

Herder-Farmer Conflict and Girl-Child Education in Nasarawa State

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Abstract

Herder-farmer conflict is a worrisome security issue in Nasarawa state. Not only has it hampered economic security, it has also brought about displacements, abject poverty, unemployment and other socio-political issues. The unabated conflicts over limited resources between herders and farmers in Nasarawa state have in no small measure rid the girl-child of the right to education. Despite a lot of literature on herder-farmer conflict in Nasarawa state, there seems to be a vacuum created on how the conflict has affected girl- education in the state. Therefore, the paper interrogated how herder-farmer conflict has affected girl-child education in Nasarawa state. The paper adopted the liberal feminist theory as explanatory framework, and relied on secondary sources of data collection. It argued that the conflicts have resulted in killings, poor health, low self-esteem, forced marriage and psychological trauma on the girl-children. It has also robbed the female children of the fundamental rights to education leading to the increasing number of female children out of school. The paper recommended that there should be re-enforcement of laws that had been made to curb the herder-farmer conflicts. Also, a programme must be put in place to ensure that the displaced girl-children have access to quality education in the state.

Keywords: Education, farmers, girl-child, herdsman, herder-farmer conflict,

Introduction

Nasarawa state is one of the states that have been ravaged by different forms of violent conflicts including communal, inter and intra- ethnic and religious violence. One of the violent conflicts that caused a devastating effect on people in Nasarawa state is herder-farmer conflict. A lot of reasons have been adduced to why the conflict persistently occur in the state and such include encroachment of the farmland cattle rustling, religious pursuit, scarcity of natural resources such as water, vegetal plants causing cattle movement, climate induced desertification and border porosity which aids small and light weapon proliferation (Adebajo & Ise Oluwa, 2020; Adebajo & Adebajo, 2023; Adebajo, 2020). Aside from killing of people and destruction of property in the state, the conflict has affected access to education, particularly the girl-child. The conflict has affected the functioning of school system by rendering classrooms and offices unusable as well as truncating academic activities. The conflict does not only sent students out of schools due to dehumanising conditions, it also turn their schools into internally displaced camp where classrooms are occupied by internal displaced persons (IDP), thus, reducing their chances of getting back to school soon.

As argued by Rick (2015), the perennial conflict between farmers and Fulani herders often forces parents to leave their original homes and move to places considered safe havens and this invariably affect children's education. And those that returned home, among the internal displace persons, prefer to stay indoors due to the fear of attacks by the herdsman and also keep their children away from schools. According to Ibrahim and Adebayo (2021), the victims of the conflict had to nurse the emotional and psychological wounds and girl-children were refused to be re-enrolled back to school for the fear of sexual assault and molestation. The sustainable development goal four places importance on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. However, achieving the goal in 2030 as projected in Nasarawa state with the incessant conflict remains uncertain. Due to the conflict, primary schools in Nasarawa state were used as IDP camps for the displaced persons to stay (Guardian, 2022). This means the pupils have been out of school from 2018 to this present 2022. Similarly, at the Pilot Science Primary School Keana, there were over 1,500 IDPs taking refuge in the classrooms, mostly women and children (Guardian, 2022).

The takeover of these school premises by IDPs has rendered academic work in such places impossible. Apart from destruction of lives and property, cases of rape and harassment of the females in the IDP camps abound. According to Suleiman (2016), when farmers and herders clash, infrastructural facilities in the schools such as classroom buildings, offices, books and other relevant documents are greatly destroyed or damaged. Most often, schools are burnt down to ashes in the rural communities. Not only do the girl-children lose their classrooms, some of them equally lose their virginity and self-esteem due to rape. The emotional and psychological problems created leads to decreased

enrolment as parents prefer to stay at home with their children to avoid death and physical assaults (Joseph, 2017). It is on this note, the study seeks to examine how herder-farmer conflict has affected girl-child education in Nasarawa state.

