

**BEYOND VIOLENCE: RELIGIOUS PEACEMAKING AND HERDER-FARMER CONFLICT IN NIGERIA**

**Nneka Maria Agbasianya, PhD**

Onitsha High School, Onitsha  
agbasianyanneka@gmail.com

&

**Ikechukwu Maxwell Ukandu, PhD**

Department of Religions and Intercultural Studies & Centre for Peace and  
Development,  
Veritas University, Abuja  
ukandui@veritas.edu.ng

DOI: 10.13140RG.2.2.14554.96967

**Abstract**

*No doubt, small and large scale livestock production is a major contributor to the economy of Nigeria, outside it being a rich source of animal protein and leather (made from animal skin). Similarly, crop production has maintained its centrality in the sustenance of human population. The need to get these herds of cattle well fed has propelled pastoralists to seek for arable lands beyond their domains. These arable lands are all-most always owned and used for farming purposes. The encroachments by herders into the property and business premises of farmers, have often thrown opened a major source of resource-based conflict. The disposition, demands and violent activities of the herders have often spelt doom for not just the crops, environment but equally, the lives of farmers, their families and community members alike. These aggressive posture and violent occupation at once reveals the violent crime component of these recurrent conflicts between herders and farmers. Thus, the research aims to interrogate religious peacemaking in the violent conflicts between herders and farmers within the context of security and criminal justice administration. Exploratory research design was used with data drawn principally from secondary sources. Also, the peacemaking criminology framework was adopted. Climate change, migration and destruction of crops, cattle rustling and the availability of small arms and light weapons were the major causes of the conflict. Similarly, income and livelihood, property and human destruction, humanitarian challenges were some major effects of the conflict. While observing the religious dynamics in the identity of the primary conflict parties, this research concludes by recommending from a religion-based peacemaking perspective, sustainable panacea that could curb and restore the relationship between the hostile parties on the basis of their long established, though currently volatile, interaction and commonalities towards national development.*

**Keywords:** *Farmers, Herders, Peacemaking Criminology, Religious Peacemaking, Violent Conflict*

### **Introduction**

No doubt, small and large scale livestock production is a major contributor to any economy, outside it being a rich source of animal protein and leather (made from animal skin). Similarly, crop production has maintained its centrality in the sustenance of human population across the globe. Pastoralist herders and crop farmers are the personnel who are active in these preoccupations respectively. In Nigeria, like other West African states, farmers and herders have had a long history of interaction and co-existence. Mutual interdependence characterized by reciprocity and support have featured conspicuously in the past (Moritz, 2010).

The culturally defined agricultural pursuit of herders or pastoralists has meant that they move from one location to the other in search of arable lands and water sources to feed their flocks. Regrettably, the need to get these herds of cattle well fed has propelled pastoralists to seek for arable lands beyond their domains. These arable lands are all-most always owned and used for farming purposes. The encroachment by these herders into the property and business premises of farmers, have thrown open a major source of resource-based conflict. Thus, conflicts have risen from the relationship between these two groups resulting in widespread violence, loss of lives and displacement (International Crisis Group, 2021).

The conflict has been exacerbated by various factors, including climate change, scarcity of land, and ethnic and religious tensions (Adibe, 2020; Okeke, 2019). According to a report by the International Crisis Group (2021), the conflict has resulted in over 7,000 deaths and displacement of over 200,000 people between 2011 and 2021. McGregor (2014) had earlier acknowledged that the Fulani herders are already well armed and engaged in a bitter struggle that can broaden the Boko Haram base. As such the rising profile of Fulani herdsmen attacks across regions is alarming (Williams, 2018). It is well known that the herders aim to gain increased control over grazing lands across the country (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2015).

