

**FOOD CRISIS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND INTRACTABLE CONFLICT:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN  
NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

The adverse effect of food crisis, climate change and intractable conflict are serious contending issues in Nigeria today which have grown to undermine her socio-economic development. The situation has also worsened by the government's inability to provide security and ensure the enforcement of law and order. A society that would develop needs a peaceful and effective governmental policy to chart the course of transformation and development. Consequently the paper argued that until there is a deliberate effort and the political will on the part of government and the leadership of Nigeria to nip in the bud, address the shortage of food and escalating prices of food stuffs, curtail the spate of violence and conflict, socio-economic development would be a mirage. The objective of this paper therefore is to determine the extent to which government could address food crises by

The paper adopted the descriptive research method and relied extensively on secondary sources of information. Therefore information gathered were content analysed and inferences drawn to arrive at our conclusion. The paper is anchored on the theory of need and relative deprivation which showed the relationship between need, deprivation and consequent violent crises in the society.

The paper found out that inflation is on the increase, conflicts amongst citizens are lingering while prices of food stuffs keep on increasing. The weather is changing while the rains are not coming as expected. When it rains lots of damages are inflicted on farms and crops because of heavy storms. The open and uncontrolled grazing of animals had taken their tolls coupled with killings and displacement of farming communities. The paper also found out that most of governments' initiatives to provide law and order and resolve problems created have been scrappy and as a result non lasting.

The paper recommended that the various institutions of governments be strengthened with more empowerment financially to rise to the occasion to act decisively in various areas of environmental protection, technical assistance and peace building efforts where necessary to facilitate development.

**Key Words:** Food crisis, Climate Change, Conflict, Economic Development

## **1. Introduction**

There is abundant proof to demonstrate that scarcity has dependably been a rudimentary and ever current state of presence in mankind's history which prompts frequent clashes and wars (Baechler, 1999: Hilyard, 1999 ). Thus, Shetima and Tar (2008) opine that contention over scarce ecological assets shapes a kind of interaction between man and nature and has been endemic in those regions where the environment, financial and social conditions have consolidated to incline the two sects together.

However some post-modern scholars address the thought of shortage and contend that it boils down to human definition associated with factors like power distribution, state distribution, state boundaries and politics on the international stage. Despite the fact that there are may not be a cause- effect relationship between irreconcilable differences in resource use, Shetima and Tar (2008) are of the view that there exist a high probability in conflict in terms of resources scarcity whenever conflicting groups are involved.

In Nigeria, conflict continued unabated as the struggle emerges amongst farmers and headers due to movement of herders in the sedentary zones before the harvest is complete and such conflict is generally intense around the semi-arid zones because of the recurrence of lack of downpours (Scoons, 1995). Subsequently, in Mali's Niger River Delta, Moorhead (1989) affirms that conflict between the farmers and the herders happen at whatever point the delta is drier and the farmers are compelled to cultivate the fathers parts of the delta, infringing into the brushing zones, which outrage the pastoralists. In accordance with comparative issues in Nigeria, Sayne (2011) present that because of movements in planting systems driven by transmuting nature of the climate, numerous farmers now plant over assigned grazing routes prompting conflict with the herders.

## **Conflict and Security**

Barnet&Adger (2007) look at the issue of conflict from the aspect of qualitative natural resources vital to the sustenance of livelihood, which when dried leads to a battle for survival. In such circumstances, human security is not by any stretch of the imagination ensured, while if measures are not taken, and worsen into a savage clash. However, the state would not have the capacity to read adequately because of the effect of climate change. In this manner, state readiness as far as institutional viability in peace-making is of most extreme significance to the capacity of states to give benefits that help maintain individual's livelihoods during a fierce clash situations.

The conflicts between the two groups, farmers and herders, ought not to be habitual pettiness between both sides. In light of the fact that agriculturalist gripe about unremitting eating of harvests by dairy cattle, it ought to be noticed that current human advancement, modernization and urbanization have deleted past munching courses leaving herders with small nibbling lands.

