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APPRAISAL OF RURAL BANDITRY IN “KAMUKU” FOREST IN BIRNIN GWARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined rural banditry, causes and its perceived effect on the rural economy in Kamuku forest in Birnin Gwari local government area of Kaduna State. It used quantitative tool (questionnaire) to collect data from 300 randomly selected respondents (i.e. 30 respondents each from 10 districts in Birnin Gwari LGA while qualitative data (in-depth interview) were sourced from ten (10) knowledgeable informants (i.e. one each from the ten districts purposively selected). Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result shows that 72.3% were male respondents and 88.2% had attained the age of 30 to 45 years while 69.3% respondents were married and they had 6 to 15 children. Facilitating factors to rural banditry were poverty (57.2%), greed (11.9%), corruption (18.3%), and poor security (12.6%). Overwhelming proportion (92.2%) of the respondents indicated that bandits are prevented them from farming (27.4%), hunting (25.7%), obtaining forest food (14.3%), firewood and medicinal herbs (24.8%) while 67.4% of the respondents agreed that rural banditry affects the rural economy. The results further reveal that the presence of “Kamuku” forest makes rural bandits to have safe haven to engage in cattle rustling in Birnin Gwari LGA. This study indicated also that the presence of security personnel had not yielded the desired result as these bandits still steal or loot their farm produce/livestock, indiscriminately kidnap women and children particularly girls as well as commit crimes such as armed robbery, rape in the community. This study recommended that security operatives should keep on carrying routine patrol and go into the interior part of the forest for proper policing. It was also suggested that the concerned individuals, stakeholders, Kaduna State government and non-governmental organizations should work hand-in-hand to get rid of activities of rural bandits in the study area.

Keywords: Cattle Rustling, “Kamuku” Forest, Pastoralists, Rural Banditry

INTRODUCTION

In Northwest Nigeria, particularly in Kaduna State and most especially in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area, criminal gangs are engaged in rural banditry by stealing cattle and livestock leading to the displacement of rural dwellers. The theft of animals forces the rural inhabitants to migrate southward; causing environmental degradation, population growth, increase in the price of cattle, regional instability influence and exacerbates farmers/herders conflict dynamics. Rural banditry and cattle rustling appear to be increasing by the day because of several interconnected issues involving tensions between farmers and pastoralists exploited by criminals masquerading as herdsmen. The phenomenon appears to be connected to government security inadequacies, identity and intergroup relations and the worsening socioeconomic conditions of the people. The rural areas are populated by farmers and pastoralists who form the economic foundation of the nation contributing over 40% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product in recent years (Augustine, 2015). Rustling and other animal theft has a different significance in the context of perennial conflict between pastoralists and crop farmers. Hence, conflicts are driven by insecurity perpetuated by grazers in this area. For instance, the growing menace of cattle rustling by armed gangs and bandits appears to differ in terms of

scale and economic consequences in “ungoverned” spaces, and territories between Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara States. These armed gang and bandits routinely raid cattle ranches owned by traditional pastoralists.

The rising incidence of cattle rustling as a part of the problem of rural banditry may not be unconnected to the problem of small arms and light weapons that have found their way into the hands of non-state actors, now a part of the wider challenge of human security confronting Nigeria. Although it is difficult to obtain reliable data in Nigeria, it has been suggested that between 7 and 8 million illicit small arms and light weapons are in circulation in West Africa alone, with a huge number entering Nigeria (Chuma-Okoro, 2013).

This is largely a result of porous borders, including the affinity between border communities which consider any stringent border control as an infringement upon the social and cultural rights of the people (Chuma-Okoro, 2013). This estimate is far above the figure of 1-2 million illicit small arms in the early 2000s (Egwu, 2014). Public policy responses must recognize that most of the factors potentially driving the proliferation of small arms and light weapons are linked to the decline in state capacity and the human security dilemma facing both the state and citizens. The situation in many parts of Nigeria resembles broader Sahel region governance voids. For instance, ungoverned space



provides a power vacuum, which is at times filled by religious extremist groups and/or criminal elements who have taken over remote areas where the State presence is reduced or non-existent (Aning, 2009).