In the wake of these intermittent skirmishes and recurrent bloodbaths in Nigeria, the criminal justice system of the country has done little or nothing to bring about brought about the seizure or significant reduction of the rate and spread of these violent criminal encounters by both parties. Beyond these challenges, the institutional response of the government has repeatedly been to set-up panels of enquiries, await their paralytic reports in perpetuity and upon eventual submission embrace them with a tradition of inaction occasioned by poor political will and vested interest. The arrest and criminal prosecution of farmers or youth members of their communities in most cases have done a great disservice to the relationship of these two historical groups.

Thus, it is with these complexities in mind, their implications for sustainable inter-group relations and their consequences for not only food security but equally allied agro-based industries and national development in general, that the researchers seeks to explore the salience religious peacemaking in the context of

herders and farmers violent conflicts in Nigeria. This qualitative research is pursued through exploratory research design. The study employed mainly secondary sources of data collection to investigate the mode of relationship, precursors and extent of damage caused by the violent affronts between herders and farmers in and across Northern and Southern Nigeria. The gathered data were subjected to thematic content analysis.

### **Peacemaking Criminology: A Theoretical Discourse**

Peacemaking is an aspect of conflict perspective and a part of sociological theories of crime causation. Siegel (2004) has it that the earliest theorists that wrote on this perspective were Tift and Sullivan. Theorists of social conflict like Tift and Sullivan (1989) cited in Siegel (2004), see crime control as only possible through peacemaking and restorative justice. Siegel (2005) threw light on restorative justice by affirming that it involves using humanistic non-punitive strategies to right wrongs and restore social justice through the agents of crime control and members of the society at large.

The main aim of peacemaking as a movement was to promote peace and a just human society. The lives and actions of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Jnr.) provided the cultural and historical background for peacemaking criminology (Moyer, 2001). For Moyer, peacemaking criminology is a more peaceful and compassionate response to individuals actions that the society popularly label as criminals. For Moloney (2009:78) this theory owes its origins to the work of Pepinsky and Quinney's (1991) entitled "theory of 'peacemaking criminology' to criminal justice polices. Peacemaking criminology is a perspective on crime that suggests that alternative methods can be used to create peaceful solutions to crime". This theory for Moloney can be implemented in society to reduce the amount of violence in the criminal justice field and improve the administration of equitable justice more so than the current approach.

Quinney and Wildemen (1991:10) opine that peacemaking "criminology is based necessarily on human transformation in achievement of peace and justice ... without peace within us and in our actions, there can be no peace and justice in our result. Peace is the way". Peacemaking criminology offers a different means of framing and thinking about crime that breaks out of the current punitive context. And at the same time, it brings into its discourse the voice of the victim, which currently is the most neglected element in the established justice system (Einstadter and Henry, 1995). The foundation of peacemaking criminology is that crime must not be seen as a war making venture, as social arrangements can be made which can cater for the needs of all and sundry in a society. This is the case, as Vold, Bernard and Snipes (1998) conclude that violent punishment can perpetrate and increase the violence of crime and that not until people look away from violence in terms of punishment as the effective means of crime control, criminals would also do same.

According to Moloney (2009) the goal of peacemaking criminology is to use a non-violent approach to solving crime. The strength of peacemaking criminology lies at

its de-emphasis on mere empirical approach on crime causation rather it applies non-violent models through a restorative justice framework. No wonder, Kathleen and Russ (1998) cited in Siegel (2004) disclose that restorative justice models lies not on punitive strategies of crime prevention and control. This is based on the idea that the problem is not how to stop crime but that of how to make peace. When applied to this study, peacemaking criminology from a religious dimension will seek to work towards a peaceable solution of the farmer and herder crisis beyond the traditional approach of criminal justice administration that assumes criminal offense as against the state. Here, the actual victims of the crime resulting of these occupational clashes will be addressed

### **The Nexus between Herders and Farmers in Nigeria:**

Beginning from colonial through post-independence Nigeria, herders and farmers have had a long history of interaction in most parts of the country, especially in Northern Nigeria. These relations though mainly symbiotic, yet it came with lesser suspicion and is characterized by tolerance and a 'live and lets live' philosophy. Overtime, a measure of mutual interdependence ensued with economic exchanges between both parties on the bases of host-client or host-stranger relationship (Moritz, 2010). They are both in a social relationship defined in terms of their preoccupation.

