Original Research Article

Effect of Conflicts on Cassava Production: A Survey of Ndokwa Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria

***Ofuoku, A.U. and Anis, C.H.**

Department of Agricultural Economics & Extension
Delta State University, Asaba Campus
Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: albertofuoku@gmail.com

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Abstract

The causes, types and effect of conflict on cassava production in Ndokwa Local Government Areas were assessed in the study. One hundred and twenty (120) respondents were selected out of which 114 were successfully interviewed, through the use of interview schedule. Descriptive statistics was employed in the description of the farmers' socio economic characteristics. The findings revealed that 31.6% and 35.1% of the respondents have at one time or the other migrated and abandoned their cassava farmland respectively. It was also found that majority of the respondents (61.4%) resorted to community leaders for conflict resolution. It was found that 77.2% of the respondents did not see violence as veritable tool for obtaining an end, but 54.4% considered violence as the most effective means of achieving their goals. The Z-test analysis indicate that there was significant differences in production situation during and off-conflict periods with respect to availability of labour, revenue from sales of produce, and the number of hectares cultivated at ($P<0.05$). Results from the regression model revealed that the level of formal education significantly influence the degree of conflict at ($P<0.05$) level of significance. Farm size also significantly influenced conflicts though negatively, while average annual income had a significant influence on conflict at ($P< 0.05$) level of significance. It was recommended that peace and conflict resolution be integrated into school curriculum, traditional system's conflict resolution be strengthened among others.

Keywords: Effect; conflict; resolution; cassava production; survey; dispute.

Introduction

The Agricultural (precisely crop production) sector is the major source of income and livelihood for the vast majority of rural people in West Africa. Agriculture is the main source of domestic food supply and therefore plays a critical role in household level food security (Ousmane and Delgado, 1995).

The above citation enunciates the importance of crop production not only to the rural populace, but also to the nation's economy. However, what becomes of a society that is affected by conflicts, whether violent (when force is actually used as a means to obtain an end) or non-violent (when the threat of the use of force/violence is enough as a means to obtain an end). According to Messer (2001), in the 1990s in sub-Saharan Africa, food shortage prevailed in cases of active conflict, such as in Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia and to a lesser extent in Kenya where those driven by conflicts from their homes faced immediate and long-term food shortages because they could not return to plant their crops.

The impacts of conflict on cassava production and to the larger economy are very diverse and were well identified in this research work. Conflicts take a multi-year toll in country-level food production and import, in community level and in household level livelihoods; and in individual nutrition, health and longevity. As noted by Messer *et al.* (1997), a recent analysis of food production trends in countries experiencing armed conflicts estimated that food production growth losses on account of conflict over the 1970s were, on the average, almost three (3) percent in conflict-afflicted African countries.

From reports and experiences, violent conflicts arose at three levels in the society, namely; within the family, within the community and within Nigeria. Afrobarometer (2002) reported 19 percent, 43 percent, and 72 percent frequency of violent conflicts for within family, within community and within Nigeria respectively, and Southerners being twice as likely as Northerners to experience conflicts in the community, whether in communal or inter communal circumstances. Violent conflicts have been attributed to various sources, viz. cultural, economic and political. The economic dimension includes factors like boundary disputes, access to land and natural resource, and revenue share.

Religious and not cultural factor have been identified as the most common source of strife in Nigeria (Afrobarometer, 2002); Ethnic rivalries, including tribal, linguistic and regional differences, were cited as secondary cultural causes. Conflicts are most likely to arise over economic issues like boundary disputes and access to land, as in the land rivalries between the Tivs and Jukuns of Benue and Jigawa States respectively, and between the Hausa Fulanis and Zango-katafs of Kaduna State. These were cases of ethnic groups who saw themselves as the true indigenes of an area pitted against those they considered "settlers". The rivalry between Iselegu-Afor and Ibabu-Onicha, Ukwani communities in Ndokwa Land, Delta State, was a case of dispute over the exact location of the boundary line. Perceived inadequate natural resource revenue share/allocation to most oil producing communities in the Niger Delta has also resulted to violent conflicts. In the process, cultural and economic motivations become mixed in complex patterns of perceived causation (Afrobarometer, 2002), and of course its toll on crop production (in this case cassava) is predictable.