Concept of Herder-Farmer Conflict

Herder-farmer conflicts are conflicts between peasant and nomadic live-stock keepers due to scarce environmental resources needed by the two groups (Adebajo, 2020). The conflicts occur as a result of cattle rustles and competition for a scarce herding environment among pastoralists – herders, stealing from herders and herders kill farmers (Arowosegbe, 2019). Herder-farmer conflict is a form of conflict between mostly Muslim Fulani herders and Christian non Fulani farmers over scarce environmental resources that are in dire need (Adebajo & Orebanjo, 2022). Okoro (2018) views herder-farmer conflicts as violent conflicts occurring between subsistence cultivators and transhumant livestock keepers causing destruction to lives and properties. The conflicts are not only caused by competition over grazing land and farmland, but they are also caused by migration, increase in human population and livestock, farming along grazing routes, proliferation of weapons, cattle rustling, etc.,. The conflicts are subsumed in social identity problems snowballing into ethnic and religious tensions since the majority of the herders are Muslims while the farmers are mostly Christians. As argued by Anyebe (2019), the herder-farmer conflicts are not limited to the rural fights between herder and farmers, but manifesting in other types of conflicts and are caused by resource disputes, evictions, killing and cattle rustling

Concept of Girl Child Education

The girl-child means a female human being starting from birth to 18 years old. It is a phase of the female comprising toddler, childhood and adolescent stages; the period of her life before she becomes an adult (Atama, 2012). Juliem (2018) defines the girl-child as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. The period covers the crèche, nursery or early childhood (0–5 years), primary (6–12 years) and secondary school (12–18 years (Ahmed & Yola, 2021). During her development, the young child is totally under the care of the adults who may be her parents or guardians and older siblings. The girl-child is malleable, builds and develops her personality and character during the period of growth and development (Ahmed, et al, 2021). Her physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments start and progress to get to the peak at the young adult stage (Tyookaa, Ifeanyichukwu & Apine, 2014).

Girl child education, according to World Bank (2023), is referred to the aspect of education that aims at developing the skill and knowledge of girls and women across all castes, religious, ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds. The girl child education include all forms of education which can include education at schools, colleges, health education, professional, technical, vocational among others. It is an all encompassing type of education which goes beyond getting

girls into school but also involve creating enabling environment where they learn and acquire the knowledge and skills to compete favourably in the labor market; gain social intelligence, emotional and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world; make decisions about their own lives and contribute to their communities and the world (World Bank, 2023). As argued by Puri (2016), lack of education robs the girl child the basic knowledge and skills needed in helping them to fulfill their potentials in society.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is anchored on the liberal feminist theory which advocated for women's suffrage, emancipation and access of the females to quality education (Maynard, 1995). The major proponents of the liberal feminist theory include Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858). The liberal feminist theory proposed that gender inequality is produced when women and girls are denied access to quality education and employment. The liberal feminists argued that sex at birth is not a legitimate basis to discriminate against women because men and women are of equal human worth (Mahawar, 2022). The liberal feminist theorists further proposed that both males and females have 42 chromosomes in their genes, so, both boys and girls have intelligence. In the view of the liberal feminists in as much as there is a need to informally educate the girl-children on the home and family life, it is equally necessary that they should be provided with the rights to formal education by government. The theory further noted that society would benefit from the public contributions of women and every cultural practice that discriminates against the girl-children can be changed when they are empowered and given access to quality education (Ackerly, 2001). Therefore, to deny girl-children access to education, is to deny the development of their full human potential. The liberal feminist theorists suggested the elimination of barriers to education of female children and subordination in every area of social life and formation. Apart from proposing the elimination of domestic violence and sexual harassment, the theory advocated for equal education for both sexes. The theory has inherent weaknesses of lacking class or racial analysis, judging women's success by masculine standards and white feminism assumes that the issues faced by white women are issues faced by all women (Mahawar, 2022). The theory is applicable to the paper for its advocacy for female access to education and inclusion in every area of social life that is gender bias.

Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Nasarawa State: A brief overview

The herder-farmer conflicts are not recent phenomena, they started as minor misunderstandings decades ago and have generated into major conflicts posing threats to lives and properties in Nasarawa state. In the North -central region particularly in Nasarawa state, the conflict between herders and farmers has constituted a serious problem affecting economic activities including education. As argued by Adogi (2013) the conflicts between the farmers and herders in Nasarawa State have been on the rise since the 1990s but became aggravated

due to worsening ecological issues. It is noteworthy that the conflict in Nasarawa state has been interpreted as having ethnic, political and religious underpinnings. The Fulani herdsman migrate from the north-west and north-east Nigeria to the Middle Belt region particularly Nasarawa state mainly to search for environmental resources such as water and grasses for their cattle. Most of the time, the incessant movement always pitch them against farmers in the rural communities in the state. The conflict has been sustained due to the increasing rate of youth unemployment, economic, political and cultural exclusion, corruption, poverty, small arms proliferation, porosity of Nigerian borders and failure of state institutions to prosecute the culprits. Lack of political will to prosecute the dearing herders due to ethnic and religious sentiments further worsens the situation with grave consequences.

The struggle over the green land for grazing and destruction of crops has occasioned herder-farmer conflicts in Nasarawa state. In 24th March, 2012, violent conflicts erupted between farmers and herders in Igbagbo in Ekye development Area of Doma causing the death of ten people, destruction of property and displacement of people (Adebajo, 2020). Also, twenty people were killed in August, 2013, in Kuduku, Keana local government area, Nasarawa state when Fulani pastoralists carried out reprisal attacks for killing their men, leading to the death of twenty people and destruction of houses (Adebajo, 2020). In discussing the historical trajectory of the conflict between the two groups in Nasarawa state, Adebajo (2022) linked it to the politicization of the conflictive relations achieved through manipulation and mobilization of clannish, ethnic, religious and parochial sentiments. The interplay of some factors including struggle over farm/grazing fields, culture of criminal brigandage, inefficient land use laws and administration increased the potency of the conflict. Increasing unemployment among the youths, political, economic and cultural exclusion, poverty, corruption of family values, weak state institutions that failed to punish offenders of violence, all combined together to encourage and sustain the conflict in Nasarawa state (Nchi, 2013, Adogi, 2013, Okoli & Atelhe, 2014, Adebajo & Adebajo, 2023). Between 2011 and 2014, people have been killed, farmlands destroyed, many rendered homeless, displaced and destitute as a result of the conflict (Adebajo & Orebanjo, 2022).

As argued by Adebajo (2022), the incessant conflicts between the herders and farmers have caused spiral of displacement affecting every aspect of social life particularly education sector. The conflict has also engendered relationship that is characterised by pathological hate posing a threat to the mutual well-being and peaceful co-existence of the parties (Nchi, 2013). For instance, in March, 2012, encroachment of farmland by the Fulani pastoralists caused violent between pastoralists and farmers claiming lives and property in Doma local government area of Nasarawa State (Adebajo, 2022). As reported by Oludayo (2020), conflicts between herders and farmers in Nasarawa state as at 2016, claimed 2,500 lives, displaced thousands of people, destroyed properties and inflicting other negative humanitarian consequences. Obi, Doma, Keana and

Awe local government areas constitute the hotbeds of the violent conflict in Nasarawa state. It rather became more pronounced with the pronouncement and implementation of the new grazing regulation in Benue state which led to the herders leaving in droves to Nasarawa state considered conducive to them. The influx of herders into the state affected cash crop production as there were regular clashes between them and local farmers whose main source of livelihood is farming. With about two million cows flooding the affected communities in Nasarawa state, the conflict became pervasive and prevalent with attendant socio-economic negative effects (Oludayo, 2020).