In this context, the basis for their meeting or nexus is agriculture that is been carried out on land. Agriculture here should be understood as a business, a culturally defined practice that commits one to the production of food and meat with their allied and derivative by-products for human consumption. The social and cultural practices associated with these economic ventures are at the core of these discrepancies. Yet, the bottom-line remains the fact that both parties play complimentary, supplementary and ought to enjoy a preponderance of natural harmony for human nourishment, wellness, economic and holistic development. The conflict between herders and farmers is based on two contrasting ways of life, with herders (also known as pastoralists) following Islam and residing in the north and farmers following Christianity and living in both the north and south.

### **The Religious Component of Herders and Farmers Conflicts in Nigeria**

The Fulani's are generally adherents of Islam, while the majority of their host communities are either Christians or indigenous religious adherents in rear occasion. The lack of conformity in worldview, social psychology and philosophy has been that communication and mental acceptance has remained low and dwindling of late. The 'we' and 'them' or 'in group' and 'out group' divide is so sharp. The inclination to overstaying their welcome and laying claims to territories as a result of their settlements in such places make host communities with different ethnic and religious background to consider them a threat that must be expelled.

Both physique, dressing, language and their mannerism and religious observance of the disputants has created a ground for greater mutual suspicion, miscommunication, prejudice and enthroned a zero sum outlook to this conflict.

It is often a case of the Fulani or Fulbe and other ethnicities in Nigeria. They have lesser or relative tension with the Hausa ethnic group perhaps for religious and relative assimilation in language and culture born of their long stay and relations. This is not usually the case with their other host communities like the Berom, Tiv, Idoma, Igbo, Yoruba and Urhobo to mention but a few.

This ethno-religious difference has given life to the suspicion and violent dimensions of these confrontations. This has reached a stage where some Christians have recognized such attacks as an extension of the Usman Dan Fodio *jihad* of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Northern Nigeria. This holy war which sought to purify Islam culminated at the establishment of empires, emirates and the Fulani instituting themselves as ruling aristocrats within these structures (Idowu, 2017).

The conquered Hausaland and beyond, till date is still been ruled by the descendants of Dan Fodio with perpetual allegiance to the Sultan of Sokoto (Udoiem, 1997). Thus, the historical successes of Dan Fodio and later Muhammad Bello his son in administering the empire under the divine law of Islam (Sharia) sends shock to the spines of many especially Middle Beltans and other Southerners who see the latest moves of the pastoralists as a disguise for their covert religio-political intentions.

#### **Causes of Herders and Farmers Imbroglio in Historical Perspective:**

This section of the work identifies and briefly explains some core factors that led to this disagreement and violence between herders and farmers in Nigeria.

**Climate Change:** It is a truism that in an attempt to feed herds of cattle in a time of drought and desert encroachment in the Sahel regions by pastoralists who culturally are used to grazing across arable routes which often are owned and used as farmlands by farmers, has provided a conflict prone environment. Precipitated by the sustained increase on the average temperature of the earth's atmosphere is considered a major driver of this resource-based conflicts in Nigeria.

Loss of wetlands, inadequate rainfall or droughts and desert encroachment as a result of the level of misuse of planet earth that plays host to human life and a myriad number of other forms of animal and plant lives. The continuous advance in science and technology without proper environmental impact assessment and sustainability especially as championed by industrial and domestic wastes is posing great challenge for survival.

The challenge of climate change which had birthed eco-scarcity as Okoli and Atelhe (2014) puts it, has a direct implication for access to fresh and portable water. The lack or scarcity of fresh water in this sense is central to this conflict because of the depletion in this natural resource. The presence of arid and semi-arid lands, the unpredictability of rainfall and magnitude of drought determines largely the distribution and availability of pasture and water resources (Abroulaye, Issa, Abalo and Nouhoun, 2015).

