

**THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNAL CRISIS ON FOOD AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY
IN TIVLAND OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA**

GBATSE AUSTINE GBATSE
Centre for Food Technology and Research,
Department of Sociology,
Benue State University, Makurdi Benue State, Nigeria.
Selugbats@gmail.com
+2348077653968

MLUNA CHARLES KORINJOH.,
Centre for Food Technology and Research,
Department of Sociology,
Benue State University, Makurdi Benue State, Nigeria.

KPENENGA CHRISTY SHAAKAA.,
Centre for Food Technology and Research,
Department of Sociology,
Benue State University, Makurdi Benue State, Nigeria.

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MWUESE LYDIA NUNGWA
Centre for Food Technology and Research,
Department of Sociology,
Benue State University, Makurdi Benue State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The study examined the effects of communal crisis on food availability, food accessibility in Tivland of Benue state, Nigeria. Conflict theory was employed as theoretical framework. Data was collected among 380 respondents drawn across Guma, Gwer West, Tarka; and Vandeikya, Ukum and Logo LGAs local government areas with questionnaire and in-depth interview using cluster and simple random sampling techniques. The study found two principal types of crises; intra (within) and inter (outside). The study also found that communal crises significantly affected food security as it leads to a reduction in the number of crops and animals produced, high prices of the available food, and difficulties in distributing the available food, thus reducing food availability and accessibility. The test of hypotheses showed that communal crisis affects food availability (χ^2 12.275 at 2 (df) and a P-value of .000. The P-value of .000 is less than the critical value of 0.05. Liner Regression analysis showed that, $B = .412$, β 0.229, P value = 0.00 i.e. <0.05 values meaning that communal crisis affects food security. Based on the above, the study recommended; peace talks between communities/traditional leaders of the warring communities, proper demarcation of the land, and punishing defaulters accordingly.

Keywords; Communal crisis, Food security, food availability, food accessibility.

Introduction

Every society desires stability, equality, and peace to pursue its socio-economic aspirations. Crises of any nature have serious and adverse effects, which always tend to undermine the normal workings of the community and its immediate surroundings economically, politically, and socially (Mafaji, 2013). The frequency of such crises had devastating effects on the socio-economic growth, political stability and above all impart negatively on food security.

In Nigeria, which has most of its population residing in rural areas, communal crisis has serious effects on access and availability of food, since agriculture is the main preoccupation of the rural population (Mohammed, 2016). The production of crops and rearing of livestock is the main economic activity of the people. In recent times, the issue of communal crisis and instability between farmers and nomadic herdsmen across the regions in Nigeria has become a major focus of the Nigerian Government, International, and National or indigenous development organizations. (Mohammed, 2016).

In Benue state, communal crisis is prevalent it's either within the communities sharing boundaries or with other states. In recent times, the incident has been on the increase resulting in the wanton destruction of life and property. For example, the Tiv and the Jukun at Abinsi; the Mbagen and Etulo conflict in Buruku local government, the Masev and Idoma conflicts and the Tiv and Ibo crisis in Gboko town, Tiv farmers and herder attacks. Intra communal crisis in Tiv Land include Ikyov and Mbayegh crisis; Utange and Mbagwaza crisis both in Ushongo local Government Area; Ishangev-ya and Ugee; Uyough and Nyiev crisis in Kwande, Ukan and Ipav crisis in Ushongo local Government area and in early 2022 crisis between Mbasombo and Mbaivur community in Makurdi local Government area Dura and a host of other conflicts in Tiv land (Dura, 2022). The communal crisis has become a threat to life and food security and has become a huge expenditure to states, as money is spent to set up IDP camps, a panel of inquiry and rehabilitation centres across the states in Nigeria (Felix, Ojong, Agba, Chinenye, Njirinze, & Pius. 2021).

