

## **AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF FARMERS/ PASTORALIST CONFLICTS IN BIRNIN GWARI EMIR- ATE OF KADUNA STATE, 2000-2018**

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### **Abstract**

*The core issues to be examined in this paper are Farmers/Pastoralist conflicts and rural banditry in Birnin Gwari Emirate of Kaduna State. The conflicts have had adverse socio-economic effects on the people of Birnin Gwari. This is because they severely curtailed movement of people, and the circulation of goods, and services. Cattle and grains markets shrunk considerably and livestock business in general lost huge amounts of money as a result. Many farmers were forced to stay away from their farms because of threats to their lives by rural bandits. Thus, the paper will investigate the impact of these conflicts both on agricultural production and other social and economic activities. In adopting an historical perspective, the paper hopes to find both the remote and immediate causes of the conflicts and explore possible measures for their resolution.*

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## Introduction

**B**irnin Gwari is endowed with abundant agricultural land and forest. It is a community of farmers, herders, miners, craftsmen, (noted for weaving, mat making, and pottery) and traders. Crops grown in commercial quantities in the area include maize, rice, wheat, groundnut and guinea corn. Known for transporting thousands of bags of grains daily to Lagos and other parts of Nigeria, the conflict between Farmers and Pastoralist (or more specifically Hausa and Fulani Communities) in the Birnin Gwari Emirate of Kaduna State appears to be part of what is emerging as a trend nationwide, whereby violent conflict continue to erupt frequently among pastoralists and farmers in different parts of Nigeria. Birnin Gwari is one of the 23 local governments in Kaduna. Its headquarter is in the town of Birnin Gwari. The Emirate has an area of 6,185 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 252,456 according to the 2006 census figure. The Emirate is blessed with agricultural lands. Birnin Gwari Kingdom/emirate is believed to have been established over 1000 years ago. The Gwari (Gbagi) were the original inhabitants and rulers of the entity.

The present dynasty of Birnin Gwari is believed to have come to existence between 120 – 1250 AD. Today, the Emirate has sixteen districts in the Birnin Gwari Local Government area. The Park is surrounded by the Gwaris, Kamukus and the Hausa/Fulanis. It is very rich in historical sites and spreads over the major towns and settlements. The research carried out by the Birnin Gwari unity forum, in collaboration with the Kamuku National Park had identified many historical sites in and around the park. The abundance of these historical features and various cultural festivals has now formed a very good basis to package the park as natural/cultural destinations for visitors (profile of Birnin Gwari:16:02:2016). The Birnin Gwari Emirate has 16 district heads which comprises the following:

- 1 Bagoma
- 2 Birnin Gwari Central
- 3 Bugai
- 4 Dogon dawa
- 5 Gayam

6	Goron dutse
7	Kakangi
8	Kazage
9	Kunki
10	Kutemeshi
11	Kuyyalo
12	Maganda
13	Randagi
14	Saminaka
15	Saulawa
16	Tabanni

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To establish the effect of rural banditry on the economies of the affected Birnin Gwari communities;
2. To understand the nature and pattern of economic disruption on the affected Birnin Gwari communities;
3. Identify the emerging trends in productivity and output since the peace initiative was launched in Birnin Gwari Emirate of Kaduna State.

### **Background**

Farmer/pastoralist conflicts and rural banditry in the urban and rural areas affected have had adverse socio-economic effects on the people of Birnin Gwari. The conflicts severely curtailed the movement of people, goods and services. Cattle markets shrunk considerably and cattle owners lost huge amounts of money. Many farmers were forced to stay away from their farms because of threats to their lives by rural bandits. The consequence has been the drastic reduction in farm produce and in farmers' incomes. A bag of maize, which used to cost N5,500.00 has risen to between N15,000 and N18,000 since the escalation of the conflict. It is

estimated that between 50% and 75 % of the productive capacity of peasants in the study area has been lost. (Interview: Z. Jibril 2015)

Birnin Gwari is a town blessed with abundant agricultural and forest lands. It is a community of farmers, herders, miners, craftsmen, (noted for weaving, mat making and pottery) and traders. Crops grown in commercial quantities in the area include maize, rice, wheat, groundnut and guinea corn. Known for transporting thousands of bags of grains daily to Lagos and other parts of Nigeria, Birnin Gwari is today a ghost town economically. Presently, it is estimated that between 50% and 75 % of the productive capacity of peasants in the study area has been lost while up to 85% of the cattle and 65% of other livestock have been rustled. Mass migration of pastoralists fleeing the conflict has led to the disappearance of livestock markets especially for cattle. This is because with the escalation of the conflict not a single cow was sold on market days.