Man seems to have perfected the act of violating himself and indeed, the physical environment that plays host to his existence. Human development and survival are well implicated by this aggressive misuse and gluttonous utilization of technological products which are no doubt the fruits of scientific discoveries. The adverse effects of these successes are now steering us in the face and are showing no sign of abating.

**Migration and Destruction of Crops:** There is an environmentally induced migration on the part of Cattle herders from core Northern states towards the Middle Belt region and further downwards to South Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria in pursuit of fresh water and grazing fields. The implication of such movements which gives birth to a number of changes within the migrating group and the receiving (host) communities is what really capture the attention of human and social scientists. The mere fact that inadequate water supply, a paucity of plants and other edible scrubs, are lacking or shrinking is a pointer to this necessary need for economic migration.

No, doubt, the movement of people occasioned by a number of reasons is not new to human societies. What comes as a surprise to many is the lack of restraint on the part of the herders as they hardly prevent their heads of cattle from consuming the crops and polluting the water sources of farmers and their communities. Thus, the case of livestock-induced crop damage is one of the most important precipitant of the farmer-herder conflicts in communities that has often been reported (Oyama, 2014). The continuous destruction of crops belonging to others and their unwilling disposition to either pay compensation or seek for forgiveness in the face of this civil wrong persist to be a major factor in the herders-farmers contemporary imbroglio.

The current stage of this violent confrontation and resource-based conflict is that it has thrown open a laughable demand in this unhealthy competition for land. Grazing routes, grazing fields and cattle colony are the contemporary lines of agitation, counter-agitations or recommendations that are making the rounds. Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture in a public notice proposed for the establishment of cattle colonies across the entire states of the federation.

**Cattle Rustling:** As an economic commodity and a rich source of food with respect to meat and milk, cows are subject to theft for either sale or consumption purposes. In some rear occasions, the damages and encroachment of these livestock on farm lands stands as a motivation to revenge or teach the herders a lesson. Locals from host or neighbouring communities connive in rustling and selling these animals thereby aggravating the conflict and giving more impetus to the parties involved. In some cases, this challenge has prompted owners of heads of cattle to arm their pastoralists with illegal weapons to safeguard their investment.

**Availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons:** This has brought about a tonic in the conflict between herders and farmers. No doubt, the use of machetes, swords and sticks, guns are not new in the cultural history of various African peoples. For example, in Igboland, during the celebration of death, it is not uncommon to hear the loud and thunderous sound of gunpowder and the shooting of guns during festivals. Similarly, the Hausa and Fulani often go about with dagger, swords and even bodily shames for their private protection. Beyond this use of weapons as cultural regalia, welding of weapon has moved into a deadly proportion.

Udeagha (2011) found this alarming when he posits that, the overwhelming availability of illicit arms is a tonic that boost and lure unscrupulous elements in violent garb to perpetrate violent crimes and the baneful intentness to channel their mind on that, which is morally despicable and socially dehumanizing. Similarly, Like Vendley and Ali (n. d.) have it that,

Guns in particular have a functional lifetime of many decades. Small arms change the dynamics of a conflict instantly. They are lethal; they are meant to kill. They can transform a simple argument into a tragedy, and be used against civilians seeking to protect themselves... Violence does not necessarily begin with a weapon, but it increases dramatically when weapons are present, particularly in already volatile environments rife with poverty, mistrust or injustice (P. 4).

The increasing availability of modern weapons has spelt violence and impunity in the encroachment and annihilation of both human and material obstruction on the part of both parties.

**Female Harassment and Violation of Soft Targets:** The migratory activities of herders are not devoid of the urge for sexual and other emotional desires. The daily and almost round the clock duties have made them to seek cheap targets for their sexual gratification. The lonely path they follow for their grazing and sparsely populated communities they sojourn through predisposes young girls, women and elder women to criminal violation through rape. No doubt, rape is a violent crime in itself. Like other crimes, the criminal intent (*mens rea*) and the act (*actus reus*) are two variables that determine its criminality. These substances are not lacking in the acts of rape committed by these pastoralists.