According to Mohammed Bello Tukur, Secretary of Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), there is weak state capacity to regulate and establish effective governance which accounts for the high level of illegal activities perpetrated by criminal gangs and networks. Most especially, in the Birnin Gwari area of Kaduna State which is a death trap where cattle rustling and other related criminal activities have become concentrated. Tukur further noted that Birnin Gwari, through Funtua, Faskari, parts of Zamfara going to Anchau is not safe due to cattle rustlers and bandits. Every cow there has been stolen including cows belonging to some Nigerian army generals and top civil servants (Tukur, 2013). It is therefore, necessary to critically appraise the conditions of the people living in Birnin Gwari LGA contiguous to “Kamuku” forest so as to enhance their wellbeing and productivity. Rural banditry affects the rural economy negatively because it impedes on production and imperils the lives of people in the rural.

The problem of cattle rustling in Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna State is worsened by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, affected by conflict, especially in the African Sahel region, due to lack of successfully-implementation of disarmament programmes. More often than not, targeted groups merely cross porous borders, acquiring new identities in the process. The difficult terrain of many rural areas, particularly the scenario around “Kamuku” forest coupled with poor communication, lack of social amenities such as good roads, adequate power supply and health facilities and poverty aggravate the situation, transforming it into ideal space for rustling, smuggling, and small arms trade. These conditions also provide potential routes for terrorist activities. These core challenges of human security are increased further by democratic governance’s failure to deliver development and livelihood security for either individuals or groups of people in the study area. Also, perhaps, major violent crises have been manifestations of the deteriorating human security situation and the failure of democratic governance in Birnin Gwari LGA. It has also sparked discourses that frame conflicts between different occupational groups, such as crop farmers and grazers.

It is against this backdrop that this study deems it appropriate for the rural dwellers not to be left in the hands of bandits because they are significant to the national economy and constitute about 70% of the nation’s population (Augustine, 2015). It is therefore imperative to put the activities

of bandits in context and deal with it effectively so as to enable rural dwellers to carry out their activities to boost rural economy. This and many others were investigated in this study.

The aim of this study is to appraise rural banditry in “Kamuku” forest of Birnin Gwari LGA, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. describe the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents in the study area
- ii. examine the factors that causes rural banditry in Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna State;
- iii. ascertain the type of crimes committed by bandits in the study area
- iv. determine the perceived effects of rural banditry on the rural economy as well as communal and Government efforts to curb it, and
- v. proffer practical solutions to the problem of rural banditry in contiguous to “Kamuku” forest in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Birnin Gwari is a Local Government Area in Kaduna State (Northwest geo-political zone) of Nigeria with its headquarters in Birnin Gwari. The LGA has a landmass of 6,185 km² and a population of 252,363 estimated by the 2006 census, but with a projected population of 335,076 in 2015. Birnin Gwari LGA is located along Kaduna – Lagos Express way at about 125km from Kaduna. Birnin Gwari is located at Latitude 12° 20’ N and Longitude 9° 10’ E (Fadama Report, 2008). It lies in the western part of Kaduna State and shares boundaries with Zamfara State to the North, Kogo forest reserve of Kastina State to the East and North East of Giwa LGA and to the West Niger State (“Kamuku” Park Report, 2010). The LGA has sixteen districts namely; Birnin Gwari central, Gayam, Bugai, Kutemeshi, Tabanni, Dogon Daa, Kakaangi, Randagi, Kzege, Kungi, Maganda, Saulawa, Saminaka, Gwaska, Bagoma and Kuyello. The area is largely agrarian and most residents are either farmers or livestock keepers. Crops grown in the area includes maize, rice, wheat, groundnut and guinea corn. The predominant language spoken is Hausa though there is the presence of residents from other part of the country

For the quantitative data, this study used simple random sampling to distribute three hundred (300) questionnaires to 30 respondents each in 10 districts (Birnin Gwari central, Bugai, Tabanni, Dogon Daa, Kakaangi, Randagi, Kungi, Maganda, Saminaka, Gwaska) of the LGA under study. In addition, to complement the quantitative data, qualitative data vis-à-vis in-depth interview method was solicited from ten (10) knowledgeable informants purposively selected based on their age

long experience and involvement in security matters in the study area. (i.e. one informant each were selected from the ten districts). Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data obtained.

