

Interrogating the nature of local economy and communal conflict disruption: conceptual implications for sustainable food security in Ebonyi State

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Abstract

This paper examines Ebonyi State local economy and its Effium/Ezza-Effium communal conflict which has implications on food security of the state. The aim of the study is to explore Ebonyi State's local economic activities often disrupted by communal conflicts which affect food production and local sustainable development. The study utilises primary (online interview and transcription of historical video documentary) and secondary data with content analysis in its descriptive form as well as thematic explication of key issues, leveraging on ex post facto research design which helped to unravel historical background issues of the communal conflict, necessary in diagnosing the causes, effects and the future of the conflict situation. The entire study was anchored on the theory of Marxism apt in explaining the dynamics, impetus and implication of societal conflicts. The findings revealed that the conflict caused major devastation on the economic activities of the local area. Particularly, agricultural activities were disrupted, households, employees, traders and farmers were displaced, insecurity and proliferation of arms heightened, and ultimately, food scarcity and hike in food price ensued in the state especially its capital and the surrounding communities of the conflict area that witnessed massive influx of victims. The paper recommends among others, engagement of local stakeholders and authorities in timely arrest of causes of conflict, and to adopt inclusive resolution strategies in its dealings. Finally, it solicits for funding and placement of displaced farmers, and creation of safe environment for agriculture cum local economic activities.

Keywords: Agricultural production, communal conflict disruption, Ebonyi State, Effium/Ezza-Effium, food security, local economy, local stakeholders.

Introduction

Quest to ensure food security in Ebonyi State, Nigeria has been jeopardized by societal conflicts and crisis. Conflict is a state of disagreement between two or more parties that could involve high or low degree of violence or totally non-violence on a rare case. Conflict is an inevitable component of social interaction. Particularly, communal conflicts characterize African societies ranging from colonial arbitrary creation of state boundaries with issues of land dispute to internal contestation for scarce material resources.

Communal conflicts are actions or threats of a party against a territory – interests, rights, or privileges – of another different party, given presence of disparity over authority or power, economic issues, or, cultural beliefs and values (Coleman, 1957). Communal conflict disrupts community life including its economy. Traditional economy of African societies is agriculture. In Igboland, agriculture, among trade and non-agricultural production (Chukwu, 2015) is a primary occupation of many families especially in local areas (Equiano, 1969 cited in Okonkwo, et al., 2021). Similarly, agriculture is the major preoccupation of Ebonyi people who are mostly poor rural subsistent farmers, itinerant labourers and petty traders. Ebonyi rural majority are poor farmers (Ukeje, et al., 2020). Though a handful of these families operate on subsistence level (Iwuagwu, 1999), some others produce enough to supply to local markets and urban areas within the state. Needless to say that the whole SouthEast depends mostly on food supply from the North (Okonkwo,etal., 2021) especially food grain, agricultural supply of Ebonyi State highly depends on her local economy.

Local economy constitutes all the economic activities and interactions at the various localities such as agriculture, food production and trade. Household economic activities constitute major aspect of local economy and at the same time serve as a driver of its development (Seaman, et al., 2017). Communal conflict displaces households and disrupts their economic lives. Kimenyi et al. (2014) have observed that conflict has effect on agriculture in various ways including agricultural input and output; agricultural supply and distribution; and massive agricultural labour displacement. Conflict disruptions of agricultural activities lead to break in food supply with its attendant results of food scarcity, food price increase, rural-urban migration in search of job and safety, and eventual urban over-population.

The purpose of this study is to explore and explain the implication of communal conflict on the local economy of Ebonyi State and how this affects food security in the state. Messer et al. (1998) observed that agricultural production drastically falls at alarming rate of 12.3 percent per year estimation during a conflict situation. Conflict has impact on both macro and micro level of the broader economy. As Gyimah-Brempong and Corley (2005) has aptly shown, conflict has implication for negative trend on national economic growth and per capital income.

