

# TRENDS IN CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY OF PASTORALISTS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE FARMER-HERDER CONFLICTS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Communities in Sokoto have experienced violence between farmers and pastoralists. The latter are divided into sedentary pastoralists, who are Nigerians and mostly herd in communities in Sokoto, and migratory pastoralists, who are transhumant herders migrating into Nigeria through the Sokoto-Niger Republic border in Tangaza local government area and other bordering communities. The destinations of migratory pastoralists in Nigeria have remained the same to this very day; however, there has been a change in the routes and migratory patterns. The alteration of the historical migratory trends and patterns can be attributed to encroachment of grazing routes by farmers, which have caused pastoralists to neglect grazing and seek alternative routes. Hence, roads and farmlands are used for passage. In addition, security challenges in Zamfara state, cattle rustling, superstitious traditional beliefs, unlawful allocation of grazing reserves by politicians for farming, and nighttime herding are other factors that have caused the change in migration patterns.

The population of pastoralists migrating into Nigeria has increased significantly when compared to that of the past. This can be attributed to the increase in the population of pastoralists and livestock, and desertification in the Sahel which is forcing more pastoralists into Nigeria. Though the relationship between migratory pastoralists and farmers has been hostile in nature, the same cannot be said of the relationship between sedentary and migratory pastoralists, which has been peaceful and mutual. The continuous dispute caused by changes in migratory trends have tended to spark cycles of reprisal attacks and can cause regional tensions with the bordering country of Niger Republic.

## **Key Takeaways:**

1. The population of migratory pastoralists moving into Nigeria has significantly increased when compared to past figures. Also, the population of Nigerian pastoralists immigrating into Niger Republic has also increased because, in the past, they usually move to Zamfara state, but due to the security challenge in the state, they now move into Niger Republic.
2. The growing insecurity and cyclical attacks are mostly experienced during the migration period of the migratory pastoralists. The migratory pastoralist usually move into communities of Tangaza LGA by October- at the end of the raining season, and exit through the same route by June- before the start of the raining season;
3. Increasing population, desertification of the Sahel and regional instability are some of the factors influencing altered migration trends, and in turn, the farmer/herder conflict;

4. Encroachment of grazing routes, superstitious traditional beliefs, night time grazing, neglect of grazing routes, entrusting of livestock to children herders, cattle rustling, unlawful allocation of grazing reserves for farming, destruction of farms, abandonment of past traditional practices are some of the drivers of the farmer/herder conflict;
5. The violence in the community is usually between migratory pastoralists and the farmers, and the clashes are predominantly violent. However, the conflict between sedentary pastoralists and farmers is mostly non-violent and easily de-escalated. There is no case of violent conflict between migratory and sedentary pastoralists;
6. In Sokoto state, unlike other places where ethno-religious narrative has been given to the farmer-herder crisis; the violent clashes is between Fulani and Hausa whom are both into farming and herding. Hence, the crisis is neither tribal or religious in nature as both parties are predominantly Muslims.

**Key Recommendations:**

1. Improved security for herders and farmers should be available to combat and prosecute the perpetrators of violence and persons with illegal possession of firearms;
2. Only pastoralists with ECOWAS International Transhumance Certificate (ITC) should be allowed passage on Nigerian soil;
3. Strict sanctions should be meted on persons who encroach on grazing routes, follow unauthorized grazing routes during herding, or tamper with the lands in the grazing reserves;
4. Regional cross-border cooperation should be strengthened with the neighboring country of Niger Republic. Both governments of Nigeria and Niger Republic should collaborate to organize information, communication, enlightenment, training and education campaigns and programs directed at transhumant herdsman and the different actors involved in transhumance in the departure, transit and host zone of transhumant herds;
5. Operational readiness of rural-based police and other security units should be improved and communication and collaboration with local authorities encouraged. Also, the use of cattle tracking technology should be deployed;
6. The governments of Nigeria should work in close coordination with neighboring countries both to manage human and cattle movements across borders and to fight illicit arms

trafficking. It should also strengthen regional cooperation in combating desertification and mitigating the impact of climate change;

7. Traditional practices and conflict resolution mechanisms should be strengthened; this should be consensus oriented, participatory, equitable and inclusive, transparent and follow the rule of law. There is a need to identify all pastoralists migrating into Nigeria through the Niger-Nigeria borders at the point of entrance and exit;
8. There is an urgent need to reform and improve grazing arrangements because open grazing is becoming gradually impracticable considering the danger faced by herders and farmers during migration of herds;
9. The migration of pastoralists in search of grazing pasture is motivated by climate change and environmental factors in the Sahel. Improved efforts should be put in place to tackle desertification and climate change to prevent lapse and relapse of violence associated with transhumant herding.

## INTRODUCTION

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Human diversity and differences are the major causes of conflicts; though conflict is a part of life, violence is abnormal, hence the need for deliberate efforts to maintain relationships without resulting into violence. The farmer-herder relationship in the past is symbiotic, with both farming and herding constituting an integral part of our culture. In recent times however, there have been sparks of violent conflict in Sokoto state between farmers and pastoralists; which can be characterized as conflict motivated by competition for limited resources, disequilibrium of resources distribution, and quest for survival of livelihood and culture.