Summarily, "famine that kills" in recent times is usually associated with conflict either directly or indirectly (Messer, 2001). Scholarly journalistic, policy and humanitarian Non-Governmental Organization writings, reported Nigeria among countries in which people suffer malnutrition,

poverty-related limitations in their access to food, and acute food shortages as a result of armed conflicts or civil disorders (Messer, 1996).

The Nigerian Dailies are replete with reports on conflicts in Delta State; with some of them occurring in Ndokwa Land. These questions then arise. Are the people conscious of the fact that frequent conflicts are capable of making the young ones imbibe a culture of violence in tacking disagreement? That conflicts are capable of encouraging extortion, plundering and kidnapping, reducing the rate of investment in agricultural production in the area, and reducing the expanse of land that should be available for crop production activities? Concisely, what are the effects of conflict on crop production? Does the government understand the implication of incessant violent conflicts in these rural communities? Do they see the need to address its root cause and thus provide lasting peace, thereby creating an environment conducive for optimizing crop production and therefore improving the economic well-being of the rural populace of the study area? This study seeks to elicit facts about these problems in the study area.

Conflict is an intricate problem (Mejia, 2004). As postulated by conflict Theorists, "conflict is inevitable in all social structures because the mechanism by which society integrates and exercises control over its members are never wholly successful" (Allen, 1994). It becomes useful to undertake a study that seeks to unravel the conflict situation in the study area and its effect on crop production activities as no such studies are known to have been carried out in the area.

This work therefore sought to ascertain the conflict situation, the constraints posed by this situation to crop production, and in line with the above, elicited facts on how conflicts relates to growth; whether economic or wealth accumulation, thus providing insight into the cause(s) of conflicts, the state of crop production. This work is a needed tool for policy makers (both traditional and governmental) as it unravels means to entrenching peace in the social entity study.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study was to find out the effects of conflict on crop production in Ndokwa Local Government Area. The specific objectives were to:

i. identity the socio-economic characteristic of cassava farmers in the study area;
ii. ascertain the types and levels of conflict existing in the study area;
iii. determine the cause(s) of conflict in the study area;
iv. evaluate the level of crop production during conflict and off-conflict periods;
v. elicit constraints posed by conflict to crop production in the study area; and
vi. ascertain the perception of farmers on conflict.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in crop production during conflict and off-conflict periods.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of cassava farmers and conflicts in the study area.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Ndokwa East and West Local Government Areas of Delta State, Nigeria. It lies between latitudes 5^0 16^1 and 6^0 03^1 N, and longitude 6^0 22^1 and 6^0 43^1 E. Aniocha South in the North, Edo State in the North West and Anambra State in the East bound it. In the South East is Bayelsa State, while Ughelli North, Ethiope East, Isoko North and South Local Government Areas occupy its Western strip. Ndokwa land has a total land area of 2,737km^2 with Ndokwa East and Ndokwa West contributing 1,796km2 and 947km^2 respectively (Central Office of Research and Statistics, 2004). It is characterized by dry and rainy seasons from November to April and April to October respectively with heaviest rains in July. It has an average rainfall of 1905mm and an average temperature of 30^0C (18^0F). It is generally low lying without remarkable hills. The people's main occupation are farming, hunting and trading. The soils are dominantly red to brown clays (Delta State Handbook, 1991).