Many factors have been explained to cause incessant conflict between the two agricultural groups in Nasarawa state. The anti-open grazing law implemented in Benue state in 2017 ignited the conflict in 2017 between the two agricultural groups. The law advocated for creation of ranches and prohibited driving of cattle around by herders to prevent crop destruction which most of the time causes violent clashes. The implementation of the law in 2017 in Benue state forced the herders to move to the nearby states with natural resources like grasses and water that the cattle need for survival. In Benue state, the herders revolted against the anti-open grazing law and creation of ranches hence, Nasarawa state became the available option where there was no anti-grazing law finding it suitable for their cattle. It is important to note that the conflict is subsumed in other social identity dimensions. As argued by Adebajo (2022), the herder-farmer conflict has an ethnic underpinning which makes it more intractable to resolve. Oludayo (2020) also argued that the movement of herders from Benue state to Nasarawa further aggravated the existing tension between the two groups. The ethnic majority/minority dichotomy played out in Nasarawa state as farmers constitute the minority group. Apart from Nasarawa state, some of the herders moved to Plateau and Taraba states. As a way of revenge, the local farmers in Nasarawa state were subjected to attacks as the herders moved in and crops were destroyed by the cows (Adebajo, 2022).

Apart from the foregoing, some of the possible causes of the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Nasarawa state include climate change, urbanisation, terrorist activities and primitive livestock management. It is instructive to note that climate change is a remote cause of the conflict by disposing the herders to constant migration due to prevalent drought and desertification which have occasioned loss of water and grasses (Adebajo & Adebajo, 2023). For instance, following the desert encroachment in most Northern States occasioned by climate change in the late 1970s and early 1980s, most of the greenbelt and water bodies along the fringe of the Sahara got completely depleted, leaving the herders with very little grazing fields (Jibunoh, 2018). This led to the search for greener pastures and subsequently the escalation of the clash between the two parties. the herdsmen/ farmers clash in Nasarawa state is caused by struggles for survival arising from the effects of global warming with increasing disappearance of vegetation and this has caused them to continue to move downwards to the Middle Belt in search of pasture (Etim, 2018).

Transformation of rural to urban areas coupled with increasing population has affected the grazing routes the cattle pass through hence crops are destroyed.

The primitive way of rearing livestock by driving them from place to place across national and state borders predisposes herders and farmers to violent conflicts. The conflict was limited in the time past because the herders would not travel long distances in search of natural resources for their cattle but due to desert encroachment, it is now a constant practice for them to travel on a regular basis. So there is connection between climate change and regular mobility of the herders into Nasarawa state. As argued by Owoyele (2022), most of the time when crops are destroyed by cows during movement, the farmers attack them and the herders launch reprisal attacks with great destruction to socio-economic activities. For instance, a reprisal attack was launched at Chabo village in Nasarawa state on 18th December, 2021, with sporadic shootings by the gunmen causing the death of several people. Farmers who own the land and the owners of the livestock (cows and cattle), both private business entrepreneurs, compete for the scarce fertile land and conflicts occur because of the two contradicting interests involved. There is the interest of the owners of the livestock whose type of business is based on open grazing that involves moving from one place to the other in search of vegetative plants and water. This when juxtaposed with the interest of the farmers who own the land and farm on the land leads automatically to violent conflict. In addition, contamination of streams in the communities of Nasarawa state often leads to violent conflicts. The streams are sources of drinking water to the farmers and animals drink water from the sources and drop dung which contaminate the streams. For instance, River Akor in Mararaba, Nasarawa state is always messed up by dung when cattle are driven for watering.

Boko Haram activities in the North-East zone of Nigeria also fuel violent conflicts between herders and farmers in Nasarawa state. It is worthy of note that loss of grazing areas in the North Eastern States of Nigeria as a result of Boko Haram deadly attacks made many herdsmen move down to Benue and Nasarawa states for grazing lands. As opined by Okolo (2018), unplanned movement mounts pressure on the fertile land owned by farmers and also gave rise to a high degree of competition for space and food (Okolo, 2018). Such desperate struggle for fertile land which is scarce, no doubt, accounts for the conflict between the farmers and herders in states like North Central states in Nigeria particularly Nasarawa state.