The farmer and pastoralists conflicts is not peculiar to Nigeria, as clashes has been recorded in some parts of South Sudan, Mali, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo; and the conflicts in Sokoto state are non-linear and have a tendency of spreading to other parts of the nation and bordering countries if not quickly nipped in the bud. The increase in the population of migratory pastoralists, change in migratory trends, environmental changes and security concerns have led communities into violent clashes as there is an increased demand on resources and unpreparedness of communities to host additional pastoralists or change the status quo. There calls for people centered, comprehensive and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection of all people, communities and foster regional cooperation.

# CHARACTERIZATION OF STUDY COMMUNITIES

Sokoto state is located in North West Nigeria and has 23 local government areas; sharing border with Niger Republic in Tangaza, Illela, Isa, Sabon Birnin, Gada and Gudu LGAs. According to the 2006 population census, the state has a population of 3,702,676 and a total land mass of 28,232,375sq kilometers. Originally named “Sakkwato”, which means “market” from the Arabic word “Suk”, the state is famous for being one of the hottest places in the world with an average temperature of 28.3 °C (82.9 °F). Sokoto is located in the Sahel, lies near the River Rima and River Sokoto confluence characterized by small isolated hills and sandy savannah, short duration of rainfall usually between June and October (with mean annual rainfall of 500 mm and 1,300 mm), and longer dry season between November and May. Majority of the population are into farming, with heavy reliance on the vast fadama land of the Sokoto-Rima River systems for cultivation, especially dry season farming. The state comprises mainly of Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups.

## Characterization of Communities by Nationality, Ethnic Composition, Types and Nature of Economic Activities

This research is focused on the Tangaza local government area of Sokoto state with the aim to determine the trends in cross-border pastoral migration and the role thereof in Farmer-Herder Conflicts in the state. Tangaza local government is located in the northern parts of Sokoto state, with a total population of 113,853 as recorded in the 2006 national population census and has a total land of mass 2,477 km<sup>2</sup>. The study area has three districts namely; Gidan Madi, Gwangwano District and Tangaza districts, with the local government headquarters located in Gidan Madi. The residents of Tangaza are mostly from the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups, with Hausa being the predominant language. Besides Hausa and Fulani, there are Zabarmawa and Tuareg minorities in the communities along the border areas. Locally, Tangaza shares its boundary with Illela, Binji, Wamakko, Gudu, Gwadabawa and Kware local government areas in Sokoto State. There is a small quantity of foreigners from the Benin Republic, Niger Republic, Mali and Togo residing in communities. These foreigners have a long history of residing in the communities, with few being periodic visitors. The foreigners in the communities are mostly petty traders, cobblers, food vendors, farm laborers, drivers, and individuals seeking greener pasture in Nigeria. About 80% of the population of Tangaza is engaged in crop or livestock agriculture, with a majority being at subsistence level in remote villages and a few large-scale farmers who cultivate primarily for sale. The crops cultivated for subsistence are millet, Guinea corn, cassava, groundnut, rice, sweet potatoes and maize, while garlic, tomatoes, beans, rice, onions, sugarcane, water melon and sweet potatoes are crops mostly cultivated for sale by large scale farmers. The sheep is the predominant species reared by sedentary herders in the communities followed closely by goats and cattle. The Sheep reared are mostly Uda breed, while the cattle and goats are the Rahaji and White breed respectively. Although the majority of the communities in Tangaza are farming communities,

approximately 30% of the farmers are also into livestock keeping, however, mostly at the subsistence level.