A multiple-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study. Two villages with records of re-occurring conflicts were purposively chosen from each Local Government Area, amounting to a sum of four (4) villages. The simple random sampling technique was used in the selection of farmers, with the traditional heads, the women, and youths as shown in Table 2. This was in a bid to avoid restriction to a group in the population. This gave a sum of 120 farmers who received copies of the questionnaire; but only 114 of the questionnaires could be retrieved (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by villages

Town	Frequency	Percentage
Iselegu (NE)	28	24.6
Umusadege (NW)	28	24.6
Umuachi-Ogo (NE)	30	26.2
Umusam (NW)	28	24.6
Total	**114**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 2: Proportion of strata in sample Distribution

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional Heads	24	20
Woman	36	30
Youth	60	50
Total	**120**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Primary data were collected for this study. The primary data were obtained using questionnaires that were administered to respondents. The questionnaire consisted of a multiple-choice questioning pattern that made for uniform response, thus facilitating the analysis of data gathered

along the set objectives. It therefore featured the farmers' socio-economic characteristics, types and levels of conflict. The frequency, causes of conflicts and the seriousness of constraints posed by conflict were assigned nominal values from which the interviewee could make a choice.

A list of indicators such as availability of labour, cost of labour, and hectares of land farmed, quantity of produce etcetera were used to check the crop production state during conflicts and off-conflicts.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages and means was used to organize and therefore reduce the complexity of the data obtained. The data were dichotomized and regrouped into types and frequency of occurrence of conflict (often and not often) using the weighted mean formula. A cut-off point of 2.05 and 1.95 was used as upper and lower limits respectively. A mean score <1.95 was adjudged as often while mean values >2.05 were regarded as not often. The seriousness of the problems was determined by computing the respondents score on the listed problems. For the purpose of analysis, not serious, serious and very serious were assigned the numeric values of 1, 2 and 3 respectively. A cut-off point of 2.05 and 1.95 as higher and lower limits respectively was adopted. The categories of seriousness were analyzed using the weighted mean score.

Hypothesis I, which states that, there is no significant difference in crop production situation during conflict and off conflict periods, was analyzed using the z – test.

Formula for the z – test was:

$$Z = \frac{\text{Mean of a} - \text{Mean of b}}{\sqrt{\frac{\text{Var of a}}{\text{Na}} + \frac{\text{Var of b}}{\text{Nb}}}}$$

Where: Mean of a = mean during Conflicts
Mean of b = mean off conflicts
Var of a = variance during conflicts
Var of b = variance off conflicts
N_a and N_b = sample sizes

This was tested at 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance. Hypothesis II, which state that, there is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the people and the conflicts in Ndokwa land, was analyzed using the ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression model.

The general model was specified as,

$Y = f(X_1\ X_2\ X_3\ X_4\ X_5\ X_6\ X_7)$
Y = Degree of Conflict (Dependent Variable)
X_1 = Age (years)
X_2 = Formal education (years)
X_3 = Farming experience (years)

X_4 = Household size
X_5 = Farm size
X_6 = Average income
X_7 = Gender (dummy variables; 1 if male, and 0 if female)

Linear function*:*

$$Y = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2, + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + e$$

Where;

b_o = intercept
$b_1 – b_7$ = slope of the variables
e = error term

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

The socio-economic characteristic discussed here include gender, age, marital status and formal education; others are farm size and average annual income.

Table 3 shows a descriptive outline of cassava farmers' socio-economic characteristics. It shows that the mean age of respondent farmers was 38.79 years.

The middle ages of 26-35 and 36-45 accounted for the highest percentages, summing up to 54.4%. A little over 19% of the respondents were in the 56 years and above age category, while the lowest percentage (10.5%) was obtained for the 46-55 years age category. This could be a reason for the volatile nature of the people. Table 3 also revealed that a high proportion (63.2%) of the respondents were married, and this may be attributable to the people's culture of early marriage. The divorced respondents were only 2 (1.8%) while the widowed were 16 (14.0%). The result further showed that 77.2% of the respondents had member per household of less than 7, with households of more than 14 persons constituting only 1.8% . About half (52.6%) of the households had between 4-6 persons. The distribution had an average household size of 5 persons. Table 3 further revealed that 44.7% of the respondents were female while 55.3% were male.