Of the three hundred (300) questionnaires distributed, only two hundred and ninety three (293) (97.6%) were retrieved from the respondents and analyzed

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic characteristics

This section discusses the results collected during the survey. Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents by age. It can be seen that young people between the age of 18 and 29 years constituted 11.9% while those who were aged 30 years and above made up 88.2%. This implies that majority of the respondents are in their reproductive age in the study area.

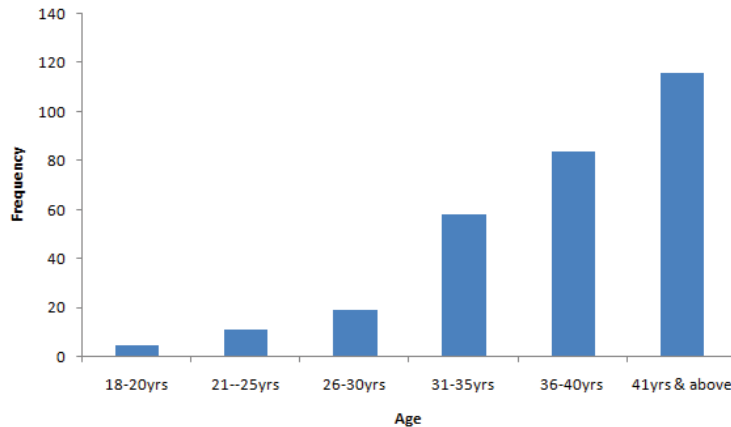


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by age

Figure 2 shows the sex distribution of respondents. The survey reveals that significant proportions (72.3%) were males while 27.7% were

females. This clearly shows that the male respondents participated actively in this study.

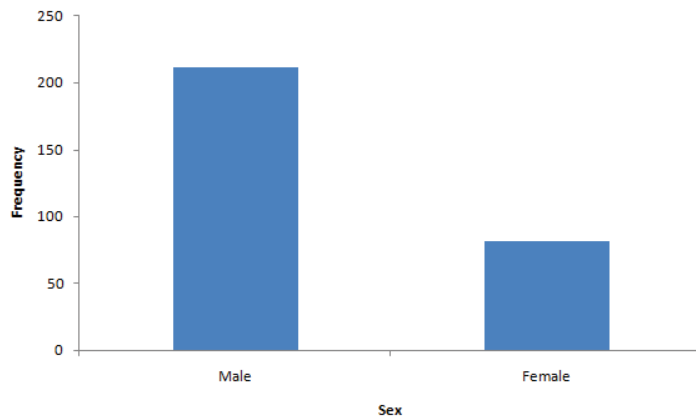


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by sex

Figure 3 shows the distribution of marital status of respondents. Majority (69.3%) of the respondents were married while 31.7% were single.

This indicates that significance proportions of the respondents are single during the survey.

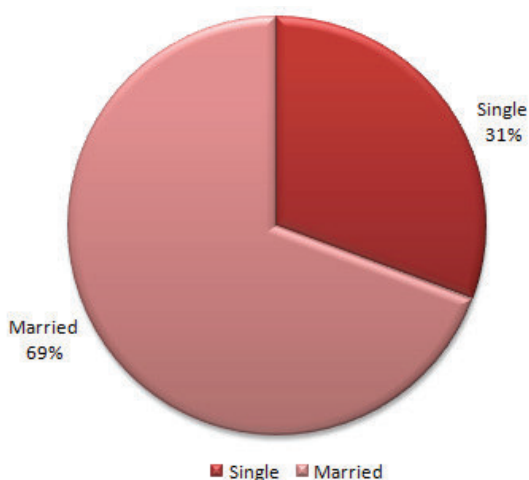


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by marital status

Figure 4 presents the level of education of respondents. The Figure indicates that 47.1% had secondary education while 10.5% of the

respondents had tertiary education. The finding of this study shows that majority of the respondents had secondary education in the study area.