Particularly, Ebonyi State's local economies have been balkanized overtime by incessant communal conflicts. On January 22, 2021, a rift erupted in a Motor Park in Effium through a fight between workers of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) that degenerated into a full blown communal crisis. It was initially between a worker of Effium decent and another of Ezza-Effium. This conflict claimed lives, displaced many and wretched the entire community economic activities. This paper focuses on the outrageous communal conflict between Effium and Ezza-Effium people of Ohaukwu Local Government, Ebonyi State. This paper is structured in the following ways: following the introduction are both the methodology employed and the theoretical framework that spiced the entire work. The next section dealt with conceptual clarifications and thematic review of relevant literature; followed by the history of Effium and Ezza-Effium with the intention of diagnosing the remote and immediate cause of the conflict between them. Furthermore, the paper peruses empirical studies to identify more gaps in the literature. Then, it unveils the methods that underline the study and the theoretical framework upon which it is anchored. Next to the last is discussion of the findings; and then finally, the conclusion and recommendations follow. The following questions were drawn to guide the study:

1. What makeup Effium/Ezza-Effium local economy?
2. How did Effium/Ezza-Effium conflict disrupt their local economy?
3. How has communal conflict disruption of local economy affected the state food security efforts?

Material and methods

This study paper adopted descriptive qualitative research design (*ex post facto*). *Ex post facto* draws hugely from the wealth of history to expose the undertone of the current data. The study leveraged on both secondary and primary sources of data. The secondary sources are literature on the subject, government archives, journal publications, online publications and relevant books. The primary sources of data include in-depth interview of persons through online media, which helped to confirm historical antecedents to the conflict situation and the present reality. The scope of the study is Effium and Ezza-Effium communal conflict in Ebonyi State. It explored other conflicts in the state to justify its position on the study focus. Universal content analysis

techniques were utilised as well as thematic analysis of key issues. The whole study was anchored on Marxian theory based on its notion of material contestation among societal classes.

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts theory of Marxism in explicating the contour of local economy and communal conflict to understand the implication on food security in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Marxism is analytically fruitful and explanatorily robust, competent and comprehensive hence, its suitability for the study goes beyond contestation.

The Theoretical Origin, Identity and Analytical Tool

Marxism is both a theory and an analytical method that employs material interpretation of historical development of societies, captured as historical materialism, to unravel social conflict and class relations. Its dialectical process perspective reveals the way societies are transformed. This theory originated from a combined work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 19th century. As noted by Arora (2011), Lenin segmented and grouped the basic trenches of the theory into three. The first was its dialectical philosophy concerned with the dynamics of historical and dialectical materialism; the second was the economic insight, where he argued on surplus theory, critiqued and analyzed capitalism (a word coined by Karl Marx); the last was on state and revolution that captures their idea of revolution, freedom/alienation, class and class struggle, and socialist and communist society. Central to Marxist theorizing is the dialectic process. Dialectics is the logic of constant change; this explains that everything is imbued with inherent seed that manipulates it to change or metamorphosis (Suresh, 2010). Dialectics (materialism) is the building block of Marxist theorizing (Ezeibe, 2015). Dialectic process is summed up as thesis, antithesis and then synthesis captured in three laws by Engels as the law of unity and conflict of opposites; transformation of quantitative into qualitative change; and the negation of negation (Suresh, 2010).

The Theoretical Assumptions

The locus of Marxist theorizing is summarized as conflict. Therefore, the theory assumes that social conflict is inevitable in a society where resources are limited, and classes and differences exist (Ezeibe, 2015). Subject of conflict in any social setting is directly or indirectly related to the

material condition of man. It spans from desire to control more lands (Feudalism), acquire more material wealth or control more instrument of power in the society by man (Capitalism). The tendency to outwit others and corner material things of life by a man or men meet controversy and countermove (s) by some other man or men to reclaim and topple the first instrument of force. It is a continuous process that leads to transformation of the society in the positive or in the negative direction.

The Application of the theory

Communal conflict is inspired by material condition of man. It is part of the societal conflict explained by Marx and Engels. Communities struggle over many things that have compound name and common denomination as material. Communities represent classes and interests. Quest to satisfy their cravings, appropriate more wealth and secure their privileged material position leads to clash because as one moves for these, another does same, hence, the clash and contradiction. In a communal conflict situation, subjects of discord usually include land dispute; community leadership contestation; land boundary adjustments; and landed property claim among others as seen in the study areas.

Conceptual and Thematic Literature Review of Key Terms and Themes

Communal Conflict and Violence

Communal conflict is a conflict by members of one or more communities. The participants of communal conflict identify as groups based in their different communities. According to Brosche and Elfversson (2012 p. 35). Community identity is an identification by a subjective group on the basis of shared basic value and culture. Elfversson (2013) identified that communal conflicts are usually within shores of a state. However, records have shown that the scope of communal conflict exceeds this. For example, in Ebonyi State, communities located close to interstate boundaries experience conflict situations too (see Orinya, 2016; Akam & Ojen, 2020).