Girl-Child Education in Nasarawa State

Education is the determinant for growth and human resource development (Gbenu, 2012). Education of women and girls are equally or more important as the education for men and boys. In spite of the fact that society benefits from the education of females, they are most disadvantaged in the provision of education. As reported by the Premium Times News (2022), the national figure for out of school children as estimated by UNICEF as 18.5 million, 10

million are girls with over 80 percent from Northern Nigeria. This is not unexpected considering the fact that in Nigeria, even in Nasarawa state, females are perceived and treated as mere men's property and sexual commodity. There is the belief that women (girl-children) are second-class citizens, and considered as a machine means for producing children. These situations have resulted in unfair treatment of women especially in the aspect of education of the female child in the traditional Nigeria society, particularly in Nasarawa state.

It is important to state that women and girls in Nasarawa state do not readily have access to education at all levels. The ratio of male to female enrolment in schools is 35:65 (Action Aid, Nigeria, 2014). Boys enroll more than girls inspite of the fact that girls perform better academically than the boys (Action Aid, Nigeria, 2014). The various impeding factors to the education of the girl-child in Nasarawa state, range from cultural to religion, the psychology of self, law, political institution and social attitudes, early marriage, poor attitude of parents towards girl-child education, among others (Abdullahi & Mamman, 2021). There are consistent cry outs and articles for the rate at which girls that are underage are given out in marriage. These girls are pushed into a phase (marriage) they are not prepared or ripe for. All these interact in several ways to limit girl-children's access to formal education when compared with their male counterparts. As a result, strategic positions and responsibilities, as well as decisions are taken by males to the exclusion of the females.

Nasarawa state like most states in African countries is patriarchal in nature based on inequality and injustice. Patriarchal attitudes lead to gender stereotyping which pervades all areas of life in Nasarawa state including education, which manifests in low enrolment of females into all levels of schools. It is a well-known fact that many parents in Africa give preferential treatment to the boy-child, especially in matters concerning education. Women are given fewer education opportunities than men as reflected in the lower literacy rates for the adult female population compared to men (Abdullahi, et al, 2021). The social norm, which supported these gender relations were culturally transmitted from one generation to another through the process of socialisation. The family setting seems to have the strongest influence on gender role development, with parents passing on, both overtly and covertly, to their children their own beliefs about gender. Some parents are usually reluctant to send their girl child for formal education especially to higher levels like their male counterpart, they consider it as a waste of resources since it is believed that the girl-child ends up in the kitchen (Azeez, Osiesi, Aribamikan & Oderinwale, 2024).

Another problem closely related to this is the reluctance to acquire western education, the ignorance and misunderstanding on the part of the girls themselves about the values of the acquisition of formal education (Abdullahi & Mamma, 2018). The traditional socialization process of the typical African

society, made women to accept negative self-fulfilling prophecy, stereotyping and stigmatization that they are members of a weaker sex and are therefore not entitled to certain rights, privileges or profession (Abdullahi & Mamma, 2018). Thus, this influence of environmental manipulation led to the inferiority complex observable in Nigerian girls and women. Nasarawa state has a mixed Christian and Muslim population sparsely spread around the countryside, thus the Islamic (Muslim) practice of Purdah (wearing of veil by the females and barricading relations with the outside world) also hinders the access of the females to education.

The high levels of absolute rural poverty (around 60%) in the state contribute to low enrolment rates too (Azeez, Osiesi, Aribamikan & Oderinwale, 2024). In such situations of poverty, parents would have to weigh between sending their girl-child or boy-child to school with the little finance they have; they would most likely settle for sending the boy-child while the girl-child stays back at home and is home-schooled as to how to care for her family when she's eventually given out in marriage. Equally too, there is a strong dependency on child labour for subsistence farming and hawking in Nasarawa state which contributes to high rates of truancy and drop-out, especially of the girl-child. According to Abdullahi and Mamma (2018), the forces which combine to hamper girl-child education in Nigeria, even Nasarawa state, could be viewed broadly to include denial of access to equal rights with the male counterparts, early marriage, confinement to solitary living, subjugation by culture to accept choices forced on them, discrimination.

