
Grazing Practices and Pastoralists Access to Natural Resources in the North East Arid Zone of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out in the North East Arid Zone of Nigeria to explore strategies of enhancing pastoralists' access to natural resources to attain sustainable livelihoods. The primary sources of data used include key informant interview, FGD, Oral histories, Geo coded transect walk and Administration of interview schedule. A total number of 181 agro-pastoral and pastoral household heads (90 agro-pastoralists and 91 pastoralists) were interviewed. Data from the study revealed that pastoralists are involved in near and far migration in search of water and pasture. Oral histories conducted with pastoralists show that while getting access was possible in the past, in recent years access to these vital resources is limited by poor or lack of clear legislation on land and water user rights. Geo coded transect walk reveals that limited access to grazing resources in the study area has rendered hither to productive grazing areas to unproductive land as the ungrazed lands have now become bushy and ungrazable pasture has taken the place of the then high quality pasture. There is no gainsaying that access to resources and grazing practices are cause of farmers-pastoralists conflicts in the North East Arid Zone of Nigeria.

Keywords: Access, Resources, Farmers, Pastoralists

INTRODUCTION

Pastoralism is a branch of agriculture concerned with raising livestock that may have mobile aspect, moving herds in search of fresh water and pasture (Wikipedia, 2009). Extensive pastoral production occurs in some 25 per cent of the global land area and occupies 66 per cent of the total land area of the African continent (Oxfam, 2009). The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that in 2007 there were 12.2 million cattle, 13.2 million sheep, 26.0 million goats, 700,000 donkeys, 250,000 horses, 18, 0000 camels found mostly in the Sahel savannah around Lake Chad. The livestock subsector accounted for

about 2 percent of GDP in the 2009 (CIA, 2009). Pastoral groups inhabit areas where constraining soil, rainfall and temperature conditions provide limited effective option for sustainable land use other than livestock rearing. Livestock herders or pastoralist are typically among the most vulnerable people in the countries they live (Oxfam, 2009). The pastoral communities are in major crises today (Faustine et al, 2002).

Common conception that pastoralists exist at basic subsistence is not true; groups often accumulate wealth and can be involved in international trade (Wikipedia, 2009). Yet despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, many policy makers consider pastoralism to be archaic, economically irrational, and in need of modernization or replacement (Jonathan and Richard, 2007). There are misconceptions concerning their lifestyles, their production system and their culture and tradition (Faustine et al, 2002). Pastoralism suffered criticisms of being unstable (Fratkins, 1997). It is commonly felt that pastoralism is primitive and outdated and pastoralists must adapt mainstream system of development and service delivery (Oxfam, 2009). Contrary to this belief, recent findings prove that pastoralism is the most sustainable livelihood in arid and semi-arid areas (Behnke and Scoones, 1993). Co-existence between pastoralists and farmers is a continuous rather than a discrete one, perhaps due to the emergence of pastoralism as a specialised economic activity that was actually enhanced by development of agriculture (Blench, 2003). Shettima and Tar (2008) observed that agriculture make it possible for the development of regional system of complementary exchange between pastoralist and cultivators. Awogbade (1983) produced evidence of wide network exchange between pastoralist and farmers through trading animal manure for grains. Such coexistence has never been without tension because it demands reconciliation of interest groups (Raynaut and Delville 1997). Conflict refers to disagreement and incompatibility between individuals or groups that ensues due to contrasting goal, interest, values or practices that manifest in grievance, conflict and disputes (Walker and Daniels 1997; Singh and Sinha 2002). Shettima and Tar (2008) operationalized resource

conflict as interaction between farmers and pastoralist over common environmental resources including land, pasture, crop residues, livestock passage, and water points.

There are several causes of conflict (Dorcy and Riek 1987). However conflicts in natural resource uses are commonly associated with opposing interests over land uses, limited uses and access, unclear ownership and boundaries delineation (Mandara, 2007). In respect to the land rights, farmers are considered as 'the landed' while pastoralist are regarded 'the landless' (Dafinger and Pelinca, 2002).

The need to have access to watercourses and forage for livestock has resulted in the many conflicts that have been recorded between pastoralists and sedentary farmers and among neighbouring pastoral communities themselves (Orindi et al, 2007). Conflict can erupt when livestock is poorly controlled and when herds wander on to cultivated fields at critical period in annual circle, particularly during sowing, when herds are late in leaving farm lands and during harvest if they return too early (Raynaut and Delville 1997). This examines the grazing practices and nature of access to resources among pastoralists with the view to ascertain their influences in the prevailing farmer-pastoralist conflicts.