They seek opportunities to harass and force themselves into females of various age ranges. They similarly, overpower males and youths within their sight with their deadly weapons that want to constitute a hindrance or prevent them from perpetrating such crime on their relatives, acquaintances or community members. In cases where they have succeeded to rape their victims before they are confronted, they drift or fall into violent defence and destruction of the enquirers. In some cases, they kill their rape victims to avoid them calling for help after they might have abused them. Thus, they kill for sex and kill in defense of themselves after sex. They show no signs of respect for local authorities and disregard constituted legal frameworks.

**Consequences of Herders and Farmers Violent Conflicts in Nigeria:**

The ongoing violent conflicts between Herders and Farmers in Nigeria has a number of negative effects and to them we turn:

**Human and Property Destruction:** Cattle grazing-related violence has been on the increase in Nigeria. The level of human life destruction and incalculable material decimation is so alarming. The pursuit of individual economic ventures or livelihood has posed a serious challenge for human life and the human person who is supposed to benefit ultimately from such activities. Individuals and communities who pursue after providing food to the growing population of Nigeria and for export purposes are currently facing extinction and seeming calculated violence. This has severe implication for human resource and capital. A threat for food insecurity is birthed by the continuous violent confrontations of Herders and Farmers in the country.

The resource-based conflicts between the Fulani and farming communities has depicted the former in the light of aggressors, non-forgetful and vengeful, and uncompromising party to a conflict and terrorists in recent times. Recent Fulani activities transcend national boundaries and dislocate local communities. The acts of violence melted by them against farmers especially with their accomplice network and willing kinsmen, have largely disrupted the peace and constituted a major clog on the will of human progress and material development.

Age is never a barrier in this regard. As the elderly, middle aged, youths, teenagers and children of both sexes are not immune from this decimation because they equally fall prey in the hands of these blood tasty assailants. It is for this kind of violent encroachment that the former Governor of Ekiti State, Ayodele Fayose was reported to have armed local hunters in the state to repel the uncontrolled aggression of herdsman.

**Income and Livelihood Loss:** The economic effects of the violent conflicts between herders and farmers at various locations in Nigeria cannot be over flogged. This accounts for a major challenge of this resource based conflict. According to McDougal, Hagerty, Inks, Ugo-Ike and Ogabiela (2015) these conflicts undermine market development and economic growth by destroying productive assets, reducing production, preventing trade, deterring investment by private sector actors, and eroding social cohesion. It has implication for waste in both livestock and crop productions. It impedes or reduces contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Per Capital Income (PCI) and well-being.

Very little can be said of capital generation let alone profit maximization during times of these violent conflicts that is taking a terroristic dimension in recent times in Nigeria. Agriculture as a wealth creating venture and a viable economic activity distorted without any consideration for food security livelihood and well-being or survival. Un-sustainability of development is the result as farmers for fear of losing their lives will remain indoors or even flee for safety. Hunger and human security at times like this are quite visible and widespread.



**Humanitarian Challenge:** The violence has resulted to untold pains, losses of families and social dislocation. But of worse challenge is the humanitarian crisis it throws open to complicate the lives of Nigerian citizens and prick the consciences of well meaning individuals and donor agencies whose underbelly is characterized by compassion for the needy and suffering humanity.

The destruction of human life and property has brought about social dislocation, homelessness, displacement and destitution. This population drift culminates at citizens being refugees or internally displaced persons within the shores of the Nigerian state. Like Idowu (2017:188) has it, the violence has uprooted more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu states, and many are staying with relatives or makeshift internally displaced person's camps". The attendant psychological trauma and anomie that these situations gave rise to is no doubt alarming. Social life as they conceive it will cease to hold sway and all manner of new and different experiences begin to crop-up to their social discomfort.