Effects of Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Girl-Child Education in Nasarawa State

The conflicts between the farmers and herdsmen have affected Due to the herder-farmer conflict, parents are discouraged to send their female children to school for fear of being killed, abducted or sexually assaulted. The menace of the herdsmen militia has affected the school enrolment and attendance of girl-child in Nasarawa state. In the affected communities, Daar, Usula, Hagher, Chabo, Tse-Udugh, Joor, Tyungu, Ugba, Angwan, Ayaakeke, Ayaba, among others, girl-children were displaced with their families during the clashes between herders and farmers in the state (Sunday, 2021). In Nasarawa State, about 3000 primary school pupils in Awe Local Government Area were forced out of school as a result of herdsmen attacks (Gyang, 2018). The truth, therefore, is that herdsmen attacks have become a serious challenge to the efforts towards sustaining the reduction in the figure of the out-of-school of the girl-child in the state. This to a large extent may affect the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The herder-farmer conflict has affected the girl-child education due to abduction of girls from schools (International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR), 2023). Parents and guardians are in perpetual fear to send their female children to school so that they will not be abducted when the herders strike. As noted by

International Centre for Investigative Reporting (2023), girls are easily targeted by herders for abduction and this scares parents/guardians from sending them to school. In 2021, during herder-farmer conflict in Keana and Doma local government areas, girls were abducted from the communities affected (Sunday, 2021).

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a significant way herder-farmer conflict has affected the girls causing them to find it difficult to cope even when they are returned to school (Adebajo & Adebajo, 2023). The harrowing experience of witnessing the killing of their loved ones gave the girls lasting trauma. Most of the girls have traumatic experience characterised by depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and abnormal fears, making it difficult for them to concentrate in schools, hence, they dropped out (Shekwolo, Monday, Omaku, Olofin & Augustine, 2017).

Early marriage which affects girl-child education is prevalent in the communities affected by herder-farmer conflict in Nasarawa state (Vanguard, 2024). Due to the fact that the means of livelihood have been destroyed during the conflict, parents and guardians find it difficult to pay school fees. Once the girls are out of school, they are given out in marriage, not minding they are minors. Nasarawa state is one of the states with high number of early child marriage in Nigeria as a result of herder-farmer conflict (Ahoo, Eraye & Anchovur (2024). Girls between ages twelve and sixteen are married out and as early as thirteen years, a girl has given birth (Daniel, 2022). It is important to note that the schools attacked during the conflict between the herders and farmers would have their educational activities suspended thereby disrupting the girl child education. As noted by Joda and Olowoselu (2015), most schools that had their activities disrupted during the violent herder-farmer conflict are yet to resume. In addition, the educational inspectors are unable to carry out periodic or regular assessment on the girl-child education.

The girl-child not only bears the general loss suffered, she also bears specific losses. Not only do they suffer sexual assaults and rape from the herders, but also from their fellow IDPs. Females are expected to be protected, but reverse is the case as they are exposed to more danger during conflict situations. Some of them are gang raped, while some are raped consistently in the so called IDP camp where they are supposedly meant to be secured. Psychology trauma makes the girl-children lose their sense of reasoning, the future is bleak and uncertain due to the protection challenges they are confronted with. Sexual abuse and harassment became the order of the day as a result of the herder-farmer conflicts in the state. In worsening the precarious situation the females face in Nasarawa state, hoodlums further exploit them by sexually assaulting and molesting the innocent girl-child (Adebajo & Adebajo, 2023).

As argued by Abubakar & Kwashabawa (2022), physical threats affect the schooling of female children in most of the communities the violent conflicts

occurred. These types of incidents traumatised many girls and their parents, leading to their unwillingness to attend school and their parents' reluctance to compel them to do so. Also, the continued insecurity occasioned by the conflict affects food production and by implication educational development in the state. The parents have been disempowered due to destruction of their means of livelihood and would not mind withdrawing their female children from school in a bid to reduce economic/financial burdens (Abubakar & Kwashabawa, 2022). Educational development cannot thrive well in the midst of acute food scarcity as well as socio-political upheavals, especially for the girl-child. This has led to the majority of parents giving their male children's education more importance than their female children. Some of them send their male children to school, leaving the girls to take care of the family on their own or, in extreme cases, marrying strangers because they can't afford the education of the girls. All these combine to rob the female children of their fundamental right to education, thus contributing to the increasing number of female children out of school in Nasarawa state.