The gravity of the situation made the Federal Government to launch Operation Sharan Daji (Operation Sweeping of the Bush), a military task force mandated to end the incidents of ethnic killings, cattle rustlings and farmer-pastoralist conflicts. While inaugurating the task force in Birnin Gwari Emirate and Zamfara State, President Muhammadu Buhari remarked;

I sympathize with the people of this area for the enormous losses they suffered as a result of the incessant activities of the insurgents and cattle rustlers whose actions have made farming, livestock management and other economic activities more difficult even in the face of the general economic challenges....I am quite optimistic that the operations of the last few days will surely lead to the restoration of economic activities of surrounding communities bedeviled for some time now by the menace of cattle rustling and banditry. (The Nation, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2016)

### **Methodology**

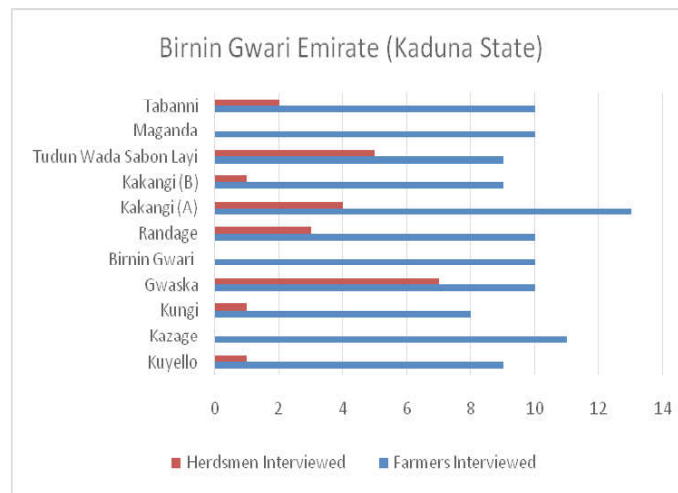
The study used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders in the conflict as a source of data collection. Oral testimonies were also obtained and used in the study in order to obtain the most up to date participants and eye-witness accounts of the conflict. Respondents to the interviews and participants in the focused grouped discussions included the victims of the conflict on both sides, community leaders, and some selected members of the communities' resident in the areas affected by the conflict in the two states. Due to the high level of insecurity in the areas involved in the conflict, field work for data collection was conducted through research assistants selected and assigned to specific communities. The research assistants were mostly university graduates and diploma holders in various social science disciplines. The research assistants were given an intensive one-day training on how to administer the questionnaires. The interviews were conducted both in the English and Hausa languages. However, the focused group discussions were mostly conducted in Hausa. Locations of field work for data collection were delimited and selected on a criterion based on areas with the highest record of intensity, and frequency of the conflict. Though the study used a lot of oral testimonies, some secondary data was also obtained from various sources including reports unpublished in academic theses and other publications. As a safeguard, as well as in order to ensure the credibility of the data obtained from these diverse sources, the data was passed through a rigorous process of assessment and analysis in order to establish their authenticity, as well as reliability and accuracy. This was done through thematic and quantitative analysis and filtering of the data collected from the area of the conflict in Birnin Emirate, Kaduna State.

### **Findings/ Results of the Study**

The study was conducted in eleven towns respectively located in Birnin Gwari Emirate (Kaduna State). It examined the effect of rural banditry on the economies of these towns. Primary data collected focused on the impact of the conflict on farm holdings, grain production, farm labour, livestock production, and commercial activities.

### Birnin Gwari Emirate

In Birnin Gwari Emirate, the total number of farmers and pastoralist interviewed were one hundred and nine (109) and twenty-four (24) respectively.