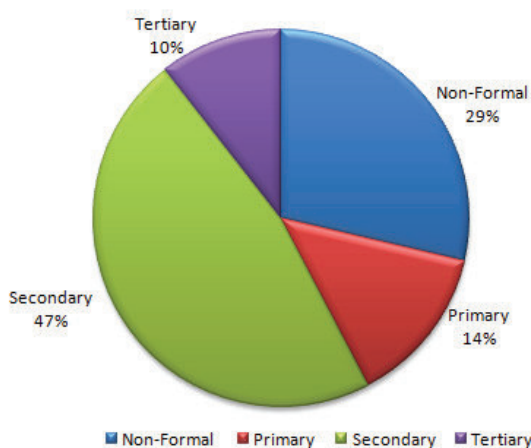


Figure 4: Distribution of respondents by level of education

Table 1 shows the data collected on the occurrence of banditry and rustling. Significance proportions (58.5%) of the respondents of the view that banditry occurred frequently in their communities while 22.2% said it rarely occurs in their communities and few (19.0%) stated that it had never occurred. Thus, the result further reveals

that 81.0% of the respondents have had experience with bandits and rustlers in their communities. This finding is in tandem with Rufai (2017) who said that several attacks are carried out by bandits against settlements of herders/farmers. They kill, steal cows and farm produce in Nigeria.

Table 1: Occurrence of banditry in the study area

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Occurs frequently	172	58.5
Rarely occurs	65	22.5
Has never occurred	56	19
Total	293	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Data presented in Table 2 show that majority (57.2%) said that poverty is the major

cause of rural banditry while 18.3% indicated that corruption involving security agents and



government officials is the main cause and 12.6% said that it was poor security. This means that rural poverty is responsible for banditry and rustling in the study area. The finding of this study is in line with those of Eldis (2016) and Rufai (2017) who noted that several factors may be contributing to frequent banditry and theft of livestock while poverty and corruption amongst the security agents, insurgency, population and resource pressures also abound in rural areas.

During an in-depth interview with an informant from Bugai district, he maintained that:

Poverty is prevalent in this area despite the fact that majority of the rural dwellers in this community are farmers, herders and hunters. Mun talakawa ne a wana kararmar hukuma (We are poor people in this LGA). They have large family size (extended in nature) which

affect their livelihoods. The bandits/rustlers are contributing to their low standard of living due to their activities in this area.

Another informant from the Birnin Gwari central district during an in-depth interview disclosed that:

People say that the rich also cry, unfortunately, the poor too also cry nowadays. We are living in the world where the quality of life of most people is low. Even in this community, majority of us are poor peasants who find it difficult to eat three square meals in a day even as rural dwellers; and ironically we are the producers and consumers of our farm produce. Shortage arises as a result of these bandits/rustlers.

Table 2: Respondents view on causes of banditry and rustling

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Rural poverty	168	57.2
Greed	35	11.9
Corruption	54	18.3
Poor security	40	12.6
Total	293	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3 presents the type of crimes committed by rural bandits. A significance proportion (33.7%) of the respondents were of the view that looting of farm produce and cattle theft are the main crimes committed while 66.3% indicated crimes such as rape, kidnapping/abduction and murder. This shows that looting of farm produce/cattle theft the order of the day in Birnin Gwari LGA. The finding of this study agrees with those of Chikwuma and Francis (2014) who observed that recently, the rate of rural banditry and cattle rustling in the northern part of Nigeria most especially in herding and farming communities affect farm produce and livestock.

An in-depth interview conducted with an informant from Gwaska district agrees with the quantitative data that:

Really, looting of our farm produce and theft of cattle are the orders of the day in Birnin Gwari community. Apart from kidnapping our wives and daughters, even our animals are not left out. We cannot freely rear our animals here because of these rustlers.

Another informant from Maganda district hinted that:

We have read and watched in the mass media how bandits and rustlers are terrorizing the people in Birnin Gwari axis of Kaduna State. Most especially, due to this economic recession, many criminals are found in "Kamuku" forest reserve. They steal so many things, kidnap people and run to this forest for safe haven.