The government's involvement, compromise or a soft spot for this herders and their private business has what complicated the government's intervention. Economic interest, ethnic affinity and religious affiliation of the of the Fulani cattle herders has featured conspicuously as areas that depicts the country's Executive President, His Excellency, Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR in the perception of the public. With these three core identities at play in the issue, the religious component has become recurrent and at its fulcrum.

### **Beyond Violence: Curbing the Hostilities through Religion-based Peacemaking:**

The normative system of religion and religious organizations that sustain them and the identity they enjoy are among others, three resources that bequeath to religion a potential for peacemaking (Ukandu, 2011). For example, religion provides standards and social values which helps in making the social order cohesive and controlling. This gives a share moral framework for peacemaking. Thus, religious leaders from both Islam and Christianity who are dispassionate and experienced in third party intervention (especially mediation) can avail themselves in this all-important issue that has cost the Nigerian state and her citizens' livelihoods and irreparable lives.

The governments misunderstanding of the conflict-crime continuum of this issue and its inability to treat it as such meant that a need to look towards religious diplomacy as a viable option in the multi-track diplomacy tool kit. The Federal government's foot dragging approach and seemingly bias posture on these issues meant that religious leaders with an unmatched moral authority gained overtime true grass root commitment and community development be employed.

We envisage that a religion-based peacemaking criminology works with the same ethical principles as restorative justice or corrective justice (Nwagwu, 2010) as it is based on the philosophy that, alternative methods are required on the

way crime is construed by the state and her criminal justice system. The trust of this model is its emphasis on the relationship and harmonium that exist among people in communities. Crime from a restorative justice perspective is a wrong from an offender against a victim and the community, instead of the state as traditionally understood and as such the offender becomes accountable to the community and the victim and not the state (Wilson Legislative Council Staff, 1998). Another salient aspect of this model is the involvement of the victim, offender and community in determining the outcome of the crime through deliberation. At times of refusal the court can even issue a letter that summons the offender to be a part of the deliberations.

Innes (2003:93) has it that the focus of restorative justice is on “the victim and offender, the harm caused by the incident and how this harm can suitably be redressed – either through an apology or some other form of reparation”. It was Nnoli (2006) who notes that, when a state fails to dialogue with its population, the result would be armed conflict as victims of injustices would be left with no other option but to fight for their survival and demands. But no amount of military brutality can solve a problem that otherwise calls for a peaceful political settlement through distributive justice. The ethics of restorative justice is anchored on the assumption that a valid relationship with God must find an outlet in social expression through moral life and actions that culminates at justice and sustainable peace, invariably.

The unifying concept behind restorative justice is the restoration of relationships and a focus on the process of righting wrongs or healing wounds (Leun, 2001). Nwagwu (2010) identified four key values of restorative justice as including encounter, amends, reintegration and inclusion. While encounter entails communication among the victim, offender and community; amends involves the offender taking steps to repair the harm they have caused on their victim or victims. On the other hand, reintegration is a process that restores the offender and victim back into society with their liberty intact; and inclusion is the provision of opportunity for all those that have a stake on the matter to play a role on the crime remediation process. It is based on the necessity to seek peace through a peaceable approach as against violence (or mere military intervention) especially through pro-active means in the prevention of violent crime of which religious intervention will work with this principle.

The approach to criminal justice system in Nigeria as in most polities of the contemporary world focused on the challenge of crime in a monolithic manner which is liken for fighting fire with fire by the state and her law enforcement agents with little or no success. Violent tactics and highhandedness in crime fighting has not done much good in the sector. Arrests and incarcerations of so-called violent offenders within the herdsmen and farming community has done more harm than good in the on-going violent conflict that centers on economic deprivation and livelihood distortion.

Observing that crime control through arrest is not peace sustaining, unlike the religion-based peacemaking criminology that will result in lasting peace among the conflict parties as both victims and offenders will get their justice. The mentality that

violence can overcome violence as it is with evil, is not true. We should understand that the suffering of the herdsmen has forced them into the economic space of others for survival. This suffering of theirs has led them into violent acts towards farmers. Ameliorating the sufferings of the herdsmen lays the true solution to this societal problem.