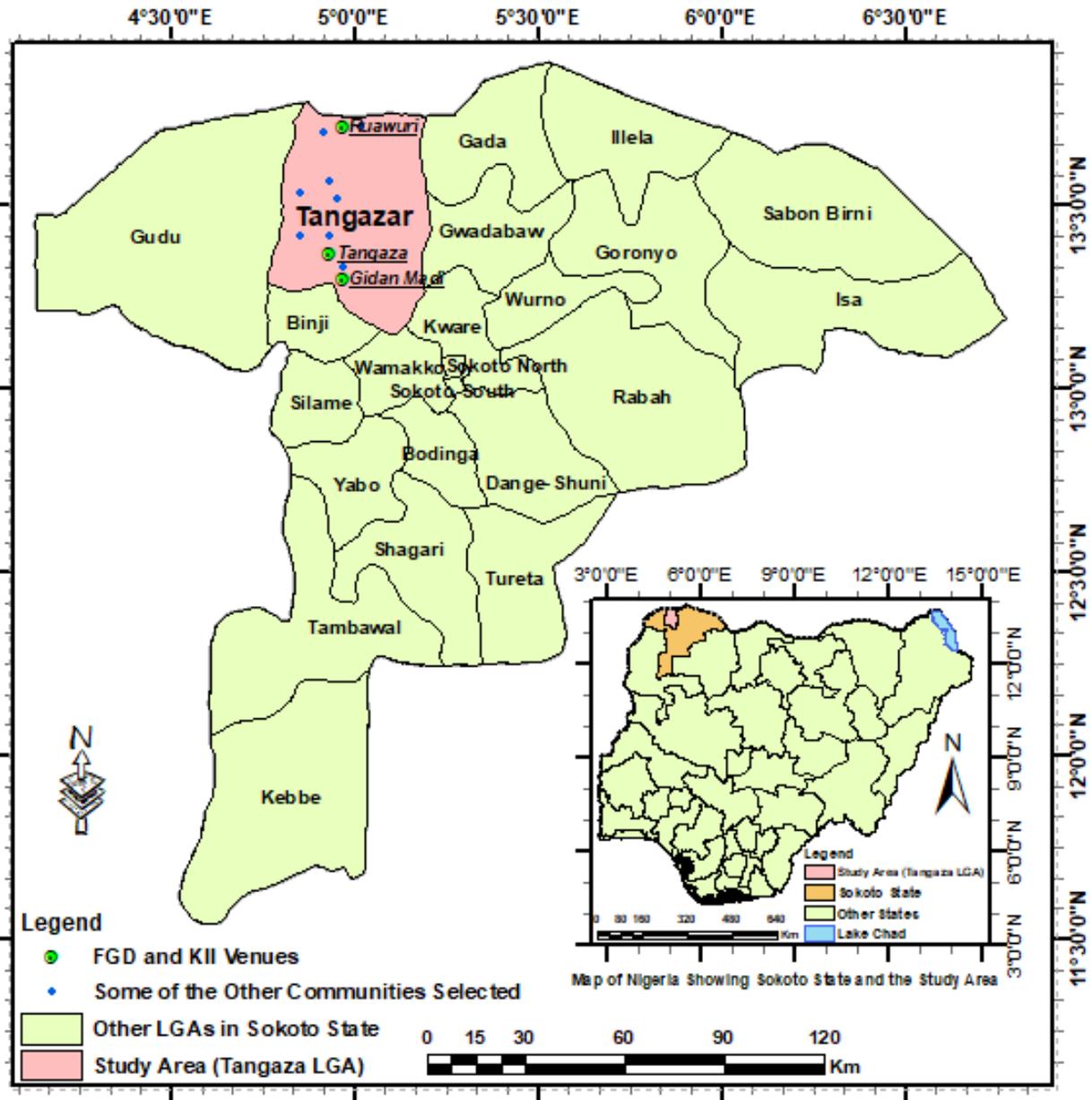


Figure 1: Map of Sokoto State Showing the Study Area and Some of the Selected Communities

In recent times, there have been recorded cases of clashes between the farmers and herders in Sokoto, especially in communities that share a border with the neighboring Niger Republic. Tangaza shares a border with Niger in communities under the Gwangwano district, and the most

commonly used passage by migrants is the Ruwa Wuri communities of Gwangono district. The violent conflicts within the communities are mostly ascribed to foreigners migrating from Niger Republic into local communities.

The objectives of the research include: the characterization of the farming and pastoral communities in Tangaza LGA in terms of nationality, ethnic compositions and economic activities of the residents; determination of the pastoral migration in the study area in terms of origin, destinations and number of migrants involved; and determination of the nature, drivers and occurrence trends of farmers-herders conflicts in the study area during herders migrations.

<b>SN</b>	<b>Communities</b>	<b>Districts</b>
1	Bagurawo	Gidan Madi
2	Falali	Gidan Madi
3	<b>Gidan Madi</b>	<b>Gidan Madi</b>
4	<b>Ginjo</b>	<b>Gidan Madi</b>
5	Jangilma	Gidan Madi
6	Kwannawa	Gidan Madi
7	Malgaje	Gidan Madi
8	Sildeyo	Gidan Madi
9	<b>Sutti</b>	<b>Gidan Madi</b>
10	Tamajiyo	Gidan Madi
11	Yami	Gidan Madi
12	<b>Bagida</b>	<b>Gwangwano</b>
13	<b>Ruwauri</b>	<b>Gwangwano</b>
14	<b>Tsoni</b>	<b>Gwangwano</b>
15	<b>Ayama</b>	<b>Tangaza</b>
16	BarkaTugel	Tangaza
17	Belori	Tangaza
18	<b>Gohono</b>	<b>Tangaza</b>
19	<b>Labsani</b>	<b>Tangaza</b>
20	Runtowa	Tangaza
21	<b>Sokwoi</b>	<b>Tangaza</b>
22	<b>Tangaza</b>	<b>Tangaza</b>

Names of the communities samples from the three districts constituting Tangaza LGA (the locations of the highlighted communities are shown in Figure 1)

## Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative data of the research were obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and Key Informant Interviews (KII) which was conducted in the same selected communities in

Tangaza local government area. The interviews and discussions cover traditional leaders, leaders of farming and herding communities in the districts of Tangaza.