STUDY AREA

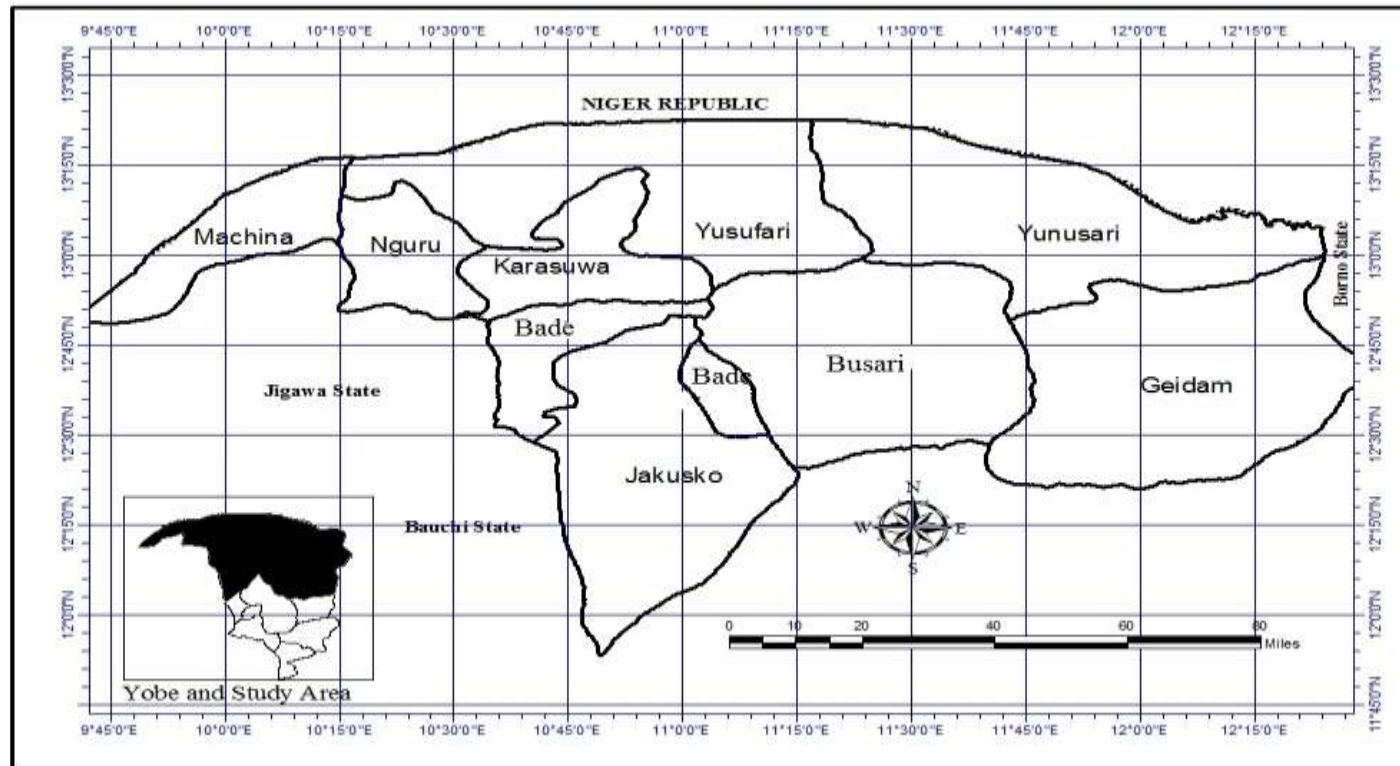
The study was conducted in the North- East Arid Zone of Nigeria. The choice of the study area was informed by its high population of farmers and pastoralists (who constitute over 80% of the people) and for its relatively large number of grazing reserves. The region also serves as a route for pastoralists migrating from neighbouring Chad and the Niger Republic towards central and south-western Nigeria in search of greener pasture at the end of the wet season. It was estimated by the Yobe State Ministry of Animals and Fisheries that the study area has about 6,000,000 goats, 7,000,000 sheep and 5,000,000 cattle. North- east arid zone of Nigeria, like Sudano-Sahelian zone, has a history of rampant clashes between pastoralists

and sedentary farmers. One of the recent clashes between the two groups in the region has been reported by IRIN, (2008).