**Chart 1:** Illustrating Number of Interviewed Herdsmen and Farmers in Birnin Gwari Emirate

Birnin Gwari has all the advantages for agricultural activities, pastoralism and trade. These activities cannot thrive in an atmosphere of fear and suspicion created by the conflict. The bandits who are well armed and brutal in their operations have taken hold of the forest where the farms and rural trading networks are located. This has negatively affected the local economy because it has restricted the movement of people, goods and services. Farmers who produced grains in thousands have now turned to producing only what is enough to feed their families. The study showed that farms cultivated shrunk by 50% and grain output fell by 77.3% during the conflict. Thus information was got from interviewed farmers in the Emirate. (Interview: Ardo pastoralist: 2 016)

Table 1: Change in Aggregate Grain Output

<b>Settlements</b>	<b>Grains Output before the conflict</b>	<b>Grains Output after the conflict</b>	<b>Percentage of Grain Output Lost</b>
<b>Birnin Gwari</b>	7540	2990	-60.3%
<b>Gundumar</b>	2930	962	-67.2%
<b>Gwaskar</b>	9312	891	-90.4%
<b>Kakangi</b>	2376	772	-67.5%
<b>Kazage</b>	1090	210	-80.7%
<b>Kuyello</b>	3990	698	-82.5%
<b>Maganda</b>	1083	353	-67.4%
<b>Randagi</b>	4635	400	-91.4%
<b>Tabbani Ward</b>	875	227	-74.1%
<b>Tudun Wada S/L</b>	4501	1210	-73.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>38332</b>	<b>8713</b>	<b>-77.3%</b>

*Interview conducted on the field*

With farm holdings redeemed by 50%, loss in farm labour was adversely affected at 81%. Farmers were unable to pay for hired labour and resorted to using family members to cultivate available farm lands in most communities. Some relocated leaving their farms in the care of the District or Ward Heads, or any other trusted person.

Families that kept cattle in hundreds were left with none. Aggregate data from the study showed that livestock population dipped by 48% due to the conflict (Interview: farmer: 2016)

Table 2: Change in Aggregate Livestock Output

Settlements	Number of livestock before conflict	Number of livestock lost to conflict	Effect on livestock Output (%)
<b>Birnin Gwari</b>	864	374	-57%
<b>Gundumar</b>	165	95	-42%
<b>Gwaskar Gudumar</b>	84	84	0%
<b>Kakangi</b>	36	21	-42%
<b>Kazage</b>	90	78	-13%
<b>Kuyello</b>	226	120	-47%
<b>Maganda</b>	328	73	-78%
<b>Randage</b>	1480	637	-43%
<b>Tabbani Ward</b>	271	76	-72%
<b>Tudun Wada S/L</b>	433	248	-43%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3945</b>	<b>2056</b>	<b>-48%</b>

*Interview conducted on the field*

Birnin Gwari known for transporting thousands of bags of grains daily to Lagos and other parts of Nigeria is today left with the challenge of how to feed its local population. The conflict has turned Birnin Gwari to a ghost town economically.

The situations as they obtain presently in Birnin Gwari in relation to the conflict, show that there is much effects regarding the developments. The situation reports recorded in the last six months and up to the present following the inauguration of the peace initiative among the conflicting communities are as summarized below.

1. Birnin Gwari, hosts many important farming and trading communities, and pastoralist who engage in a lot of commercial transac-



tions in grains and livestock worth hundreds of millions of naira weekly, yet the community has no functional banking services. In Birnin Gwari, the branches of the two banks (ECO Bank PLC & First Bank PLC) operating in the area had closed after being attacked by bandits at the height of the conflict. This situation itself attracted armed robbers as well as cattle rustlers attracted by the huge amounts of money in hard cash circulating openly in the areas.