Informant/ Group ID	Name of District	Name of Informant/ Group
1	Gidan Madi District	A Group of Traditional Council Members
2		A Group of Herders From Various Communities
3		Abubakar Suleiman from Ayama Community
4		Village Head of Labsani (Darai of Labsani)
5		Dabran Ruwa Wuri (Village Head of Ruwa Wuri)
6	Gwangwano District	Idris Khalid from Tsoni Community
7		Magaji Umaru from Tsoni Community
8		Lawali Ahmadu from Bagida Community
9		Magaji Bello from Bagida Community
10		A group of Traditional Council Members
11	Tangaza District	A group of Herders from Various Communities
12		Abubakar Yammi from Yammi Community
13		Alhaji Mai Kudi from Jangilma Community
14		LabboJibo from Sutti Community
15		Marafan Tangaza

*Names of Key Informants and FGD Groups from the three districts constituting Tangaza LGA*

## TRENDS OF PASTORAL MIGRATION IN TANGAZA

### Pastoral Migration from Niger Republic to Nigeria

In recent times, there has been an increase in the population of migratory pastoralists in communities in Tangaza and Sokoto at large. The cross-border movement of pastoralists to other nations predates the ongoing farmer-herder crisis in Nigeria and historically, has become a part of the herders' annual traditions. As a part of the ECOWAS transhumant protocol of 1998 and ECOWAS protocol of free and fair movement of goods and persons in West Africa, migratory pastoralists have free movement across the West Africa region in search of pasture. The herders constitute two groups; the sedentary pastoralists who are predominantly Nigerians, and migratory pastoralists who are mostly foreigners migrating into Sokoto, Nigeria through the Sokoto-Niger border. Increasing pressures on arable land as a result of increasing population, particularly as

more people turn to crop farming, radical shifts in economic and climatic conditions; has forced farmers and pastoralists or transhumant herders to compete for diminishing resources.

There exists seasonal migration by pastoralist particularly at the beginning of the raining season and during the harvest time; this practice is an age-old practice among the herders. The migratory pastoralists are mostly coming from Adar, Kwanni, Dogon Dutse, Dosu, and Tawa (Aduwa, Kiriya, Chinyasu, Bagaji) communities of Niger Republic. The migratory pastoralists usually herd with their livestock which comprises mainly of cattle of Rahaji breed, followed by sheep of Uda and Kamba breed, and white goats. Tuaregs who usually rear camels also migrate into Tangaza in previous years, but the population of Tuaregs migrating into the communities in recent times has reduced. The migratory pastoralists arrive into communities in Sokoto at the beginning of harvest (end of raining season, usually around October) when there are still fresh grasses for their livestock, and at that period, the dry season is beginning to approach in Niger Republic. These migratory pastoralists usually travel to Zamfara state, Niger State, Kwara state, the Middle Belt, while a few of them go as far as the southern parts of Nigeria. Hence, Sokoto being the bordering state is the point of entry and exit for the migratory pastoralists and serves mainly as a route and not their destinations. The migratory pastoralists graze in the communities between October and May, and at the beginning of the raining season; the migratory pastoralists commence the exodus of livestock back to Niger Republic as the breed of their cattle do not survive under heavy rainfall. Additionally, the beginning of the raining season signifies that there would be fresh grazing pastures in Niger Republic and few down pour there.

The pastoralists migrating into Tangaza has increased significantly when compared to the past figures, although the seasonal migration is not a new practice but the desertification of the Sahel and climate change has resulted in scarcer and poorer quality pasture; forcing pastoralists to migrate south. The destinations of migratory pastoralists are the same as that of previous years although there are changes in the routes followed. The increase in the population of migratory pastoralists can be attributed to the conflicts, banditry, and insecurity in Zamfara; as the pastoralists who initially are migrating through Zamfara state to move southward are now going to Kebbi State. The change of routes means that more pastoralists migrate from Niger Republic into Tangaza, after which they move into neighbouring Binji local government area and then into Kebbi state and continue their movement south in a bid to avoid passing through Zamfara.



**Figure 2:** FGD with Sarkin Fulani and some Ardos' in Tangaza LGA, Sokoto State

Formerly, migratory pastoralists used to only follow designated grazing routes but nowadays, they follow roadsides in some areas because the grazing routes have been converted to farms, while other routes are becoming narrower. Also, there is a change of routes pastoralists follow in some communities, which is caused by the flooding recently experienced in Sutti community which causes pastoralists to change routes because their sheep cannot pass through the water. Also in a bid to get to their destinations more quickly, the migratory pastoralists often use roads and people's farm as passages rather than the grazing routes. Hence, there is a reduction in the number of migratory pastoralists moving through the allocated grazing routes. The migration pattern, routes, and destination for the majority of the migratory pastoralist is relatively the same year-in-year-out except for a few pastoralists who alternate destination and routes annually.