Though the gross annual income is an interplay of many factors such as engagement in other income generating activities, and weather, among other factors 67% and 34% of the respondents earned income of less than ₦120, 000 and between ₦120,000 and ₦240,000 with only 8.8% earning between ₦240,001 and ₦480,000.Their average income was, ₦161,578.95, an indication of very low income, and therefore poverty. This, according to Angaye (2007), can predispose them to conflict.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Farmers` Socio-economic Characteristics

Socio-economic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)	Mean/Mode
Age (years)			
15-25yrs	18	15.8	
26-35yrs	38	33.3	
36-45yrs	24	21.1	38.79
46-55yrs	12	10.5	
>56yrs	22	19.3	
Educational Level			
No formal education	16	14.0	
Adult education	4	3.5	
Primarily	28	24.6	Secondary
Secondary	46	40.4	
Certificate/diploma	20	17.5	
Gender			
Male	63	55.3	
Female	51	44.7	Male
Marital Status			
Single	24	21.1	
Married	72	63.2	Married
Divorced	2	1.8	
Widower/widow	16	14.0	
Farming Experience (years)			
1-6	12	10.5	
7-12	26	22.8	15.38
13-18	24	21.1	
>18	52	45.6	
Household size			
1-3	28	24.6	
4-6	60	52.6	
7-10	20	17.5	
11-14	4	3.5	
>15	2	1.8	
Average Income (₦)			
<120.000	65	57.0	161,578.95
120,000-240,000	39	34.2	
241,000-480,000	10	8.8	
Farm Size			
<1ha	44	38.6	
1-2ha	60	52.6	1.44
2.1-4ha	10	8.8	

Source: Field survey, 2008

The highest educational attainment of most of them was secondary education; 14.0% had no formal education. About 40.4% of the farmers had secondary education, while 3.5% of them had adult education. Primary School Leavers' accounted for 24.6%. This is an essential conflict-moderating factor.

Types and Frequency of Occurrence of Conflicts

Table 4 indicates that deputes at intra-community level (1.04), threat of violence at intra-family (1.72), inter-family (1.81), intra-community (1.42), inter-community (1.80) levels often occurred. Others were violent conflicts at intra-community (1.61) level, and armed conflicts at intra-community (1.77) and inter-community (1.68) levels. Strong disputes at intra-community level were the most often experienced type of conflict, while armed conflicts at intra-family level (2.88) were the least form of conflict experienced/encountered in the study area.

Table 4: Frequency of conflicts

Types/levels	Score	Mean Score
Strong dispute		
Intra family	258	2.26
Inter Family	228	2.00
Intra Community	118	1.04
Inter Community	230	2.02
Threat of Violence		
Intra Family	196	1.72
Inter Family	206	1.81
Intra Community	162	1.42
Inter Community	204	1.80
Violent Conflict		
Intra Family	292	2.56
Inter Family	232	2.04
Intra Community	184	1.61
Inter Community	228	2.00
Armed Conflict		
Intra-Family	328	2.88
Inter Family	326	2.86
Intra Community	202	1.77
Inter Community	192	1.68

Source: Field Survey, 2008; Upper and lower cut-off points were 2.05 and 1.95 respectively
A mean score <1.95 = Often; >2.05 = not often

Factors that Triggered Conflict

Table 5 displays the various causes of conflict and how they relate to the study area. Perceived marginalization (2.56) was the most primary cause of conflict, followed by quest for recognition by youth (2.54); boundary dispute (2.51) came third in the rank of causes of conflict. Access to land use (2.44) and corrupt leadership (2.25) all resulted to significant conflict. The mean score was obtained using the "weighted mean" formula. Mean scores of ≥2.05 and ≤1.95 were then taken as causes and not causes of conflicts in the area.