North-east arid zone in Nigeria occupies limited area west of Lake Chad and covers North-eastern parts of Borno and Yobe States (Fig. 1). The study area lies between longitude 12°00' to longitude 13°28' and latitude 09°45' to latitude 12°00' 12°30' and covers the nine Local Government Areas of northern Yobe State namely, Bade, Nguru, Machina, Yusufari, Geidam, Yunusari, Jakusko, Karasuwa and Bursari Local Government Areas (Fig. 1). The region is aptly described as the major wetland in the semi-arid Sahel corridor, supporting some 11 million people (FAO, 2004). The study area has about 6,000,000 goats, 7,000,000 sheep and 5,000,000 cattle and large amount of fisheries.

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Fig.1. Map of the study area



METHODS

Both primary and documentary sources of data were used in this study. The primary sources include Key informant interview, household survey, focus group discussion, oral histories and Geo-coded transect walk. These sources were used jointly to answer research questions on access to natural resources for pastoralists and nature of interaction between resource users. These methods were complemented with personal field observation of land use practices.

Structured and semi structured interviews were conducted with key informants namely, the traditional rulers, officials of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, and officials of Ministry of Animals and Fisheries. Twelve traditional leaders, eight officials of pastoralists associations and six officials of Ministry of Animals and Fisheries were interviewed. The interviews with key informants enabled construction of interview questions about the nature of access to resources, grazing systems and causes of conflicts. Focus group discussions were conducted with a variety of individuals including adult members of selected pastoral households.

In this study, household interviews were also conducted with pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. A total number of 181 agro-pastoral and pastoral household heads (90 agro-pastoralists and 91 pastoralists) were interviewed. Agro-pastoralists were selected through systematic sampling at intervals of five while pastoralists were selected using snow ball sampling. Historical changes in grazing practices, natural resources access and its availability captured in surveys and focus group discussions were complemented by oral histories with elderly individuals known to have knowledge about pastoralism. In this study, transect walk was done in the company of key informants. Transect walk was conducted at each of the four selected zones. The targeted points are water points, stock routes, grazing sites and farm land areas. Six stakeholders participated at each transect walk. At each walk, encroachment of stock routes, available water points, access to water points and grazing sites were observed and explanations were sought from the

stake holders. To confirm what was reported during interviews by respondents, personal field observation was carried out to gather data from live situations of what was taking place in situ.

Cluster with purposive sampling techniques were used in the selection of villages. The area was divided into twenty clusters upon which four clusters were selected on the basis of certain criteria. The first cluster zone is an area that contains Grazing Reserve while the second cluster zone is an area sharing a common boundary with the Niger Republic. The third and the fourth cluster zones are areas that facilitate year-round cropping and a major cattle route leading to the south that passes through the study area respectively. In each of the four selected cluster zones, two agro pastoralist settlements were selected.

RESULTS

Grazing Resources in the North East Arid Zone of Nigeria

Describing the grazing resources is crucial in the study of pastoralists' access to resources, competition between pastoralists and other natural resource uses and possible arising conflicts. The entire study area has 28 grazing reserves. There are also communal grazing areas which are under the control of the communities. Access to government gazetted grazing reserves is free to both settled and immigrating pastoralists throughout the year. Government gazetted grazing reserves are linked by thirteen (13) cattle routes. The communal grazing areas all located near the communities are only free to local and agro pastoralists linked to the communities by local stock routes. Communal grazing areas are demarcated annually by villages through local agreements. There is no individual ownership of grazing land, it should be either owned by government or community on communal basis. Households and family are not granted ownership of a portion despite the fact that ownership of grazing land is recognised under Article 6: (16) of Land Use Act. "There shall be ownership of land to a person or organization for grazing purpose up to 5000 hectares" (Article 6:2).

Grazing Practices and Systems

North East Arid Zone of Nigeria is located along the northeast pastoral corridor that emanates from Niger and Chad, terminating in Niger – Benue basins. The transhumance pastoralists identified within this pastoral corridor are Udawa, Mare, Jahunawa, Degereji, Bokoloji, Bororo, Ayyanko'yan, Kesu and Baddin. Transhumance pastoralists move towards the south and north direction in the dry and wet seasons respectively, following the availability of water and pasture. Free ranging system in the study area is usually practiced by local and agro- pastoralists. They continuously graze throughout the year on the same area approximately at the distance of 3-5 kilometres. The size of free- ranging areas is usually determined by available grazing spots. Key informant interview shows that even these small spots continue to diminish due to land use changes. At Rigar Mallam Sule, for instance, in order to cope with increasing land squeeze, agro-pastoralists have to develop the idea of converting farmlands to grazing areas.

The area used as farmland by agro-pastoralists will in another season be used as grazing area and vice - versa. Geo- coded transect walk reveal, land degradation and over grazing at areas used as free grazing zones with grasses and shrubs that hardly get time to regenerate. Data generated from field work and presented in fig.2 below reveal that only twelve per cent of pastoralists practice zero grazing.