### Pastoral Migrations from Nigeria to the Republic of Niger

Nigerian pastoralists also migrate to the Niger Republic with their livestock, especially the pastoralists in bordering communities of Sokoto state. This migratory pattern among the sedentary

pastoralists has been in practice for years, and they usually migrate to Barade, Chinta, Fako Mai Dullu, Aza, Mai Seka, Taibara, Mai Segummi, Innelu, Dosu and nearby forests in the Niger Republic. The increase of pastoralists in Tangaza migrating to Niger Republic is mainly due to the increase in the population of pastoralists in the communities and the fear of damaging crops as most grazing routes in Nigeria have been encroached. The migration into Niger is usually during the raining season, usually between June-September; at the time, there is adequate rainfall in Niger Republic, large expanses of land to graze on and grazing routes that enables migration. The sedentary pastoralists migrate with cattle and sheep of Rahaji and Uda breeds, respectively, into the nearby forest areas and grazing reserves in Niger Republic. Another factor causing the increase of sedentary pastoralists heading to Niger Republic is the insecurity, banditry, cattle rustling, and kidnapping faced in Zamfara state by previous pastoralists who migrated there to herd. Following series of challenges, the pastoralists who in the past migrate to Zamfara state, now move to Niger Republic as it is more secure. The routes used by sedentary pastoralists to migrate to Niger Republic are the same year-in-year-out because cattle routes are not tampered with there, but while on their journey, they mostly follow roads in Nigeria due to blockage of cattle routes. Although the population of sedentary pastoralists migrating to Niger Republic is increasing, the routes and destinations they annually migrate to is still the same; and they return to Nigeria at the end of the raining season in Niger Republic.

## NATURE, DRIVERS AND OCCURRENCE TRENDS OF FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT DURING HERDER MIGRATIONS

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### Conflicts between Sedentary Pastoralists and Farmers

In Nigeria, the farmer-herder conflict has become a major threat to the peace of not just Sokoto state; but the North-West, North-Central, South-South and South-Eastern parts of the nation. The violent clashes resulting in deaths are becoming alarming and the conflict is becoming potentially as dangerous as the Boko Haram insurgency. According to another, incidents involving herders accounted for 44 percent of all fatalities in the country in 2016. These conflicts are, by every measure, complex and multidimensional. Formulating appropriate responses requires a clear diagnosis of their root causes, evolution, impacts and implications.

The relationship between sedentary pastoralists and farmers in the past is usually mutual and non-violent. The farmers and sedentary pastoralists are of the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups respectively, they are members of the same communities who share similar religious and cultural values. In the past, pastoralists graze freely on the leftover of farmers' harvest and in turn, the herds help to manure the farm with their dung. However, there has been an increase in the reported cases of conflicts between the sedentary pastoralists and farmers in Tangaza in the past decade. The conflicts between these parties are predominantly non-violent, with very few reported cases of violent clashes leading to loss of lives and fatal injuries. The conflicts between the sedentary pastoralists and farmers are mostly unintentional and some of the causes include: pastoralists sleeping while herding leading to straying of cattle; pastoralists occasionally encroaching on farms before completion of harvest, which is partly because nowadays pastoralists follow roadside passages during the course of migration, as grazing passages are usually too narrow to accommodate large herds; habit of deliberate nighttime grazing on farmlands while everybody is asleep by some pastoralists; superstitious beliefs amongst pastoralists (especially indigenous pastoralists) that a herder needs to graze other people's grain crops [guinea corn, cowpea] from time to time in order for his livestock to be blessed; conversion of some sections of the grazing routes to farms, which sometimes necessitates passage of herds through farms or force them to follow the aforesaid narrow roadside passages, leading to unavoidable encroachment on farms. Other drivers of the conflict are population growth, greed, arrogance of both parties; new structures on grazing routes; farmers intentionally refusing to harvest their crops so that herders may destroy and they can lay claim on money; unlawful land allocation by politicians and forest guards to farmers in grazing areas; people taking the law into their own hands instead of inviting security forces; attempts to capture livestock after they have destroyed crop; and entrusting of livestock to children herders. In the past, there was peaceful coexistence between the sedentary pastoralists and farmers as they have conflict mitigation/resolution mechanism in place, which are mostly through traditional leaders; the conflicts between sedentary pastoralists and farmers that were non-lingering and were usually resolved by village and district heads of the communities using tradition mediations of conflict resolution and mutual agreement between the parties involved. In the case of violent conflicts or dissatisfaction by either party with the resolutions of traditional leaders, legal channels such as the Nigerian Police Force and the Court of Law are resorted to as conflict resolution mechanisms. The most popular conflict resolution is the police, because people have lost trust in the integrity of traditional rulers, as most farmers believe that the judgment of the traditional rulers often favors the pastoralists