As O'Connor (2004:4) has it that, “the solution to crime is to create more caring, mutually dependent communities and strive for inner rebirth or spiritual rejuvenation (inner peace)”. Restoration is the ultimate end product of the peace that this alternative approach seeks to establish. Arrest, imprisonment, and other forms of punishment and victim neglect are not considered helpful in the process.

### **Recommendations**

On account of the foregoing, the research puts forward some recommendations which it intends could be palliatives to the violent conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria which have descended into acts of criminality.

Firstly, since peacemaking criminology emphasizes crime control through a peace model of cooperation rather than retribution, it will be vital to allow the herders and farmers engage themselves in a peaceful communication that will be mediated by a neutral third party comprising of religious leaders from Islam and Christianity. The target is to reach an agreeable consensus (peace agreement) that is enforceable.

Secondly, the desire to get healing for all those concern is a key concern from the peacemaking criminology perspective as against retribution. Leaders of the organization of Miyetti-Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and various community development groups or professional farming groups should work towards amending their modes of operation or practice to accommodate the other. Compensation should be paid or given to families and their communities to give them a sense of justice.

Thirdly, the mutual beneficial basis of herder and farmer relationship should not be neglected. Cow and sheep wastes are very nourishing for the replenishment of soil which will go a long way to improve crop production. Thus, these two categories of agriculturalists have a meeting point that should set a common ground for their mutual compromise, complementarity and reciprocity. Thus, an inclusive system should be implemented to allow for a sort of mixed farming. As such farm houses with crops and livestock coexisting in the same compound should be promoted.

Fourthly, religious leaders and their traditional rulers' counterparts who are no doubt custodian of traditions and agents of community development, should avail the services of their good offices to sensitize and orient stakeholders especially the bellicose actors on the need for peace and mutual co-existence for the purpose of development that will benefit all. Relevant agencies of government can partner with them at this level to make for logistics and provide

various outlets for information dissemination. Thus, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) will be helpful in this regard.

Finally, the provision of security through neighborhood watch scheme, community policing strategies and deployment of passionate and dutiful personnel of the armed forces and other security agencies will be a motivating factor in for the reduction of hostility and violence.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The paper has employed a religion-based peacemaking criminological approach to gain palliative insight into the violent conflicts that has bedeviled and characterized the contemporary history of Nigeria. This regrettably is the case at the level of intergroup relations between herders and farmers. The quest to pursue legitimate livelihood for personal and societal benefits has been halted and stands threatened due to the challenge of climate change which has induced economic migration and resulted in the destruction of crops by the herders. Similarly, the harassment of female both young and old who are to be understood within the context of soft targets, has provoke families and host communities and situated the herders as a common enemy.

On the other hand, criminal acts of cattle rustling with an intention to repay the herders have been carried out by network of organized criminals from communities and their neighbours. By bringing harm to or depriving herders of their valuable cows, they pursue after arming themselves to better secure their economic interest and reciprocal threat to their lives. Small arms and light weapons have given a major boost to this resource-based conflict and progressively lethal confrontations to an extent that not only herders utilize them, even communities are currently assembling vigilantes under the umbrella of community policing for some form of resistance to the encroachment.

This imbroglio has manifested itself through income and livelihood strangulation, property and human decimation, and an overwhelming sorry state of humanitarian conditions. The work moves the discourse beyond the conflict plane to its crime pedestal. Thus, in the face of these consequences, the peacemaking criminology perspective was adopted because it opens a window for crime remediation by looking beyond the traditional criminal justice system which seem helpless at best and culpable at worst in this issue. The offenders, victims and communities are to negotiate a peaceable outcome with the help of religious leaders.

In conclusion, the paper posits that compromise and reciprocity among others should set the platform for mutual coexistence, adequate communicative information through awareness, and by adopting distributive and restorative justice for this ongoing menace to be curbed. The respect for individual dignity and making efforts to right whatever wrong done to them as against the state is the hallmark of this approach to peace.

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