Table 5: Distribution of the Causes of Conflict

Causes of Conflict	Score	Mean
Boundary dispute	286	2.51
Discovery of natural resource	178	1.56
Access to land use	278	2.44
Perceived inadequate natural resource revenue share	204	1.80
Competition for office by politicians	298	2.61
Competition for office by traditional leaders	146	1.28
Quest for recognition by youth	290	2.54
Corrupt leadership	256	2.25
Tribal differences	214	1.88
Breach of taboo	213	1.87
Perceived marginalization	292	2.59

Source: Field survey 2008; Upper and lower cut-off points were 2.05 and 1.95 respectively

Array of constraints posed by conflict

Table 6 implies that the constraints posed by conflict in the Ndokwa Local Government Areas include; reduced access to land use, insecurity, plundering, lack of labour, reduced income, and reduced external investment.

From Table 6, it could be observed that plundering (2.14) was the most serious problem posed by conflict. Others were lack of labour (2.07), reduced external investment in cassava production (2.05), insecurity (1.97), and diversion of resources to other ventures, which are in consonance with the opinion of Mejia (2004). The non-seriousness of reduced access to land use could be as a result of abundant arable land in the areas surveyed. The other not-too-serious problems included; destruction of farmlands (1.91), increased labour costs (1.40), food shortages (1.51) and inability to harvest (1.58).

Table 6: Problems Posed by Conflicts

Problems/Constraints	Score	Remark	Mean Score
Reduced access to land use	214	NS	1.88
Destruction of farm land	218	NS	1.91
Insecurity	224	S	1.97
Increased labour cost	160	NS	1.40
Plundering	244	VS	2.14
Reduced access to market	220	NS	1.93
Lack of labour	236	VS	2.07
Reduced external investment	232	VS	2.05
Food shortage	172	NS	1.51
Reduced income	212	NS	1.86
Diversion of resources	216	NS	1.90
Inability to harvest	180	NS	1.58

Source: Field survey, 2008; NS = not significant; S = significant; VS = very significant

Hypotheses Tests

Result of the test of the hypothesis (H_{01}) that there is no significant difference in cassava production situations, during conflict and off conflict periods (Table 7) indicates that there were significant differences in the means of the following production variables; labour, revenue from produce and the number of hectares cultivated. Since the above-stated parameters had z = 0.000, (P<0.05); Z = 0.0051, (P<0.05) and z = 0.000, (P<0.05) respectively, the decision was to reject the H_{01}, which states that there is no significant difference in these production variable during conflict and off-conflict periods.

Table 7: Result of Z-Test

Production parameter	z	P(Z≤z) (two tailed)
Labour cost	0.3754	0.7074
Available labour	-15.7296	0.0000**
Cost of land rent	0.4134	0.1576
Revenue from produce	-2.8022	0.0051**
No. of hectares cultivated	-5.53961	0.000**

*Significant at 5% level of significance.
**Significant at 1% level of significance

A test of hypothesis H_{02} that there is no significant relationship between the farmers` socio-economic characteristics and conflicts in Ndokwa land, presented in Table 8 indicates that four explanatory variables were significant while three variables were non-significant. The significant variables (i.e. influencers) included level of formal education, household size, farm size and average income. The non-significant variables were age, gender and farming experience. The regression model was utilized in the determination of the factors that influenced conflict in the Ndokwa Local Government Areas. The level of formal education of the farmers was statistically significant. This implies that increase in formal education will increase the level of conflict contrary to *a priori* expectation. This could be explained by the fact that, as more persons get educated, they become enlightened as to what their rights are, and so may go to any length to ensure that they protect such rights.

Table 8: Regression model analysis result

Variable	Co-efficient	t-ratio	P-value
	0.0569	1.8466	0.0476
Level of formal education	0.4597	2.0764	0.0403*
Gender	-0.6159	-1.3436	0.1819
Farming experience	0.1776	0.4466	0.6561
Household Size	0.1217	0.4081	0.0684*
Farm Size	-1.3072	-3.0494	0.0029*
Average income	9.113×10^{-6}	2.2601	0.0259*

*Significant

Household size was significant as a result of the fact that the size of the household will determine the resources needed to sustain the members of such households. This implies that the larger the household size, the more jealously the household head will guard the resources needed to sustain or manage the household.