This paper investigates the effect of these crises on food security with special attention on the crisis in Tivland area of Benue state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study is designed to (i) assess the effect of communal crisis on food availability in Tivland area of Benue state. (ii) find out how communal crisis affects food accessibility in Tivland area of Benue state.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Communal Crisis and Food Availability

Food availability, one of the four dimensions of food security, is affected by crisis, even when the duration of the crisis is relatively short. Consequently, crisis disrupts production. According to Simmons (2013), hostilities, especially armed hostilities, prevent normal farming, fishing, and herding operations from being carried out. He furthered that for the millions of poor households, whose principal source of income and much of their food supply-is derived from agricultural production, crisis can inflict significant damage to livelihoods and food security. For example, a study of 14 countries by Messer, Cohen and Marchione (2002) found that production levels were, on average, 12.3 percent lower in crisis periods than in peacetime in 13 of those countries, with Angolan farmers experiencing reductions as high as 44 percent.

Thus, communal crisis is correlated to food security and under most circumstances depresses production and income from cash crops and livestock. This reduction in production and income has serious implications on food security with the capacity to reduce the coping capacity of those depending on food resources for their livelihood. World Food Program (WFP) (2004) has identified the effect of communal crisis on food security. To WFP, communal crisis destroys land, water and social resources for food production and those thirty million people in more than 60 countries were displaced or had their livelihoods destroyed by crisis every year.

There is also evidence that households in crisis-affected areas deliberately make choices that reduce their production, thus, the risks of predation, looting, or loss of crops or livestock. In northern Uganda, for example, households shifted their livestock holdings from cattle to small ruminants, reducing the value of their herds by two-thirds (Shut, 2017).

In another dimension, crisis disrupts the flow of food. Thus, Simmons (2013) maintains that crisis reduces physical security, even for people not directly engaged as combatants or victims of violence. This

insecurity disrupts normal commerce, directly reducing flows of food through market channels, as marketing agents face high risks of loss through theft and high costs if they try to protect their stocks. Further, international humanitarian organizations are only too aware that, since food is a valuable commodity in a resource-constrained environment, supplies of food readily become targets for competing parties, and food assistance pipelines are adjusted accordingly.

In Somalia in 2008 and 2009, for example, food aid was a “source of competition, diversion, and manipulation. To prevent losses, food aid transporters were required to pay a deposit equal to the value of the food in order to ensure its arrival at the intended destination. ...Fears about the loss or diversion of food aid made donors warier and access by agencies more difficult” (Otite, 2014).

Finally, crisis results in outright loss through the destruction of food and food-producing assets. Contributing to this, Simmons (2013) asserts that production equipment, animals, seed supplies, and food stocks are often casualties of crisis, deliberately destroyed by competing factions. Such destruction reduces food availability in the short term, but it also prevents a resumption of productive activities and recovery of livelihoods in post-crisis periods. During the Mozambique civil war, “there was a two-thirds reduction in operational dams and plant nurseries, with 40 percent of rural facilities destroyed or eroded” (Shut, 2017).

Communal Crisis and Food Accessibility

Access to food is the most defining aspect of an individual’s food security. “Access” implies that consumers have both the physical and economic ability to acquire the food they need. Physical access is provided either by production on one’s own farm or by going to markets in which supplies are available. Economic access to food depends upon prices, incomes, and households’ competing expenditure needs. Delivery of food aid to populations by national or international humanitarian organizations can compensate, to some extent, for disruptions to either physical or economic access. Simmons (2013) asserts that populations forcibly displaced by violent crisis suffer the greatest reductions in their access to food. He further added that their economic access is hit hard as they are separated from their sources of livelihood and income. Also, their physical access may be further compromised if they move into areas where markets are limited. In some cases, refugees liquidate their assets to generate cash in hopes of being able to purchase foods that will sustain them in exile. In some cases, fleeing households are able to take food stocks with them, but often they leave with few reserves and quickly become dependent on international assistance.

Not only has communal crisis limited the production of food, but it also has the propensity to deny people access to food and the availability of food supply. According to the Food Research Policy Institute (2004) most crisis and post-crisis zones in sub-Saharan Africa are home to substantial numbers of food-insecure people. In most cases, the population in need of food only accounts, for a small percentage of the total food-insecure people. Hence, African countries are zones of high chronic food insecurity.

