. With this situation it is doubtful if truly Nigeria is on the path towards attaining the most critical Millennium Development Goals such as eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, achievement of universal basic education for all children and reduction of child mortality.

Recommendations

- Government should provide basic amenities and infrastructures such as schools and portable drinking water to marginalised communities.
- Extension workers in the various Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) across the country should include pastoralists in their schedule of duty.
- Teachers should be trained and encouraged to teach nomads in their Local settlements.
- Pastoralists should be re-orientated to be receptive to extension workers.

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