2. Many markets along with normal commercial transactions have been badly affected by the conflict leading to a drastic fall in the tempo of commercial and economic activities. This generally leads to a drop or outright decline in productive activities which translate into loss both in gross and net local production.
3. The incidence of banditry, kidnappings and armed robbery seem to be more frequent during the last six months. They seem to be still rampant in Birnin Gwari and its villages making movement of people, goods and all forms of transactions very difficult. There is still a scarcity of goods in the markets leading to a sharp rise in the prices of commodities, especially food items.
4. Agricultural production in Birnin Gwari is still low as farmers have abandoned a significant number of their farms especially those located far away from the town due to the conflict.
5. In spite of the relative peace that is gradually retuning to the two areas though in a lesser degree in Birnin Gwari it seems much need to be done. This is particularly on terms of providing both physical and social infrastructure to the areas. There is also the need for a more proactive and all inclusive peace building initiative. This will help to achieve lasting peace and security among the communities in the conflict-ravaged areas.

### **Recommendation to Policy Makers**

1. There is the need for the restoration of complete security of lives and property in the Birnin Gwari area. This is a task that govern-

ment as well as community leaders, non-governmental organisations including business communities investors as well as members of the community themselves and the media most come together to undertake jointly.

2. More physical and social infrastructure including roads, telecommunications, schools, health and banking services need to be provided to the communities in the two conflict areas as part of permanent peace building initiatives.
3. More conflict prevention measures ought to be permanently put in place to forestall reoccurrence of conflict. This should include the restoration of government policy for forest and grazing reserves and cattle routes and watering holes or earth dams.
4. There is a need for the resettlement and rehabilitation of all displaced persons affected by the conflict in the two areas.
5. There is the need for more dialogue and cooperation among the communities in the areas and the adoption of politer ways of conflict resolution through more effective diplomatic means.

#### **Recommended Areas for Further Research**

1. Effect of conflict and insecurity on Women and children Birnin Gwari area.
2. The effect of the conflict on psychological and physical health of the victims of the conflict and their relations in the conflict-ravaged areas of the two states.
3. The effect of the conflict on the demography of the area, in terms of migration and immigration in the two states since 2012.
4. New perspectives on more viable approaches to peace building and maintenance among communities in the two areas.

#### **Conclusion**

The study tries to establish that insecurity as a result of cattle rustling, banditry, kidnappings, and armed robbery persists in relative degrees and has affected and is still negatively affecting economic activities and social life in Birnin Gwari Emirate. This has led to heavy monetary and property loss resulting from virtual collapse of economic and social activities as an upshot of the conflict. Still the absence of adequate infrastructure of transport and communications in form of road, telecommunication, banks, adequate law enforcement and security personnel offices, schools and hospitals must be regarded as a permanent potential cause of conflict in the areas. These must be remedied before normalcy could be returned to the areas. Though the Kaduna state has done much to restore peace and normalcy to the areas, our recent study has shown that more needs to be done in order to return complete normalcy to the area. This may include the adoption of more measures aimed at solving other subtle but serious social problems such as high level of unemployment among youths and the menace of drug abuse among youths as well as the high level of illiteracy and poverty in the area.

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**Oral Source**

- 1 Interview with Alhaji Abubakar Isa, Bagoma District, Birnin Gwari, 28/03/2015
- 2 Interview with Hamza Lawal, Birnin Gwari, Central 28/03/2015
- 3 Interview with Hamza Lawal, Bugai Birnin Gwari, 29/03/2015
- 4 Interview with Aliyu , Bugai Birnin Gwari, 1/04/2015
- 5 Interview with Aliyu , Bugai Birnin Gwari, 1/04/2015
- 6 Interview with Jaafaru Zubairu Jibril , Hakimin birni, Birnin Gwari, 4/04/2015
- 7 Confidential Interview with Alhaji Zubairu Jibril , Emir of Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 4/04/2015
- 8 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Goron Dutse, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 4/04/2015
- 9 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Gayam, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 5/04/2015
- 10 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Kakangi, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 6/04/2015
- 11 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Kazage , Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 6/04/2015

- 12 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Kunki , Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 6/05/2015
- 13 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Kutemeshi , Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 6/04/2016
- 14 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Kuyyalo , Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 7/04/2016
- 15 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Maganda, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 7/04/2016
- 16 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Randagi, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 7/06/2016
- 17 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Maganda, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 7/06/2016
- 18 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Randagi, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 7/06/2016
- 19 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Saminaka, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 8/06/2016
- 20 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Saulawa, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 8/06/2016
- 21 Confidential Interview with the District Head of Tabanni, Birnin, Birnin Gwari, 8/06/2016