Olabode&Ajibade (2010) inspected the relationship amongst conflicts and resource utilization, considering climate instigated conflict and sustainable development in Nigeria. The discoveries uncovered that the successive reasons for farmers/ herders conflict is the pulverization of harvests by cattle. Along these lines, the authors prescribed that government, at all levels, ought to provide grazing reserves which will continue the movement of cattle.

Victor et al (2015) redirects from the usual resources discussion to the issue of socio-economic effects of conflict on the local populace. Accentuation is put on compromise and arbitration to settle conflicts between farmers/herders. The need for farmers to compromise especially during the migration season for cattle is very significant in settling the conflict as the claim of ideal by both sides would give no progress over the long-run. Additionally, herders must consider harvest periods before taking their dairy cattle out unto farmlands. At the point of this bargain is the needs to rein enforce customary and institutions occupied with intervention and mediation. Such organizations must be given requisite re-training and enlightenment on different modes or methods for obliging moving herders in their communities.

For some researchers, the security person is even more circumstance and end result issue. Climate change or desertification, in one district causes neediness, yearning, imbalance and subsequent mass movement to the next. This movement frequently tends to prompt conflicts amongst migrants and local occupants particularly on the utilization and appropriation of scarce resources. Two components support the climate-conflict narrative. To start with, it assumes worldwide climate change prompts dry spell ad desertification, which then prompts to resource shortage. Second, it proposes this resources shortage causes movement fuelling new clashes, or activating existing turmoil rising beneath the surface.

## **2. The Concept of Development**

Development is a broad term that can be ascribed to different themes depending on the subject matter. But for the purpose of this study, it will be restricted to the socio-economic and political discourse. In terms of these themes, reverberating issues centre on poverty, unemployment and inequality. According to seers (1997), if all three have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt the country in question has witnessed a period of development. Consequently, Seers sees development as a process aimed at eradicating poverty, reducing unemployment and closing the inequality gap in the society.

Torado and Smith (2011) views development as a multi dimensional process involving the reorganization and re orientation of the entire economic and social systems. In Torados' view, development is not a one man's affair; it includes collaboration on a wider level and puts primal importance especially on the participation of affected locals. In this light Rogers (1990) submits that development is a long participatory process of social change in the society whose objective is the material and social progress for the majority of the population through a better understanding of their environment

Essentially how well a nation will develop will depend on the capability to fulfil the indicators of development as given by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which are: employment opportunity, poverty rate, health, education and human development index, social cohesion, safety and security and good governance. Consequently, with climate change and persistent farmers and herders crises, cultivation of the farm would be difficult as the people who are to work in the farm are already displaced from their farmlands

### **3. Methodology**

The paper adopted the descriptive research design method and relied extensively on secondary sources of information. Therefore data collected were content analysed and inferences were drawn. The paper is anchored on the theory of need and relative deprivation.

### **4. Causes of Food Crisis**

Climate change and food shortage has been linked to the cause of food shortage in Nigeria today. The world, in particular African states, are experiencing a catastrophic change in weather patterns. Storms are becoming more volatile and droughts are becoming more severe as the rains are not coming as usual. These changes are having an effect on crop production around the country and Africa as a whole. Beatie boy (2014) here one needs to understand the weather patterns that are responsible for food shortage. On this Asa Wahlquist (2009) said that some of the weather conditions that are associated with climate change are extreme cold, extreme heat and excessive amount of rain and snow". It follows that these conditions contribute to damage crops around the country. Crops such as wheat, rice are mostly affected. With the production of crops reducing due to climate change, the prices of crops goes up because of high demand of the available crops.

Global population growth and food crisis is growing at an astronomical rate and this has not exonerated Nigeria as her population is growing at an alarming rate and providing enough food to combat this problem is becoming challenges. The current rate of production will not be enough to feed the growing population. Food production will have to increase according to the growth of the African population if we are to avoid a total food crisis (chakraborty and newton 2011). To achieve this and in order to have a sustainable future, more farmland will have to be provided to increase crop and livestock production.

Also Pest and diseases are seriously causing food crisis in Nigeria as pest control and diseases has become a challenge. Where climate change plays a big part in damaging the Nigerian food supply, plant disease and animal pest contribute to the dilemma as well. Plant diseases can demolish the others crops and spread to other crops and within in a region. Plant diseases are hard to control, since they are usually discovered after they have infected the crops.