Farm size was significant but had a negative co-efficient of –1.3072. This implies an indirect relationship, indicating that the larger the farm size, the less probable the farmer is to be involved in conflict. Average income of the cassava farmers did not comply with *a priori* expectation but it is also statistically significant at 5%.

Farmers Perception of Conflicts and Channels of Conflict Resolution

This sub-section deals with the farmers' perception of conflict and the available channels of resolving conflicts. From Figure 1, it could be seen that 54.4% of respondents considered violence, as the most effective means to obtaining an end, while 77.2% of the respondents did not see violence as a veritable means to obtaining an end because even a greater percentage (75.4%) was of the view that incessant conflicts could make the young imbibe a culture of violence in settling issues.

Figure 2 indicates that 61.4% of the respondents engaged community heads in resolving conflicts, while the least used channel was personal efforts (11.5%), followed by the police (21.9%), family heads and neighbours (22.8%), religious leaders (23.70%) and then the law courts, which accounted for 24.56% of the responses.

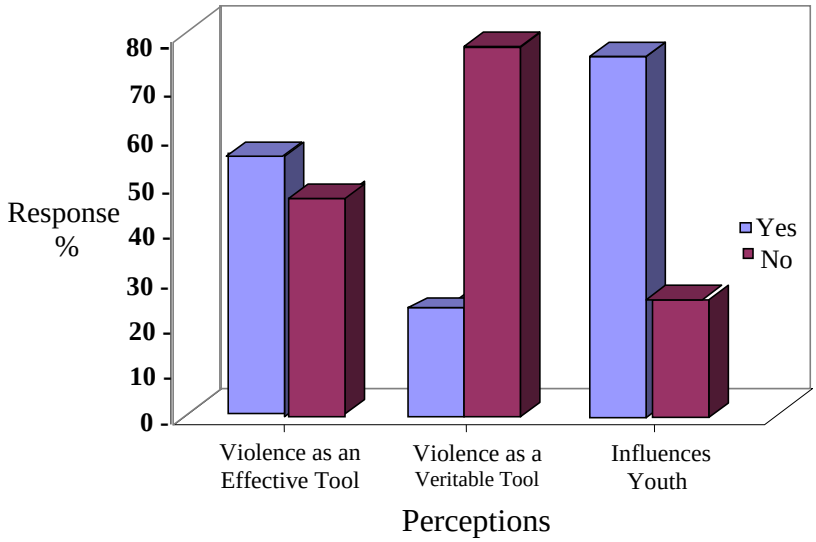

Figure 1: Farmers' perception of conflict

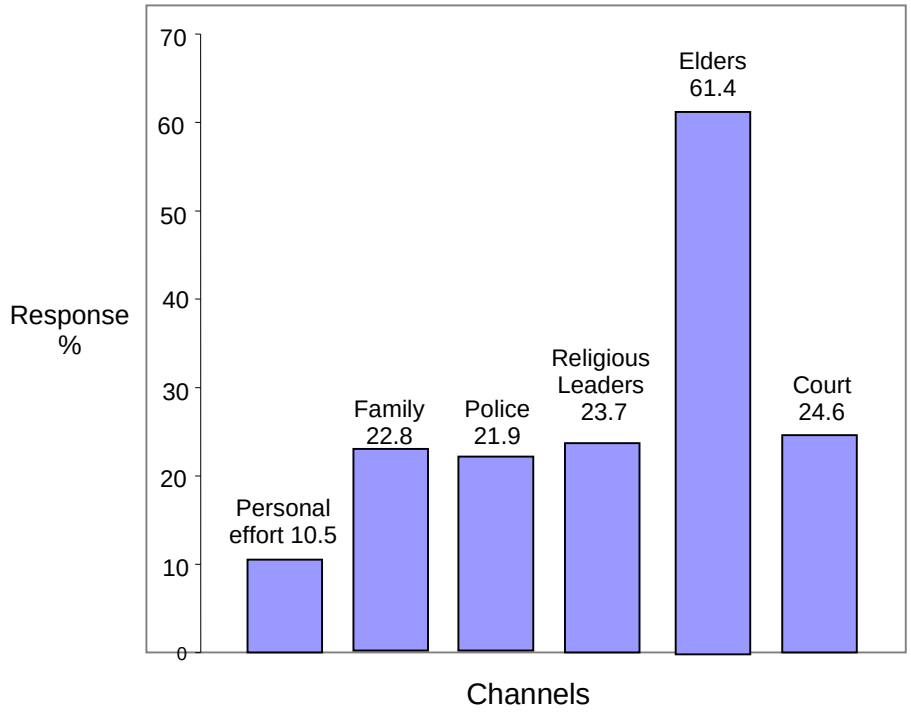

Figure 2: Channels of Resolving Conflicts

Conclusion

Considering the aforementioned findings, it could be concluded that conflict had negatively affected the agricultural productive activities, and more precisely in this case cassava production, which is the foremost crop in Ndokwa Local Government Areas. While plundering, lack of labour, and reduced external investment were the most serious fallouts of conflicts, insecurity and reduced access to land use constituted serious problems. The major causes of conflicts included perceived marginalization, quest for recognition by the youth and boundary disputes. Also, conflicts significantly reduced availability of labour, revenue from sales of produce and the number of hectare cultivated, although it did not result to food shortages due to other factors. The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents as observed from the study pointed to fact that most of them were poor, earning less than ₦120, 000 per annum, and that the highly educated rarely got involved in farming.

Results of the regression model however showed that level of formal education, farm size and average income significantly influenced their involvement in conflicts. It could also be concluded from the study that although the majority of the respondents saw violence as an effective means to getting what they needed, they did not see it as a positive channel. Also a large proportion of the respondents confided in traditional leaders when it came to resolving conflicts.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have vital implications for policy strengthening and re-orientation both at the government and people level, so as to create an environment conducive for productive agricultural activities and therefore the development of the study area.