Communal conflict often is violent in nature. Violence that is communal in nature is internecine, demonic and dehumanizing such that it is heavily emotional driven targeting opposite group to exterminate them with little or no option for resolution (Nnoli, 2003). It usually involves mobilization of offensive and defensive instrument of war that is lethal in form. In traditional

African setting, it even transcends physical to spiritual weapon mobilization. Communities go into diabolic media to confront and win the opponents. Nnoli (2003) notes that it is has to do with violent confrontations between ethnics, villages, nations, peoples, states, and religious groups within a political setting. As a conflict by those who share common identity, violence that is community based is “defined in ethnic, communal, regional and religious terms, either pitched against themselves in deadly confrontation, or against the central government” (Egwu, 2006 p. 408).

Conflict, Insecurity and Food Security challenges in Nigeria

Food security concerns, issues, and challenges, and government approach to related intervention policies, have sustained attention and reference among many scholars in Nigeria (see Ukeje et al., 2023; Ukeje et al., 2022; Nnaji et al., 2022a; Nnaji et al., 2022b). Several governments of Nigeria have at one time or the other initiated policy programmes targeted at arresting food insecurity in the country, however, these efforts have been highly challenged by insecurity situations (Nwangbo, et al. 2022) that claim life of farmers thereby causing drastic reduction in farm productivity increasing fear of hunger (Eme, et al., 2014). Food security refers to a condition that permits everybody to be able to access sufficient food to enable them live productive and healthy lives (World Bank, 1986). Food security depends on production of agriculture, donations and imports of food, among others (Maxwell & Frankenberger, 1992). Food security has three folds namely, food affordability, accessibility and availability (World Bank, 2007). Food affordability is challenged by limited supply of food to the markets. Following law of demand and supply, few supplies with many demands leads to high price of food items hence, lack of its affordability. Accessibility is concerned with how many people are able to get the food they want and when needed. Insecurity issues leading to close of interstate boundaries and closure of inter country border hinder the people from getting the food they want. On availability, when few farmers produce and producers are being killed, scarcity is bound to play out. Agricultural producers population are constantly been depleted by conflicts and insecurity. Farms are destroyed by herdsman and enemy groups in a communal conflict destroy farms as well. All these pose food security challenges to the state since the farmers could no longer go to their farm land freely due to fear of been killed or kidnapped by herders or even the warring faction in the conflict prone areas of Effium and Eziulo

Local Economy and Agriculture: Challenges and Insights

The emphasis of the three tiers of government on rural development is right and serves as a pointer to a fact that they make-up the most important sector of the economy of Nigeria (Omeje & Ogbu, 2015). As has been established, rural communities major occupation is agriculture occupying a central place in local economic activities. With possession of large farm lands and fertile grounds, prospect of food security is high. Many local actors major in subsistent farming due to lack of fund to engage in large production. This is a pointer to the extent poverty hinders agricultural efforts of these actors. Governments of the world including that of Nigeria initiate policy programmes targeted at funding farmers through loans and grants. Ebonyi State for example, has executed many agricultural cum poverty reduction programmes over time with attendant experiences (see Ukeje, et al., 2020; Ukeje et al. 2020; Idike, et al., 2020; Ukeje & Chukwuemeka, 2021). However, as the case with Nigeria, these efforts are ridiculed by corruption as real farmers fail to get the funding. Political farmers and brief case farmers working in government houses receive the funding while the real farmers are short-changed. Again, successful farmers who obtain government loans suffer to pay back because the government do not make provision to protect their farms from herdsmen activities. It is an irony where the government lends out money to farmers and still allows herders to raid the farms. Governments neglect the challenges of the local economy while pursuing mainstream national economic agenda. Notwithstanding, local economic activities serve as a strong background to success of national economic life. The food scarcity and hike in price of food materials have a link with the disruptions going on in the local economies.

Historical facts and antecedents of Conflicts in Ebonyi State

Communal Crisis and Societal Conflict in Ebonyi State

The first outbreak of communal conflict in the area that later became part of Ebonyi State is traceable to 1925 between Ngbo people of Ohaukwu Local Government, Ebonyi State and Igala (Agila) of Idoma speaking community of Ado Local Government, Benue State (Orinya, 2016), far before Nigeria's political independence. The interstate boundary (land) between Benue and Ebonyi which also served as the then defunct boundary between the Southern and Northern protectorates during the colonial era, has remained a source of conflict between the people of

Igala and Ngbo (Orinya, 2016). There have been punctuated internecine war between the two Peoples. Depletion of population of both sides, displacement of farmers and forced migration have been the resultant cases.