## **The Relationship between Rising Prices of Food and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria**

As clothing and shelter serve as the basic necessities of life, food remains the most vital because of its centrality to human existence. It is this importance that food holds in the lives of individuals that has led to the commitment to end hunger by the United Nations in the sustainable development goals. This goal is pursued by ensuring that food which is an indispensable prerequisite for the survival of mankind and his economic activities such as food production is made available to all at the cheapest rate. The availability of food at the cheapest rate to the citizens of a country is one goal that every government should strive to attain as it is one indicator of the socio-economic development of any country.

In any economy, the constant increase in the prices of food is a significant pointer to the problem of inflation in that economy. According to Fatukasi, (2012) inflation is the persistent increase in the general price level within the economy, which affects the value of the domestic currency. From the given definition, it should be noted that not every rise in the price level is termed inflation. Therefore, for a rise in the general price level to be considered inflation, such rise must be constant, enduring and sustained. The persistent rise of food prices has assumed a major concern of different economies of the world be it developed, developing or underdeveloped and has led to different efforts taken by policymakers to ensure price stability.

Many factors have been attributed to the constant increase in the prices of food in Nigeria. First the seasonal lack of fertilizer supply gives rise to high fertilizer price, and then farmers have difficulty in purchasing. Since there is a perpetual increase in the price of these essential chemicals for planting, it is only expected that a high cost of planting agricultural goods would lead to a corresponding rise in the cost of food which culminates in greater effects of poverty on many Nigerians (Joseph, 2018). Again, due to the hike in fuel prices, transport operators too have to increase the cost of transporting goods in order to meet up with their operational and maintenance cost. The addition of fuel cost to the transport service cost brings about a resultant increase in the cost of food being transported. That is why the consumer feels the effect of this price. In addition, rural roads leading in and out of these farms are in a poor state in Nigeria. This discourages the smooth movement and distribution to places where foods are demanded, thereby reducing the number of vehicles that can willingly distribute the crops. With fewer vehicles on the bad roads, there is a limit to supply of food and a corresponding increase in food prices. Also plant disease and animal pest contribute to this dilemma as they demolish and destroy crops rapidly.

The Nigeria economy over the years has witnessed a perpetual increase in the prices of goods and services which in most cases has led to economic downturns. The upsurge in the prices of food as however been more pronounced over the years and has become intolerable for many citizens of the country. For instance, the average annual consumer food price index which was 71.9 in 2007, rose to 83.4 in 2008, and 109.9 in 2012 and up to 186.2 in December, 2016 (CBN, 2016). Again, based on some selected food commodities, the food price watch data released in

June 2017 by the National Bureau of Statistics show that on year-to-year basis (covering May 2016 to May 2017), the average price per 1kg of imported rice increased by 29.6%, the average price of one piece of Agric eggs increased by 34.6% and the average price per 1kg of tomato rose by 13.0%. The average price of 1kg of yam tuber increased by 52.7%, the average price per 1kg of garri increased by 65.8% while that of beans rose by 42.7%. The average price of 1kg of beef increased by 29.9%, the average price per 1kg of fish increased by 60.22 while that of local rice rose by 37.4%.

Given that Nigeria is an agrarian economy, there is a realistic expectation that food stuffs should be at an affordable rate for its citizens as an agrarian economy is expected to ensure adequate supply of food to the people. However, the continued shortage of food and spikes in food prices contradicts the claim of being an agrarian economy as many citizens struggle to purchase basic foodstuffs for their physiological survival.

Nigeria faces huge food security challenges. About 70 percent of the population live on less than N 100 (US\$ 0.70) per day, suffering hunger and poverty (Matemilola&Elegbede, 2017). Still, great shares of these meagre budgets are used to purchase food stuffs. Higher food prices are devastating for the majority of Nigerian citizens who spend 60-80 percent of their income on food. The negative impacts of food prices spikes in the country are evident in the erosion of purchasing power of consumers, reduction in caloric intake, consumption of less varied foods, deepening food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition. The declining socio-economic and welfare conditions of most households in Nigeria cannot be divorced from food price upsurges. For instance because of the longstanding menace of poverty in Nigeria, if prices of staple foods soar, poor people bear the brunt.