The following recommendations were therefore made;

1. Peace, conflict-resolution and management studies should be incorporated into academic curricular right from primary schools, so as to bring about a change in attitudes and conflict behaviour. This will obliterate negative cultural norms and direct violence respectively, since there is an increased drive to get formal education.

2. The traditional systems of conflict resolution should be strengthened through adhering to the principles of dialogue, truth telling, forgiveness, reconciliation, reparation/compensation as seen in the case of "gacaca"(Okpevra and Efe, 2008), since most of the people resort to traditional heads to resolve their conflicts.

3. Equitable distribution of natural resource benefits, such as scholarships, revenue share, social amenities, and job placements should be entrenched into the system as this will minimize conflicts.

4. Every social system has traditions that restrict permissible violence against fellow human beings and the environment. These traditions should be strengthened and its application extended.

5. Effort should be made to understand the dynamics surrounding a particular conflict, since what causes conflict differs from one social system to another, and from time to time in a community, as this will enhance conflict management.

6. Good neighbour policies, negotiation, mediation, public consultation, and good planning should be incorporated alongside the values of respect, integrity and honesty into conflict resolution endeavor to make for an effective resolution process. Conflict resolution efforts should be inclusive and also workable.

7. Having understood that the people naturally would not opt for violence in seeking to achieve their objectives except when they are made to believe that it is the only way out, effort should be made to look into their plight, thus preventing any such violence that would have resulted.

8. Given that the average income of most of the cassava farmers were exiguous, an indication that poverty is a prevalent factor, effort should be made to increase the productive capacities of the cassava farmers, and therefore their level of income.

9. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should be encouraged to carry out peace campaigns in the study area and other conflict-affected areas in the nation.

10. The principles of good governance should be entrenched as this can play a vital role in the prevention of conflicts.

11. Extension education on the importance of keeping records on production and income should be relayed by the Delta State of Nigeria Agricultural Development Programme (DT.ADP), to help monitor variations in output so as to improve studies on effects of various factors on production.

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