### Conflicts between Migratory Pastoralists and Farmers

There are growing reports of violent conflicts between migratory pastoralists and farmers which are often associated with banditry and cattle rustling. In the past, migratory pastoralists upon arrival into communities usually head straight to the palace of the traditional ruler to inform him of their presence, where they migrated from, where they are heading to, their purpose for coming,

and the duration they intend to stay in the community and give their commitment to abide by the law of the land. Their stay in communities was mostly characterized as peaceful and temporal because communities in Tangaza are passages and not their destinations. However, in the last decade, conflicts involving the migratory pastoralists have become predominantly violent, intentional and non-lingering. The non-indigenous migratory pastoralists have imbibed the habit of sneaking into the communities, taking advantage of the porosity of the Sokoto-Niger border and settling for a while before proceeding further without reporting to the traditional authorities for proper identification. These practices make them untraceable after terrorizing communities and embolden them to do whatever they wish. The migratory pastoralists have violent dispositions and they have the habit of engaging in deliberate destruction of farmlands in the host communities, and are generally dreaded by people around because of their possession of arms, also because they usually commit crimes at night and abscond afterwards. This, in turn, often results in incrimination of sedentary pastoralists and their entanglement in unlooked-for conflicts and/or legal battles with farmers. Recently, two farmers were injured terribly by pastoralists migrating from Zamfara state en route to Niger Republic; alongside numerous destruction of farms and banditry; the pastoralists are gradually posing serious dangers to the peace of Tangaza. The drivers of the conflict include: deliberate destruction of farms by migratory pastoralist, after which they run and the sedentary herders are accused; superstitious believe that cattle grow fatter when they destroy farms; daylight destruction of crops; arrogance and carelessness; illegal possession of guns by herders who willfully destroy crops, politicians and forest guards allocating grazing routes to themselves and others unlawfully; conversion of sections of grazing routes to farms, which sometimes necessitates passage of herds through farms, forcing herders to follow narrow roadside passages, leading to unavoidable encroachment on farms; night time grazing usually done around 2-3am and entrusting livestock to children herders; refusal to resolve the conflict amicably; and criminal elements under the guise of herders.

In most situations, there are no mutual or traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution for migratory pastoralists because they flee after destroying the crops; hence they are unavailable to resolve conflict. They usually have little regards for traditional rulers in the communities and refuse to honor the invitation of traditional rulers. Because of their possession of arms, the farmers are scared of confronting these pastoralists; also, when reported to the Nigerian Police Authority, they resist arrest and flee from communities before the arrival of the police. When caught, they are usually handed over to the police and further charged to court for prosecution. There is a tendency for our bordering nations to be affected by international developments, especially the current migratory trends; the possibility of future conflicts spreading to other communities of Sokoto state is high. Migratory pastoralists spread across many West and Central African countries, any major confrontation between them and other sedentary Nigerian farmers could have regional repercussions, with pastoralists drawing in fighters from neighboring countries.

## Conflicts between migratory pastoralists and sedentary pastoralists

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The relationship between sedentary and migratory pastoralists is predominantly peaceful with a common sense of brotherhood because the pastoralists are mostly of Fulani ethnic origin. The Fulani tribe is spread across west and central Africa, found in countries like Senegal, Gambia, Niger Republic, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroun, Mali, Togo etc. and the migration of livestock to other nations is practiced by sedentary and migratory pastoralists respectively. Sedentary pastoralists scarcely engage migratory pastoralists in conflicts except when the latter arrive with livestock infected with certain diseases, in which case the former raise objections to their staying around. In fact, sedentary pastoralists even have the habit of covering-up migratory pastoralists involved in destruction of crops

## CAUSES OF CHANGES IN MIGRATORY PATTERNS OF PASTORALISTS

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***Neglect and Encroachment of Grazing Routes:*** The traditional grazing routes used by migratory pastoralists have been encroached by farmers in most communities. This change has caused the pastoralists to abandon the grazing routes and seek alternative routes by using the roadside as passages through the community. Where the grazing routes have not been encroached, they have been narrowed down by farmers and this makes it difficult for the pastoralist to control the herds passing through a narrow grazing route without straying into the farmlands.

The allocation of lands by traditional rulers and political leaders without consideration to the grazing routes is another factor influencing the change in migratory trends. The pastoralists coming from Niger Republic find it difficult to migrate to their destinations in Nigeria because most grazing routes are now farms, while Nigerian pastoralists moving towards the Niger Republic have a different experience as the grazing routes there are still in place and are not tampered with.

***Cattle Rustling and Possession of Firearms:*** The recurrent cases of cattle rustling by bandits in the grazing routes have led to pastoralists arming themselves for self-defense purposes. Initially, pastoralist move with sticks used for controlling their cattle and for self-defense, but with the introduction of arms as a culture by migratory pastoralists, they now see themselves as above the law. The migratory pastoralists allow their livestock to graze on peoples' crop and mostly have no regard for the grazing routes, all of which is backed by their possession of arms to attack local farmers and community members who try to question their action. This change has led to increased tensions as farmers who try to capture livestock grazing on their crops are attacked by the herders and intimidated.