One major factor that ascertains if there is a rise or decline in the socio-economic development of a country is the living condition and wellbeing of its citizen. The availability of food as well as the ability to purchase guarantees a living condition free from hunger as well as a population physically fit to take up economic activities. In a case whereby citizens are unable to buy food at affordable rates, their state of health may decline which will lead to reduced participation in economic activities, generating economic decline and ultimately leading to more poverty rate. Nigeria amongst some other African countries such as Malawi, Niger, and Togo is classified among the highly vulnerable countries in the world in terms of vulnerability to surge in prices of food. Thus it is not surprising that physical, social and economic access to safe sufficient and nutritious food still remain poor and could be exacerbated by the soaring global food prices. This is an indication of a decrease in the socio-economic development of the country.

Apart from this, there are many other ways an increase in the prices of food affects the socio-economic development in Nigeria. They include:

### **Higher Spending of Household Income on Food**

While food prices rise constantly, few are able to increase their earnings to match the ever increasing spikes in food stuffs. It is inevitable that increases in food prices will have a direct

impact on poor household's real income. According to Wiggins and Levy (2008), whilst the proportion of household expenditure on consumption may vary depending on whether households are net consumers or producers of food, approximately half of household budgets may be spent on food in low income countries, and around one third in middle income countries, with the poor tending to spend larger fractions on food. No wonder the National Employment Policy acknowledges that although there is still a large workforce in the country, their incomes are "insufficient as a strong cushion against poverty" (The Nigerian National Employment Policy, 2017). The adverse effect of this is that because poor households need to spend more money on food, they will have to reduce other household expenditure such as on health and education. That is why a majority of the Nigerian population still suffer from illiteracy which is a bane to the development and productivity in the country. A decline in the education of a country threatens national development as education can rightly be viewed as an engine of national development (Amaele, 2005).

### **Increased Cases of Violence**

Soaring food prices can be considered as a major trigger of conflict especially in countries where a majority of its populations are poor. A deprivation of basic essentials such as food which is a non-negotiable essential to the physiological wellbeing of humans will in most cases lead to anti-social behaviors from individuals. Throughout history, riots appear to have frequently broken out as an ostensible consequence of high food prices especially in areas with high concentration of poor households. No wonder Goshit (2002) assert that a hungry man is an easy target for selfish members of the bourgeoisie who would buy their services for a price to foment anarchy within the society. Similarly anti-social behaviors in the society are usually triggered by the deprivation of some legitimate needs of which access to affordable food is included. Food problems have forced some Nigerians to engage in social vices, which are having a negative impact on the country. These social vices include ethnic-religious conflicts, armed robbery, prostitution, child trafficking, and corruption amongst others. Food price shocks are both a determinant and effect of conflict. The recent escalation of violence in the northeast of Nigeria shows that soaring food prices triggers violence as much as violence contributes to soaring food prices. This is because a higher amount of money is needed to purchase food and many Nigerians especially in Northern Nigeria live in extreme poverty. In order to meet their needs, some get involved in stealing, thuggery, cyber-crimes amongst others. For instance, many of the Boko Haram footmen are gotten from the impoverished population of northern Nigeria's youth. In the absence of security, socio-economic development cannot be sustained as it destroys economic, human and social capital. The security crises in different parts of Nigeria is destroying existing infrastructure, and a safe environment for economic activities by individuals to give them economic empowerment that will enable households not only to cater for their present generations, create wealth, but also to provide for future generations