Another protracted conflict in Ebonyi State has been the fifty-two year Ezillo and Ezillo-Ezza dispute (Orji, 2014). Ezillo is one among seven sub-ethnic groups in Ishielu Local Government, Ebonyi State. Ezillo, Ngbo and Ezzangbo trace their ancestral leanage to Mgbom Eze located in Ishieke Izzi in the present Ikwo and Ebonyi Local Government Areas (Orji, 2014). The ancestral linkages mandate the people to avoid bloodshed among themselves (Enuke, 2010). In the early 1930s, Ezillo people invited Ezza-Ezillo from both Ezza North and Ezza South of the same present local governments in Ebonyi State to come settle their land dispute between them and Ngbo people at Egu-Echara (Ugbo at al, 2008). The Ezza people, however, continued their occupation of the land even when the dispute had ended. Later, the relationship between the two people began to suffer and animosity became the order of the day. The situation was that of settler-indigene rivalry. Whereas there had been remote conflict scenerios over time since the 52 years, the one that commanded confrontation by the peoples was that of May 10, 2008 (Orji, 2014). It started with an altercation between an Ezza man and Ezillo boy over telephone booth erection at a motor park known as Isinkpuma (Orji, 2014). Lives were lost and economic life was threatened.

Another conflict case in the state is that of Adadama (Abi and Ipolo community, Yala, Cross River) and Amagu/Ndiagu (Ikwo and Izzi, Ebonyi State). Cross River share boundary with Ebonyi State at several points: one is between Adadama and Ikwo; another is between Obubra and Ikwo; the next one is between Obubra and Abakaliki; last one is between Izzi and Yala (Akam & Ojen, 2020). The subject of this conflict is land dispute. The peoples have failed to agree over the boundary between them though formal instruments have been mobilised to settle the case. Another conflict that disrupted community life was that of Ikwo and Izzi that escalated into the hub of economic and social life of the state, Abakaliki before the second half of 2021. People were hunted in their houses in the town. The conflict had begun in the respective villages initially.

Communal conflicts that have bedeviled the state are of two kinds: intrastate and interstate. Intrastate conflicts involve indigenous peoples of the state fighting each other while interstate

conflicts involve communities in Ebonyi fighting those of other states they share boundary with. Common subjects of conflicts have been land and boundary dispute, and resources allocation. In most cases, formal instruments mobilised to settle the rivalries prove abortive. The population of the state is constantly being depleted and organised economic activities at the communities become heavily challenged. Particularly, the conflict activities disrupt farming activities in the localities of the state leading to food scarcity and insecurity.

The Historicity of Effium and Ezza-Effium people

The origin of Effium people is traceable to Ukelle Kingdom in Cross River State, Nigeria. Ukelle people are indigenes of Yala Local Government located in Cross River. Some part of Ukelle people also live in Utonkon, Benue State. The Ukelle people are therefore scattered across these two states. Over a century ago, there was a war that erupted in Ukelle Kingdom where many clans were wiped out. A group of people known as Effium clan primarily identified as itinerant hunters escaped the onslaught and camped in a land away from the war. However, they met unfriendly neighbours in the new place namely, the people of Izzi Nnodo and Ngbo Ejeogu (both in Ebonyi State). The unfriendliness threatened their new found land and given to the fact that they had lost warriors through many wars, they sought assistance from Ezza people known for their fierceness in war to enable them fight the new enemies.

Nama Oke, an Ezza-ezekuna warrior, led a detachment of men to rescue Effium people. The price for the services of Nama Oke and his men was absolute and perpetual irrevocable rights over parts of their land. They received this after the war. Nama Oke, his warriors and their kith and kin lived and served as buffers. The people of Effium reached an irrevocably binding covenant with the warriors for the rest of their posterity sealed by planting an Ogbu tree for Ezza-Effium people in Uturu Effium playground known today as "Ngamgbo Amnaberu Ezza Ogbu". The terms of the covenant included that both parties that is Effium and Ezza-Effium shall live in peace and shall not see each other's blood.