Sambe, Avanger and Alakali (2013), confirm that communal crisis has been the dominant cause of famine in sub-Saharan African countries hit by crises such as Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia and Mozambique. Sambe, Avanger and Alakali (2013), argue that the ability to produce, trade and access food is often directly and indirectly affected as a result of violence.

Further, due to the general lack of physical security in crisis zones, people may simply not feel safe travelling to markets (Perry & Borchard, 2010). Also, when the displaced people move to established towns or cities experiencing peaceful conditions, physical access to food supplies in markets may be within reach, but the migrants’ economic access is likely to be seriously affected (Simmons, 2013).

Again, communal crisis can have a significant effect on food prices which limits people’s access to food. As a consequence, prices of essential commodities and food products have skyrocketed making them unaffordable to the common man. Prices of rice, for instance, have been hitting historic highs of ₦40, 500 per bag, triggering panic amongst people across the country (market survey at Gbajimba, Guma cluster, 2022). Persistent increases in prices of other staple products such as fish, bread, meat, cereals, chicken, yam, onions, beans, vegetable oil, tomatoes, groundnut oil and others have aggravated the continued woes of the common man. Shortage of products and ever-increasing prices has created unsettling sentiments across communities, dampening the country’s efforts to end poverty and malnutrition

Theoretical Framework

Conflict Theory

The conflict perspective or conflict theory was derived from the ideas of Karl Marx (1818-1883). In general, the conflict perspective view society as made up of individuals competing for limited resources (Ritzer, 2012). According to the conflict perspective, society is constantly in conflict over resources, and that conflict drives social change. From the conflict perspective, change comes about through conflict between competing interests, not consensus or adaptation. All conflicts share common qualities. The first is that there is a kind of contact between the parties that are involved, secondly, the parties in conflict perceive conflicting views and finally, one of the parties always wants to redress existing contradictions (Ofuoku and Isife, 2009).

Relating to the communal crises, conflict theory is used because Tivland area in Benue state in the recent time is characterized by communal crises. In Tivland, the incessant communal crises are a result of the interest in land matter and other related resources. Due to divert interest between the different communities, there is always conflict leading to the insecurity of lives and properties in turn affecting food security.

Conflict theory is relevant in proving the fact that competition for access to natural resources between farmers and herders gives rise to crisis in Tivland of Benue state leading to a shortage of food availability in the state. It sets the background for the origin of the conflict in terms of access to the means of production. Every farming system such as nomadic cattle herding has a boundary, which separates it from the larger system, the environment. The boundary represents the limits in the larger system. Farmers increasingly compete with nomadic herders for farmland, pastures, water, trees and the use of rangeland in general. The new trend of land acquisition also pave way for communal crisis, this is the situation where land is now acquired through the rent, and the highest-paid farmer end up taking position of the land, this is what the conflict authors describe in their early statement of the relationship in the society as the have and have not keeps on struggling. The researcher, therefore, uses conflict theory to explain the relationship between communal crisis on food security in Tivland area of Benue state.

Methods

The study was conducted in Tivland area of Benue state. Out of the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Benue state, the Tiv nation is made up of 14 LGAs spread into zone 'A' (Buruku, Logo, Katsina – Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Ukum, Ushongo, and Vandeikya LGAs) and zone 'B' (Gboko, Guma, Gwer East, Gwer West, Makurdi and Tarka LGAs). The researcher adopted the survey design. It was adopted because it allows for empirical inquiry of either a large or a small population. The study obtained cross-sectional data from the respondents by means of a questionnaire. However, because of the impossibility of reaching everybody in the LGAs for the study. out of the fourteen LGAs in Tiv-land (Guma, Gwer West, Tarka; and Vandeikya, Ukum and Logo LGAs) were randomly selected for the study from the two senatorial districts in the Tiv-land and the population of the study comprises of all farmers between the aged of 18 years and above. According to All Farmers Association of Nigeria, Benue State Chapter (AFAN) data base (2021), the selected local Government area have a total of 441,400 farmers. Using Salant and Dillman sample size determination formula (1994) with the characteristics at three levels of plus or minus ± 5 , ± 3 and ± 10 percent reliability level the study arrives at 384 sample size. The choice of the sampled population mentioned above is based on the fact that rural areas experience communal and ethnic crises more than urban dwellers. The LGAs selected for the study are spread across TivLand to ensure a fair presentation of facts that communal crises affect almost all in Tiv land. Both primary and secondary information were used for the study. Primary data were sourced from the 380 respondents through questionnaires and oral interviews. The questionnaire has two sections, that is sections A and B. Section A seeks information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. While section B elicits responses to the communal crisis and food security in Tiv-land. The questionnaire comprised a set of multiple choice. The first hypothesis was