***Superstitious Traditional Believers:*** There is a cultural belief among the migratory pastoralists that cattle grow fatter and survive drought when they are allowed to destroy crops, hence the motivation for their actions. The sedentary pastoralists are mostly held responsible for the destruction of crops done by migratory pastoralists who most practice nighttime grazing for the destruction of crops, leading to disagreement between the sedentary pastoralists and farmers. The sedentary pastoralists are oftentimes accused of concealing the identity of the migratory pastoralists when they destroy crops. This is attributed to their sense of brotherhood and a “no snitching” policy among the pastoralists. Sedentary pastoralists have been forced to change routes because their cattle are rustled in the grazing routes and banditry is on the increase.

***Neglect of Past Traditional Practices:*** There is an age-old practice of seasonal migration of herders with their cattle in search of lush grass, available water, and markets for their cattle. In times past, migratory pastoralists identify themselves upon their arrival in a community at the palace of the traditional ruler. These pastoralists who are often herders with years of experience possess mutual understanding with local farmers and adhere to the previous grazing trend; hence they were able to peacefully migrate across various parts of the community without violent clashes. They valued peace and had local mechanisms for dispute resolutions. However, there is a change among the herders as children and young adults between the ages of 13-24, who are mostly inexperienced, are entrusted with livestock for herding. The young herders who mostly do not understand how to control the herds from straying into farms, also frequently engage in nighttime herding, which causes the destruction of crops. Formerly, migratory pastoralists migrate into the communities in Sokoto after the harvest period; when the farmers would have harvested their crops and there are fewer chances of cattle destroying crops. In recent times, the herders migrate into communities before or during harvest

***Increased Population of Migratory Pastoralists:*** There has been an increase in the number of transhumant pastoralists migrating into communities of Sokoto, this is attributed to the climate condition of Niger Republic and other neighboring Sahel countries. High population growth over the last four decades has heightened pressure on farmland, increasing the frequency of disputes over crop damage, water pollution and cattle theft. In the absence of mutually accepted mediation mechanisms, these disagreements increasingly turn violent. For example, Tangaza LGA shares a border with Niger Republic and from the reports of residents of Ruwa Wuri, Beli, Girma, Mazoji, Tumbulla, Laboda, Yangari, Bireme, Taffuka, Tsoni, Ayama, Labsani, Bagida, Yammi, Jangilma and Sutti communities; the number of herders migrating into their communities has increased significantly. With increases in the population of herders and livestock; the demand for lush grasses to feed cattle is high and thus, there are speculations of herders collating their cattle and allowing them to graze *en masse* on crop under the guise that the cattle strayed while the pastoralists were asleep. There is also an increase in the number of sedentary pastoralists migrating into Niger Republic. This is because there are grazing routes that have not been encroached in Niger and certain breed of their cattle do not do well under heavy rain fall.

***Use of Alternative Routes:*** The violent clashes in the neighboring state of Zamfara have caused pastoralists to seek alternative routes to their destination. The migratory pastoralists who are usually heading to Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Benue, Kwara, Niger and as far as the southern states of Nigeria are forced to seek alternative routes. The pattern of exodus back to their countries is also changing; because different pastoralists have different states they migrate into and their movement is somewhat systematic. When it is the beginning of the raining season, the pastoralists in Sokoto start migrating to Niger Republic, thus creating space for pastoralists in Zamfara to migrate to Sokoto, those in Katsina to move to Zamfara , and those in Kaduna to move to Katsina until they all migrate to their destinations. However, pastoralists are reluctant to migrate into Zamfara state because of the security challenges, hence, the pastoralists now pass from Sokoto to Kebbi state rather than Zamfara state.

***Drought and Desertification:*** A major factor that has affected the migratory trend of pastoralists is environmental. The desertification in the Sahel regions is escalating as 50-75 per cent of the land area is becoming desert in Niger Republic and far northern parts of Nigeria (Sokoto, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Yobe and Zamfara states).<sup>5</sup> These climatic changes have forced pastoralists to migrate to places where there are lush grasses for livestock. Migration initially was seasonal, with herders spending December to May in the central zone before returning north. Over the last two decades, however, as available pastures shrank in the far north, herders have been staying in the central zone longer – from December to June or July. More recently, some have chosen to graze their herds there permanently. This has triggered increasing disputes over land and water use with central Nigeria’s growing populations of sedentary crop farmers. Hence, causing a significant change in the migratory pattern of pastoralists as the migratory pastoralist migrating into Sokoto is always on the increase compared to past years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### ***A. Improve Security for Herders and Farmers***

In recent times, there have been increased concerns about conflicts and security situation in Sokoto state and other states in North West Nigeria resulting from the farmer-herder clashes. The government and security agencies should intensify efforts to combat illegal carrying of firearms which often results in cattle rustling and banditry, and improve the security for the farming and herders communities. Regional cross-border cooperation should be strengthened with the neighboring country of Niger Republic. Both the governments of Nigeria and Niger Republic

should collaborate to organize information, communication, training, and education campaigns and programs directed at transhumant herders and the different actors involved in transhumance in the departure, transit and host zones of transhumant herds. Operational readiness of rural-based police and other security units should be improved and communication and collaboration with local authorities should be encouraged. In 2016, Sokoto state government alongside all North West states of Nigeria, funded an anti-rustling operation in Kamuku/Kuyanabana forest which yielded positive results with recovery of large portion of stolen cattle. Similar operations should be in place to check the excesses of armed migratory pastoralists and the security challenge they pose during migration.