Effium and Ezza-Effium Crisis: The State of Things Now

Against the historical backdrop above, relationship became sour and conflict began to arise among the people. In 2002, during an election period, crisis shook the land and claimed 40 lives in Ugedede village. There had been internecine relationship and suspicion among the people since.

Effium people had been claiming that the people they gave living space have been encroaching on other facets of the community life while Ezza-Effium counterclaim that Effium people are strangers in Ebonyi State and that there is no way they are traceable to their Progenitor, His Eminence Ekumenyi, whose first son was Ezekuna their ancestor.

The last straw that broke the camel's back was the January 22, 2021 rift at a motor park in Effium between the divergent groups. A man of Effium decent and another of Ezza-Effium who were both workers of National Union of Road Transport Workers had disagreement. This resulted into a fight in the park that later escalated into a full blown communal conflict among the people, unveiling the internal hatred and internecine relationship that had existed among them coated with false friendliness. Scores were killed and these numbers were hardly recorded. It was brutal and outrageous. Hundreds of people were kidnapped and killed: some stocked in wells and others were maimed in the streets. Security officials sent by the state were even been attacked by the people.

The rift was an opportunity for a war that had been 80 percent hatched in Benue State because part of the area had been under dispute between Ebonyi State and Benue State communities. The non-combatants made their ways to the neighbouring communities of Ngbo, Izzi and Ezzangbo, while a host of others ran to the state capital, Abakaliki. Farms were destroyed; trading activities came to a stand still and production of any kind stopped. The people scattered around the state sought for shelter, food and new life. The invasion of other communities by these displaced persons has brought more economic hardship to the state entirely. As farms had been destroyed and agricultural activities stopped, food became more scarce and many employed were displaced.

Empirical Review of Related Studies

Orinya (2016) did work a on “Communal Conflict, Internal Displacement and Livelihood Security: An Analysis of the Agila Situation”. The purpose was to analyse the impact of population displacement arising from the Agila/Ngbo communal conflict on livelihood security in Agila community. The finding was that the livelihood security of the Agila community life has been badly affected by the population displacement. The recommendation was that the

government as well as donors should make provision for humanitarian aid and resolution mechanism to end the protracted conflict.

Orji (2014) in his work “Communal Conflicts in Nigeria: an Examination of Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo Conflict of Ebonyi State, (1982-2012)” sought to understand the factors behind the protracted Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflict. He explored secondary data and utilized universal content analysis research techniques to unravel the causes of the conflict. He adopted historical research design that enabled him to trace the origin of the peoples and how the conflict began. Theory of Marxism and pluralism were adopted. The findings revealed that issues such as indigenship, land ownership, cultural denigration, competition for resources and measures taken by the government managing the conflicts were responsible for the conflict. Recommendation among others was that people driven management resolution mechanism (mixt or hybrid model) should be adopted. This should involve harmonised (integrated) conflict management model with membership of large spectrum of different categories of stakeholders (such as the church, women, the youth and Elder councils), rather than few leaders that does not even take recognition of gender balance.

Akam and Ojem (2020) carried out a study on “Inter/Intra State Communal Conflict and Conflict Management in Cross River and Ebonyi States of Nigeria”. The study specifically examined the strategies put in place to resolve communal conflict between Adadama in Abi and Ipolo community in Yala Local Government of Cross River State and Amagu in Ikwo and Ndiagu in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi state to provide remedial alternative for sustainable peaceful coexistence among these disputant areas of the two states. The study utilized primary source of data and analysed them using thematic analysis. The finding shows that the long lasting conflicts between Adadama/Amagu over land boundary issues have adversely affect the wellbeing of individual or rural people. From the study, it was recommended that Nigeria Boundary Commission should revisit earlier report and reimplement the resolutions stated therein. The same could be applied to others in the nearby locations of conflicts.

Kimenyi, et al. (2014) carried out a study on the “The impact of conflict and political instability on agricultural investments in Mali and Nigeria”. The objective of the work was to analyze the causes of ongoing violence in Mali and Nigeria that continue to undermine agricultural productivity and investment. Terrorism was observed as one of the causes and there is possibility for its containment. The paper recommended carrot and stick approach to resolving the situation.

Eme et al. (2014) in their work “Food insecurity in Nigeria: a thematic exposition” sought to unravel challenges that bedevil food security in Nigeria. They found that insecurity epitomised by herdsmen and Boko haram, and climate change undermine laudable efforts of the government to ensure food security. They concluded that without addressing these challenges, food insecurity will persist in Nigeria for a long time.