### **Malnutrition**

Shifting from a varied diet rich in micronutrients to one that is derived predominantly from high carbohydrate staples is a common response to declines in income. This is because most staple food (e.g. rice, maize, cassava) are much cheaper than fruits, vegetables and animal source foods (Meerman&Aphane, 2012). However, when staples are eaten on their own or with very small amounts of other foods, the result is a poor quality, monotonous diet that is likely to be nutritionally inadequate in protein fats and micronutrients (Thompson, 2009). When households replaces meat, fruits, vegetables and other micronutrient-rich foods with high carbohydrate staples, their energy intake may remain above the minimum requirement , but both macro and micronutrient intake is compromised, thus increasing risk of stunting, micronutrient deficiencies and associated poor health outcomes. In the event of soaring food prices, there is a high possibility that many citizens may not be able to afford to eat adequately. If food supplies becomes too low of too expensive, the ability to replenish supply will take a long period of time. This will result in people in less wealthy homes suffering from starvation and death. Malnutrition of lack of food will cause pandemics of diseases that could spread continentally. Hunger and malnutrition have been found as the underlying causes of death of over 3.3 million children every year, a rate of more than 10,000 children every day (High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis, 2008). Food crisis is a dual threat to health: under-nutrition, mainly in young children, pregnant and lactation mothers, and chronic diseases (heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers) that are strongly linked to improper diet. Reduction in nutritional intake of many Nigerians as a result of rising food prices have increased the rate of malnutrition with a worsened health status and reduction in resilience to disease and shocks. Lack of access to food influences food intake, and consequently impacting the health and nutritional status of households. Report has shown that out of the worlds undernourished children, 80% live in 20 countries, nine of these are in the sub-Saharan Africa, 29% of Nigerian children under five years are considered underweight (National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), 2013). Today, Nigeria is among the ten countries in the world with the largest number of underweight children (UNICEF, 2016).

### **Decrease in Savings and Investment**

A higher saving rate, through investment, is a prerequisite for robust and sustained economic growth. That is why a continued rise in the prices of commodities should not be handled with kid glove. This is because inflation of any sought has a negative impact for domestic savings, as it erodes the purchasing power of money. Hence a significant part of generated income is spent on consumer goods while little or none is dedicated to saving and investments. According to Ekeruche (2018), Nigeria has an abysmally low savings rate. In the same vein a report carried out by Enhancing Financial Innovation and Access (EFINA) in 2016, revealed that only three out of ten Nigerian adults save in banks. This situation is not unconnected with soaring increase in consumer price as well as a stagnation in the rise of incomes. With this, many people cannot afford to save especially household with small incomes and large families. This in turn has a negative impact on the economy of the country. Savings is the main source of capital

accumulation which is the main determinant of investments and growth in the economy (Ominyi&Okoh, 2017). A continued decrease in savings stagnates the economy and further deepens poverty and causes many other developmental issues in the country.

### **The Effect of Food Crisis, Climate Change on Socio-Economic Development**

A shortage in food will drive prices to an unaffordable level that most cannot sustain. Higher food prices are devastating for the over 3 billion poor people around the world who live on less than \$2.00 US dollar a day and spend 60- 80 percent of their income on food. With food prices predicted to rise by annual rate of 10 percent over the next ten years, the number of hungry people is expected to rise around three million today to around 87 million by 2025 (Fenous.org).

In the event of food shortage, the possibilities of riot and chaos against government post a significant risk. If food supplies become too low, the ability to replenish supply will take a long period of time. This will result in people in less wealthy homes suffering from starvation and death. Malnutrition of lack of food will cause pandemics of diseases that could spread continentally. The result of likely food shortage could contribute to the state of a national crisis.

### **5. Theoretical Framework**

Relative deprivation and needs theory was adopted for this paper. Sociologist Samuel A. Stouffer is credited with developing relative deprivation after world war two. Stouffer first wrote a relative deprivation theory in his study entitled “The American Solider” (1949) which is a four-volume series entitles “studies in social psychology in World War 2. Stouffers relative deprivation theory, developed to understand the physiology of soldiers grew to be an established theory of social science scholarship (Adams, 1970).

Relative deprivation theory refers to the idea that feelings of deprivation and discontent are related to the desired point of reference. Feelings of relative deprivation arise when desires become legitimate expectations and those desires are blocked by society. Society satisfaction is the opposite of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is generally considered to be the central variable in the explanation of social movements; social movements emerge from collective feelings of relative deprivation (Morrison, 1971).