Measures Adopted to Encourage Girl-Child Education in Nasarawa State

In a bid to encourage the education of the girl-child affected by the herder-farmer conflict, Youth Assembly of Nigeria (YAN) donated N600, 000 to 10 vulnerable female secondary school students in Nasarawa State to ameliorate their academic burdens and promote Girl-Child education (Omaaku, 2021). Equally, it was reported by Awayi (2020), that the Nasarawa State government partnered with the traditional institution in the state to encourage girl-child education in the conflict affected local government areas. It was stated by Hajiya Halima Jabiru, the state Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development that the state would be focusing on the girl-child education affected by the conflict so that they can go back to school in order to discourage early marriage and other social vices prevalent in Nasarawa state.

Furthermore, the Nasarawa state government in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Education sensitised the general public on the importance of girl-child education through campaigns which were aimed at ending gender inequality in relation to girl-child education in the state. It is important to note that cultural norms, violence and gender inequality prevalent in rural areas in Nasarawa state denied girl children the right to education and educating a girl-child is as important as educating her male counterpart (Michael, 2021).

In spite of the aforementioned efforts, the education of the girl-children in Nasarawa state remains highly discouraging due to the herder-farmer conflict. It is noteworthy to state that in 2021, the Nasarawa state government launched the National Livestock Transformation Programme (NLTP) to end the herder/farmer clashes. The programme involved maximising the hitherto abandoned grazing reserves, which have become the hiding place for criminal elements. The aggravating security breaches necessitated a holistic resolution that will cater for not only improved productivity in the livestock sub-sector, but

also justice, security, recovery for victims of violent clashes, as well as human capital development (Abel, 2021). The Nasarawa State government equally collaborated with other organisations to address the issue of herder-farmer conflicts in the state including adopting many methods to ensure peace between the herders and farmers. Curbing all barriers to address the education of the girl-children is advantageous because an educated girl-child would not only be of benefit to herself and family, but also to her community and society at large. UNICEF (2007) buttressed that girl-child education extends beyond the girl in affecting her family and the society as a whole, but also socio-economic development.

Conclusion

The herder-farmer conflicts have in short affected the education of the girl-children in Nasarawa state, leaving some of them in the middle of the road with nowhere and no one to turn to. Low self-esteem, psychological trauma and emotional torment became the order of the day, making education a luxury they cannot afford. It is therefore concluded that swift measures should be taken by the government and those that matter to curb the herders-farmers conflicts and rescue the girl-children in Nasarawa state. The paper recommended the following suggestions to improve girl-child education in Nasarawa state.

There should be re-enforcement of laws that have been made to curb the herder-farmer conflicts. The Federal Government of Nigeria should as a matter of urgency, ensure the immediate re-implementation of the Open grazing prohibition law in places where it has become redundant to stop the incessant killings and destruction of lives and property. Also, there should be continued sensitization and enlightenment of the populace in Nasarawa state on the need to formally educate the girl-children. Also, the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and indeed wealthy individuals should embark on reconstruction of buildings and other infrastructures destroyed in Nasarawa state in the course of the conflicts. This will encourage the people to send their children back to school. Scholarships should be given out to support the education of the girl-children, particularly the victims of herder-farmer conflict. In addition, programmes should be organized in the state to encourage, motivate and help girl-children who have been molested or sexually tortured in the course of the conflicts. Professionals should attend to those that suffered great psychological breakdown. The menace of child marriage needs urgent intervention by empowering the parents that their means of livelihood were destroyed and also bringing an end to incessant conflicts between the two agricultural groups. Finally, the internally displaced persons should be economically empowered to increase their financial buoyancy and subsequently be able to send their children to school, particularly the girl children.

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