Ololo, K.O (2017) carried out a study on the effects of inter communal conflicts in Nigeria, the case of Takum Local government area of Taraba state Nigeria where the study unraveled the causes and consequences of communal conflict in Takum LGA especially between the Indigenes and settlers. The study conclude that the high level of mistrust between Fulani settlers and the Takum people are fueling the communal crisis in Takum which has hampered farming activities thereby causing food insecurity in Takum and other neighbouring communities in Taraba state.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This session thematically and succinctly presented and content/thematic analysed secondary and primary data gathered in the study guided by the research questions.

Effium and Ezza-Effium Local Economy

The local economy of Effium and Ezza-Effium are made up of agricultural activities, trading and petty processing of food crop and other petty economic productions. The main economic activities of the communities are agriculture and trade. As local communities co-habiting a shared area of land close to Ebonyi State border with Benue State, their major occupation is agricultural farming.

We have villages in our communities, when the crisis started, we ran to the villages.

However, the problem spread down to the villages and then the people ran away and deserted everything (Respondent 6)

It can be inferred that the people ran away and deserted their farm lands and businesses. This confirms the words of Equiano (1969) cited in Okonkwo, et al.(2021), that Igbo societies are mainly agrarian and that their family depend on this as their main occupation. Chukwu (2015) supported this view that though the people engage in petty trade and production, their most significant preoccupation is agriculture. Iwuagwu (1999) more deeply observed that this kind of

agriculture is mainly subsistence. Moreover, as primary data in this study has shown, the peoples under study produce agricultural products enough that serve their communities and other communities including the state capital.

Local Economy and Conflict Disruption

It was drawn that the crisis that ensued among Effium/Ezza-Effium disrupted local economic activities in the same crisis area.

The fight started in our motor park in Effium. Six persons were killed at the park. That was how riot and fightings began and spread to the streets and villages (Respondent 17).

From this, it is found that trading and commercial activities at the economic hub of the communities were first disrupted by the killings of the six persons. As it spread to the streets, the people began to run for their lives.

This school is where we had been as you can see. It all started when we came back from our prayer mountain. God had shown me that there would war in the land; so I called my church members to start the prayer. When the prayer ended we all went home. Just one or the days I was walking out of our compound when some men stopped my husband and began searching him. Some other people around began to say 'no leave him, na nwayi amuma husband be that', they left us from there we started running as people were asking us if we did not know what was happening. Since, we had been in this school and I am 9 months pregnant now no hospital and no midwife here (Respondent 10).

As can be drawn from the woman, everybody including church members and pastors ran away from their houses, churches, shops, and farms. Overtime, the community became ghost town and no economic life.

Many people died in my family. I am run for my life (Respondent 07)

We ran to our neighbouring community to avoid death (Respondent 12)

Our local market were we come to buy and sell has been scattered nobody is thinking about market again. We are running for our lives (Respondent 20)

All these confirm that the communities were rendered into shambles.

We had been leaving in peace together. We have history that binds us to live peacefully. Our chiefs (Ezza) were being installed by the Ogabaidu of Effium. I was born in the year 1935, so since then I had know this place. We intermarry each other (Respondent 1)

We have been together. It's that we Ezza people have been having progress and as a result attract hatred from Effium people (Respondent 18).

For me, we never had any issue we had been living together. It was 2002 during an election period that crisis started 40 people were killed in Ugede village. In 2016 it happened again. Now, the war was why I ran to the Abakaliki town and left my land. We don't want Ezza people again in our land. Let them leave (Respondent 15).

We are Ezza people, we ran to the nearby village, we came back and there are army people. They tell to stay: no problem again. The security dey strong for here. But no market; nothing nothing (Respondent 30)

Communal Conflict and Ebonyi State Food Security

We are here in Abakaliki because we ran from Effium crisis. We had no cloths; what we are wearing was given to us by people (Respondent 19)

We are living in this church now. They gave us a place to stay. They are feeding us. (Respondent 25)

We have no place to stay; we are staying under this bridge. We are hungry; no food. We left our things and ran (Respondent 29).

The internally displaced persons and conflict victims found their way to churches in Ngbo, Ezzangbo and Abakaliki especially headquarters and big churches. These churches rallied for

food and clothing for the victims. The members of the churches were stripped of their livelihood so as to feed the victims. The researcher had the privilege of interacting with these people. They poorly fed as it was not easy to cater for them due to food scarcity. Others who could not run to churches gathered under Ezzangbo flyover where they made their temporal abode. Many of them had no money on them to buy food. They helplessly strayed around the streets. It created avenue for crime in the host communities.