Table 3: Views of Respondents on the types of crimes committed by bandits in the study area

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Looting of farm produce/cattle theft	101	33.7
Theft of other domestic animals	92	30.7
Rape	23	7.8
Kidnapping/abduction	56	19.2
Murder	28	7.7
Total	293	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017



Table 5 shows the effects of banditry on rural communities. Majority (67.4%) of the respondents said that it prevents farming, herding and hunting activities in rural areas while 32.6%

were of the view that it causes communal conflicts, loss of livelihood/income and lower standard of living.

Table 5: Respondents Views on perceived effects of banditry on individuals, households and communities

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Prevents farming activities	80	27.4
Prevents livestock rearing	75	25.7
Hinders hunting	42	14.3
Communal conflicts	31	10.4
Loss of livelihood/income	50	17
Lower standard of living	15	5.1
Total	293	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 6 shows the communal efforts adopted to end banditry and cattle rustling. Majority (48.1%) said that vigilante/night watching was the main method use to curb rural banditry/cattle rustling followed by 23.5% who responded to peace meetings while 28.4% stated that there should be cooperation with other communities and reporting bandits to security agencies.

In-depth interview with an informant from central senatorial district of Kaduna State noted that:

We thank the Almighty Allah in this community that most of us are vigilante members. We complement the efforts of security personnel by carrying out night vigil to protect our people from attack by bandits/rustlers. We report and/or arrest and hand over some bandits to security agents. Cattle rustlers are not also spare by us. They kill some of us during gun battle and we kill them too. No gain no pain

Table 6: Communal Efforts Adopted to Curb Rural Banditry/Cattle Rustling

Communal Efforts	Frequency	Percentage
Vigilante/night watch volunteers	141	48.1
Peace meetings	69	23.5
Cooperating with other communities	48	16.5
Reporting criminal activities to security agencies	35	11.9
Total	293	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 7 shows the views of respondents on government efforts to curb rural banditry. Thirty seven percent of the respondents said that joint-military operations, followed by 31.6% who believed that government focused on the formation of peace committees while 19.7% indicated task

forces. The remaining 1.4% of the respondents said that government has focused more on sensitization and promotion of cattle ranching. This implies that joint-military operations can tackle the menace of banditry in the study area.

Table 7: Government efforts to curb rural banditry

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Joint-military operations	109	37.3
Formation of peace committee	93	31.6
Formation of anti-banditry task force	58	19.7
Sensitisation	15	5.1
Promotion of ranching	18	6.3
Total	293	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 8 shows suggestions by respondents on how best to curb banditry and rustling. Twenty three per cent of the respondents were of the view that increase security presence in rural areas will

ameliorate this menace, 19.1% advocated cooperation with rural dwellers while 18.5% believed that intelligence gathering/sharing between security agencies is the solution. The



remaining (57.7%) said that intelligence gathering/sharing use of livestock trackers/GIS,

closure of illegal livestock markets, control of light arms and small weapons will solve the problem.

Table 8: Practical and Sustainable Ways to Curb Rural Banditry

Practical and sustainable ways	Frequency	Percentage
Intelligence gathering/sharing	54	18.5
Use of livestock trackers/GIS	37	12.5
Cooperation with rural dwellers	56	19.1
Increase security presence in rural areas	68	23.2
Closure of illegal livestock markets	46	15.9
Control of light arms and small weapons	32	10.8
Total	293	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

CONCLUSION

The study examined rural banditry, causes and its perceived effect on the rural economy in Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna State. The study discovered that the facilitating factors to rural banditry were poverty (57.2%), greed (11.9%), corruption (18.3%), and poor security (12.6%). Poverty, Looting of farm produce and cattle theft (33.7%), theft of other farm animal (30.7%) as well as abduction (19.2%) were found to be the predominant acts of bandits which has led to reduction in farming activities/ livestock rearing, hunting and has increased the level of communal conflicts, Loss of livelihood/income as well as lowering the standard of people living in the study area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

- i. Rural poverty and deprivation needs to be urgently addressed to stem the increasing tide of rural banditry and its negative effects on the rural economy.
- ii. Rural areas like the ones found in the study area are not adequately equipped to address the challenges of rural banditry and cattle rustling. Therefore, there is an urgent need to strengthen the traditional security system and its conflict resolution component to fill the gap of the declining capacity of State formal security agencies to meet the security needs/challenges of rural areas.

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