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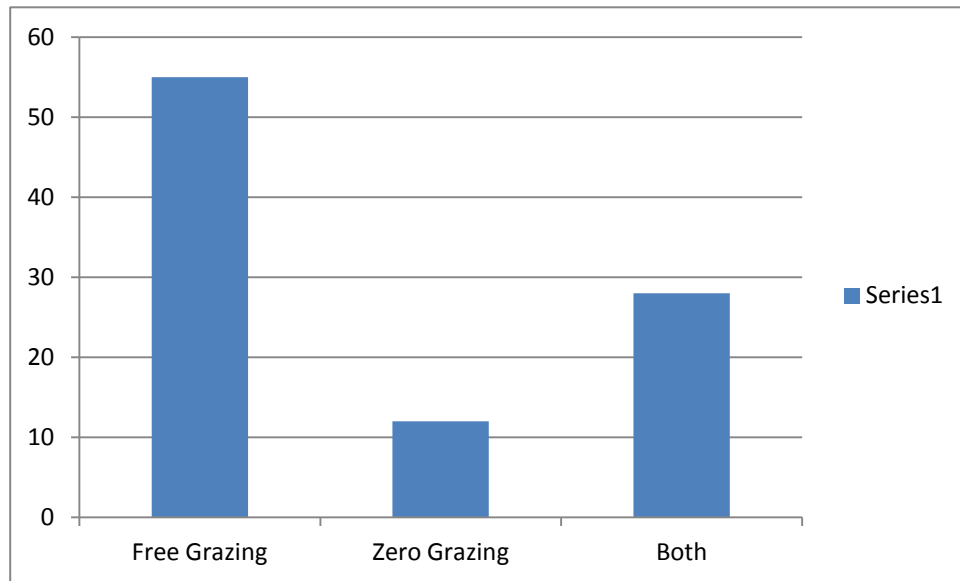


Figure 2: Grazing practices in the study area

Those who reported practicing zero- grazing are agro pastoralists. They tethered animals at their home yards or go with animals to farmlands, where they could be tied to a tree at nearly available uncultivated piece of land between farms. This system is possible to people with small number of animals. About twenty seven per cent of respondents practice both free- ranging and zero ranging. While animals are kept at home yard or tied to a tree during dry seasons, in rainy season they practice free ranging by driving animals to a nearby community grazing areas. The practice of free ranging contributes more to conflicts than zero grazing because cattle are driven to and from grazing sites through cattle tracts that are increasingly encroached by farmlands. Herders with large flocks hardly control animals that are desperate of nutritious fodder. However, there was confession from pastoralists (FGD) that while at times animals accidentally move to farmlands, they led livestock into farmlands to display their displeasure over encroachment of stock routes and grazing lands by farmers.

Only two per cent of reported conflicts are related to zero ranging. Key informant shows that even the few cases of conflict related to zero grazing are unintentional, as animals cut the rope or go into farmlands. They further reveal that conflict related to zero grazing are

non violent and are settled between the owner of livestock and farmers.

Access of Pastoralists to Natural Resources

Pastoralists are involved in near and far migrations in search of water and pasture. Oral histories conducted with pastoralists reveal that while getting access to resources was possible in the past, in recent years access to these vital resources is limited by poor or lack of clear legislation on land and water user rights and has consequence on reoccurring conflicts. People use conflicts to ensure access to resources that are vital to their livelihoods and similarly, conflicts transform relationship between resource users and consequently blocked access.

Data generated from interviews and focus group discussions dramatically illustrate the strong link between conflicts and access to natural resources (mainly land and water). Pastoralists lack security rights over land and water. They rather enjoy conditional land and water rights. Conditions attached to usage rights include payments of money by migrating pastoralists to traditional leaders for grazing in their domain. In case of not seeking permission through payment for grazing right, a traditional leader can deprive pastoralist's access to grazing. Failure of the pastoralists to pay homage and seek permission from traditional ruler who also serve as land chief may lead to their arrest.

In the study area, villages have same land tenure system. Those who were the first to clear and settle on the land claim the ownership. Migrants that move to the area later (seen as landless) can only have right to access through the permission of the traditional leader. Pastoralists are classified under landless. Village leaders rely on customary principle to convert grazing areas and stock routes to farmlands. Generally, both government and traditional institutions manipulate land tenure to the disadvantage of pastoralists. In rural areas, traditional leaders use customary rights to covert grazing reserves and stock routes to farm lands, while near urban centres

statutory rights is used by government to covert grazing reserves and stock routes to other uses.