Relative deprivation theory proposes that individuals utilize examinations with other people, groups, or themselves at various points in time to access their present conditions. On the off chance that these correlations persuade that they don't have what they merit, they will be irate and angry. The theory alludes to the experience of being denied of something to which one feels qualified for. It mostly applies to being denied access to resources influencing ones way of life be it financially, politically or socially. Thus, people participate in degenerate practices when their methods don't align with their goals. Political scientists have frequently refereed to relative deprivation as a potential reason for social movements promoting political brutality, for example, revolting, terrorism and even wars. In the event that there is a critical inconsistency between what individuals think they merit and what they think they will get, there is a probability of

resistance. In this way, similarly as dissatisfaction produces forceful conduct with respect to an individual, so too does relative deprivation for see aggregate savagery by social groups.

In relations to this paper, herdsmen feel deprived of grazing routes hence the foray of their animals into farmlands. Erstwhile marked routes for cattle have either been turned into farmlands or used for other purposes over the years. So while on one hand they duly feel marginalized, the farmers also feel deprived of maximum harvest due to the activities of herdsmen and the seeming cold shoulders of the government to security of their landed properties.

Notwithstanding its tenants, critiques of this theory have often pointed out that it does not clarify why few people who feel discontent neglect to make a move and join social movements seeing that it offers a platform for their voices to be heard by the concerned authorities. Counter contentions incorporate that a few people are inclined to strife evasion and that fast approaching life challenges may emerge since there is no certification that life-change will come about because of social activity.

The human needs theory was another prominent theory that has attempted to provide explanation for violence with many variants such as Maslow (1973), Borton (1990), Rosenberg (2003) and max-Neef (2010). It attempted to explain that conflicts or direct violence might be a resultant effect of unmet needs. These needs could be power, position, water, land and property among others. The inability of groups to meet their expectations might lead to a situation of frustration and when no acceptable remedies are available, such group might turn aggressive. With reference to herdsmen and native farmers violence, access to water and grass for grazing is of utmost importance particularly to herdsmen to feed their animal while climate change leading to encroachments of desert reducing the grazing space. This invariably led to mass migration of herdsmen

## **6. Conclusion**

Climate is changing annually and adversely causing poverty amongst the people. Desserts are advancing at an alarming rate and fertile lands are becoming scarce for farmers and herders to graze their animals. Greening the Sahara and the Sahel region gradually would help but government should intensify effort to fund projects such as the Great Green Wall initiative. Part of project to be pursued include the the provision of grazing reserves for herdsmen, fertilisers and grains for famers for planting and above all help to procure pesticides to curtail the menace of pests and diseases.

While the effect of an increase in the prices of foods may vary from country to country, the paper however observed that it has a negative effect on many households in Nigeria. This is because a majority of the population survive on very low income which limits their ability to purchase food when it is overly expensive. Therefore the paper concludes that there is a relationship between rising prices of food and socio-economic development in Nigeria. The former determines the quality of life that many citizens of the country can afford which is the crux of socio-economic

development. The government should therefore strive to implement policies that ensures the stabilization of food prices.

Extant modes of resolving conflicts between the farmers and herdsmen need to be taken seriously. Not every conflict situations requires the use of force by security agencies as aggrieved parties will only restart the conflict at a convenient time. Therefore should be structures put in place to address the issue of the root causes of conflict and where there are structures, such agencies should be given adequate support and financial mobilisation to function effectively to stem the root causes of conflict

### **Recommendations**

This paper in view of the findings and conclusion submits that the Federal government should further ensure the rehabilitation of existing and provision of more grazing reserves all over Nigeria and maintaining them very well without encroachments by farmers. Also specialised board should be created solely for the management of grazing reserves in the country

Conflict prevention should be utilised as a tool of resolving the conflict between farmers and herdsmen instead of conflict resolution

The federal government must empower and improve the capacity of the intelligence agencies especially the police in order to put a stop to the attack, killing by herdsmen and retaliatory attacks by victims.

Preparation must be made against the effect of climate change, wild fire and global warming which is now inevitable. This would involve prompt proactive measures, such as improving capacity building and exploring science based solutions through the concern agencies for the management of the environment.

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