### ***B. Promotion of Community-based Conflict Resolutions***

Previously, the traditional leaders were aware of the presence of all migratory pastoralists in their communities. These leaders had knowledge of their source and intended destinations; hence, it was easy to resolve a dispute at the community level before it escalated. Local- and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms proved effective in both averting violence and helping communities recover from conflict. However, the case is not the same anymore as local mechanisms of conflict resolutions are no longer respected by the migratory pastoralists who mostly flee the site of conflict after causing harm. Organized forums comprising of traditional rulers, farmers, sedentary and migratory pastoralists, community vigilantes and state security agencies should be put in place to monitor, identify, discuss and manage potential threats, hence serving as an early warning system too.

### ***C. Ranching and Establishment of Grazing Reserves***

There is an urgent need to reform and improve grazing arrangements because open grazing is becoming gradually impracticable considering the danger faced by herders and farmers during migration of herds. In March 2016, vehement opposition from farming communities forced the federal government to relent its intentions to establish grazing areas across the country. Sokoto State has taken practical steps in tackling the open grazing of livestock by initiating a regional cattle ranching project that is expected to fully kick off in May 2018. The project, which will cost about N3 billion, is situated on a 10-hectare expanse of land and will cater to more than 10,000 cattle. The modern cattle ranch will involve high milk-yielding cattle breeds from Brazil, as well as high beef-yielding species from Argentina, which, when crossbred with the Sokoto Gudali cattle breed, will result in higher milk and beef production. More importantly, the cattle ranch is expected to rake in N2 billion annually for Sokoto State when fully operational. On this ranch, production of feeds, soya beans, maize, sorghum, essentially to feed animals, and growing of pastures will be the focus. Federal and state governments also need to work out alternative plans for the large numbers of herders who may lose their livelihoods in the transition from open

grazing to ranching and the transitioning from open grazing to ranching should be in place and not like that obtained in Benue state. Bilateral and multilateral commitment, especially those concerning the conservation and sustained management of natural resources and the environment should be in place to cater for migratory pastoralists.

#### ***D. Tackle Desertification***

The migration of pastoralists in search of grazing pasture is motivated by climate change and environmental factors in the Sahel. Some estimates suggest that during the twenty-first century, two thirds of Nigeria's eleven far northern states could become desert or semi-desert regions. Neighboring countries like Niger Republic and other West African states had experienced drought forcing pastoralists to migrate southward, risking more conflicts with the growing farming communities. In November 2011, the government drafted a National Adaptation Strategy and Plan of Action on Climate Change (NASPA); in November 2012, it adopted a National Policy on Climate Change. Over the longer term, therefore, federal and state governments should intensify implementation of the Great Green Wall Initiative for the Sahara and the Sahel. In spite of the efforts by state and federal government on climate issues, the impact is scarcely felt in Sokoto and other arid regions of the North West; hence, there is an urgent need to intensify actions towards combating desertification.

#### ***E. Strengthen Regional Cooperation***

Regional cooperation will help reduce the cases of armed conflicts. Nigeria should work in close coordination with neighboring countries both to manage human and cattle movements across borders and to fight illicit arms trafficking. The involvement of foreign herders in the conflict in Sokoto is no longer a secret and if no regional measure is taken, it may erupt into an even bigger conflict across West Africa. To that end, the government should engage the governments of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, as well as the ECOWAS commission, to reach an agreement on how to collectively monitor and regulate international transhumance pastoralism, in accordance with relevant international instruments, including ECOWAS Protocols. It should also strengthen regional cooperation in combating desertification and mitigating the impact of climate change.

## **CONCLUSION**

The spread of armed conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria is becoming a national and international worry. With scarce resources, weak policies and legislations, criminality, violent conflicts, ineffective conflicts resolution mechanisms, weak rural governance and security system being the major drivers of the conflict; priority should be given to this conflict to prevent further

bloodshed, disunity, deaths, and escalation by conflict merchants and persons who may want to politicize the crisis. State governments also need to formulate and implement steps to address the needs and grievances of all sides transparently and equitably. Strengthening law enforcement, supporting local conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, preventing grazing routes encroachment, establishing and protecting grazing reserves would all make a significant and immediate difference. In the longer term, the arms influx should be curbed, violent cultural beliefs should be modified by enlightenment, and environmental trends forcing herders into Nigeria should be addressed, particularly as they pertain to migration to the southern parts of the country. Failure would spell greater danger for a country already battling other severe security challenges and, potentially, for the wider West and Central African region.

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