Water rights are closely linked to land use rights. When surface water dries up, pastoralists in the study area moved to fadama areas for rivulets and other ground water points. In areas far from fadama, they move to wells and boreholes for watering animals. Geo- coded transect walk and personal field observations reveal that access to rivulets in fadama is restricted by surrounding dry season farms. When a stock route that provides access to water is blocked, it becomes a case in which water for livestock is available but not accessible.

Box 1. Access to water for pastoralists

You know pastoralists have to move their animals from one place to another for pasture and water. While this movement was possible in the past, now it is restricted by encroachments on grazing routes. Some years back, this stock route can contain the passage of ten herds. If you look around what you see are encroached farm lands. Farmers don't want us to move around and get access to water and pasture. Even during dry season they grow *Guna*. What livelihood do they want us to have?

In areas far from Fadama, boreholes and wells are mostly located near villages. Like in customary land use rights, access to boreholes and wells is restricted to local communities. Boreholes, though public property, have no open access. Even in the agro pastoral communities, migrating and transhumance pastoralists are deprived access to water points.

Geo coded transect walk reveals that limited access to grazing resources in the study area has rendered ungrazed land unproductive. The ungrazed lands have now become bushy and ungrazable pasture has taken the place of the then high quality pasture. Similarly, poor access to other grazing reserves has led to the concentration of

animals at Gumsi and Nasari grazing reserves and consequently resulting to degradation.

Interaction between Pastoralists and Host Farming Communities

In the study area as elsewhere in the Sahel, the pastoral life and mode of livelihood have never been without interaction with their host communities, most of whom are peasant farmers. However, the relationship had never been without rancour. The acceleration of fatal violence started in the 1980s and, since that period relationships have continued to deteriorate. Oral histories reveal that the conflicts started when western Bornu became the scene of political and military conquests. Stenning (1959) noted the killing of Woodabe pastoral leader in the study area around 1850 by Badde people which forced the pastoralists to retire back to areas under the control of Sokoto caliphate. Though pastoralists did not appear with sword, their perception by sedentary communities as spies to Islamic jihadists gave them a bad reputation. Similarly, the rise of Mahdism in Central Sudan had its repercussion on the relationship between pastoralists and their host communities. Pastoralists supported the Rabeeh movement.

Oral histories conducted shows that the interaction between pastoralists and sedentary communities started in the last 200 years when pastoralists moved into Bornu to gain access to grazing land. Possible factor that integrated pastoralists and their host farming communities was payment of tribute by pastoralists to obtain grazing right. Similarly social and economic reciprocities were evident. In each village, pastoralists have settled host household friends where they temporary camp especially for market days. The relationship between a pastoral family and settled host family usually extend over generations. When the going was good, pastoralists kept monies and other valuable goods with their host households. The host households were free to use the money until the time a pastoralist may request the use of it. Pastoralists also give animals as gift to these host households during naming and wedding ceremonies. In similar reciprocal gesture, the host household used to prepare meal on

market days for their visiting pastoral families. In the study area, the relationship started to strain in the 1950s over contesting claim to a grazing territory and later exploded into a violent confrontation in 1986.

CONCLUSION

North east arid zone of Nigeria is located along the northeast pastoral corridor that begins from Niger and Chad, terminating in Niger – Benue basins. Pastoralists are involved in near and far migration in search of water and pasture. Getting access to natural resources was possible in the past, in recent years access to these vital resources is limited by poor or lack of clear legislation on land and water user rights and its consequent reoccurring conflicts. There is strong link between conflicts and access to natural resources (mainly land and water). Pastoralists lack security of rights over land and water. They rather enjoy conditional land and water rights. Limited access to grazing resources in the study area has rendered hither to productive grazing areas to unproductive land as the ungrazed lands have now become bushy and ungrazable pasture has taken the place of the then high quality pasture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is the need for the establishment of rules over natural resource use, collective acceptance of such rules and continuous negotiation on divergent demands. Equally important is the need for enhancing understanding of the importance of survival of pastoralism as livelihood among non-pastoral groups. Traditional institutions and religious leaders that often have the knowledge of cultures and values of pastoral groups should help to achieve this target.
- There is also the need for measures to overcome widespread marginalisation of pastoralists in policy making and implementations. To achieve this concern organisations should helped to build and develop capacity of pastoral groups through which they can represent themselves and their values and come to understand, articulate and have voice concerning their rights.

This will increase the few channels that pastoralists have in challenging negative attitudes against them and would undoubtedly reduce the limitation they faced due to lack of influence of those responsible to their needs and concern.

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