Discussion

Local economies of Ebonyi State have been heavily threatened by communal conflicts and crisis over time. The conflict situation left devastating impact on the people and their occupation. Drawing from the case under study, the Effium/Ezza-Effium communal conflict, many issues have been unraveled that militate against the food security efforts of the state. The rift that started first in a motor park kiddled a fire of conflict that gulped the entire communities. This period was when farmers were preparing to cultivate their seasonal crops and vegetables. Communal conflict is dangerous as each party with their instruments of war fare targets to exterminate their opponent. Effium/Ezza-Effium communities were reduced to shambles by the harvoc of conflict. Scores numbering hundreds died, while many were displaced and others maimed. The scores dead were farmers who were supposed to be contributing their quota to the economic development of their respective communities. Those who escaped death found the entire land unsafe for agricultural and other economic activities. Hence, the entire community could not contribute their quota of food supply to the state. Moreover, those who escaped alive became economic burden to the communities they ran into. The problems caused by the conflict could be summarily itemized as following though not conclusive:

- i. Death of able bodied men and women who were actors in the local economies of the two warring communities;
- ii. Infiltration of the crisis zone by external actors from the neighbouring state to exploit opportunities of the war situation;
- iii. Opportunity to inflict mayhem by external actors from other states who had harboured hatred for the warring community;
- iv. Displacement of agriculturists, traders and producers in the localities;

- v. Infiltration of the local communities by the victims of the conflict leading to the insecurity of the host communities.
- vi. Food scarcity caused by destruction of farm land, agricultural storages, provision stalls, and local markets.
- vii. Infiltration of the state capital by the conflict victims thereby causing price hike of food stuff, population congestion, and crime increase in the town.
- viii. It reawakened hatred for the warring parties by their neighbouring communities who either take sides or condemn the reason for the conflict.

The parties to the conflict have failed to agree that any of them has wronged the other and needs to apologize to make peace. Orderliness is now enforced on the entire communities by the state instrument of coercion. The police and army officials have been enforcing decorum in the communities. Normal life is still far from the communities.

This study shows that the conflict between Effium and Ezza-Effium has disrupted and disorganized local economic life of the people. This has had wider economic implication of ridiculing the effort of the state to ensure food security in the entire state.

Conclusion

Communal conflict is one of the major reasons for the food insecurity being experienced in the Ebonyi State against government policies and programmes targeted at arresting the same. This study focused on local economy and communal conflict and sought to explain how the later variable affected the former to induce food insecurity in Ebonyi State. The study confirmed that lives were lost through the conflict while a host of others escaped to neighbouring communities. The implication was that economic activities including agriculture in the conflict area came to a zero state. Hence, the agricultural contribution of the communities to the state was affected. The communities around the warring communities suffered setback and challenges resulting from the conflict. By and large food insecurity resulted in the state due to the communal conflict.

Recommendations

Against the backdrop and drawing from the research objective/research questions, the following recommendations are made:

- a) Remote causes to conflict situation should always be nipped in the bud to stop conflict from occurring;
- b) Local stakeholders in a communities should be identified and engaged in inclusive resolution of conflict as they occupy powerful position to determine conflict in their localities;
- c) The government should have record of all conflict issues in the state and set-up committee to resolve them and not wait till a conflict situation before intervening; hence government of Ebonyi state should be proactive her conflict management strategy.
- d) Traditional rulers and local authorities should be sensitized on the implications of conflict and given orientation on the best way to arrest situations in the communities.
- e) The state security should take adequate security of the communities and avoid escalation of fights and conflicts.
- f) The security should prevent proliferation of arms which is motivates people to fight.
- g) Farmers and farms should be protected in conflict situations to avoid food scarcity.
- h) The government should proactively support farmers with funds, equipments and other resources to facilitate agriculture;
- i) Displaced farmers should be placed again to their rights and privileges to enable them continue their occupation as that would contribute to food security efforts of the state.
- j) Government should meet periodically to dialogue with youth leaders, community leaders, traditional rulers and Faith base organizations in the area on the issues that affect them, seek their opinion and suggestions where necessary. This measure will give everybody in the warring factions' sense of belonging.

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