tested using chi-square at a 0.05 level of significance while the second hypothesis was tested with linear regression at the same 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of the farmers based on socio-demographic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	241	63.4
Female	139	36.6
Total	380	100
Age		
19 years and below	55	14.5
20-35 years	99	26.1
36-51 years	144	37.9
52 years and above	82	21.6
Total	380	100
Marital status		
Single	156	41.1
Married	177	46.6
Divorced	41	10.8
Widow(er)	6	1.6
Total	380	100
Level of education		
No formal education	42	11.1
Primary	109	28.7
Secondary	218	57.4
Tertiary	11	2.9
Total	380	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.1 showed that 63.4% (241) of the respondents are males while 36.6% (139) are females. On age distribution of showed that, 39.7% (144) of the respondents were between the ages of 36-51 years, 26.1% (99) made up those between the age range 20-35 years and 21.6% (82) represented those from 52 years and above. Meanwhile 14.5% (55) of the respondents were those at the age of 19 years and below. Majority of the respondents falling within the age brackets 36-51 years is an indication that agriculture in the study area is mostly practiced by the active population. With regards to marital status, 46.6% (177) of the respondents were married, 41.1% (156) single, while 10.8% (41) were divorced, and 1.6% (6) widow (ers). Most respondents (177) were married in order to have a large household size for agricultural activities which are predominantly carried out manually.

Concerning the level of education, 57.4% (218) of the respondents had acquired secondary education, 28.7% (109) had obtained primary education, while 11.1% (42) had no formal education. Respondents with tertiary qualification numbered 11 (2.9%) respondents.

Table 2: Types of communal crises in the study area

Types of crises	Frequency (n=380)	Percentage (100%)
Intra		
Land crises	223	58.7
Farmer-grazer crises	307	80.8
Leadership crises	50	13.2
Inter		
Herdsmen attacks	320	84.2

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Multiple responses recorded (n = 380)

Results in Table 4.2 revealed that 84.2% (320) of the respondents had suffered herdsmen attacks while 80.8% (307) of respondents had experienced farmer-grazer crisis. Table 4.2 equally revealed that 58.7% of the respondents had experienced land crisis., leadership crisis was reported by 13.2% (50) of the respondents. This type of crisis was mostly common among leaders of different council wards in the various local government areas.

Table 3: Effect of communal crises on food security in the study area

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Food availability		
Reduce the quantity of crop/animal produced	152	40
Reduce the quantity of food in storage	92	24.2
Increase in varietal scarcity	136	35.8
Total	380	100
Food accessibility		
High prices of the available food	191	50.3
Difficulties in distributing the available food	110	28.9
Reduce food donation	79	20.8
Total	380	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.3 revealed that 40% (152) of the respondents recorded a reduction in the quantity of food crops and animals produced as a result of the communal crises. 24.2% (92) mention reduction in the quantity of food in storage availability. 35.8% (136) of the respondents blamed varietal scarcity of food to communal crises, 50.3% (191) of the respondents, communal crises have led to an increase in food prices, Communal crises equally affected food distribution 28.9% (110) of the inhabitants of the study area could not distribute their produce to their family members in the same Local Government Area and 20.8% (79) of the respondents attributed the inability to donate food to others to their losses caused by the communal crises

A 64-year-old male cassava farmer from Saghev council ward in Guma local Government Area on the 16th August, 2022 lamented thus:

... in this community, we depend mostly on cassava and its products. In 2020, almost a hectare of my household cassava farm was cleared-off because of land dispute. This led to a mark reduction in our harvest. My two wives, eleven children and I had to cut down our quantity and our number of meals a day to two and later to one. Even with this, we were still unable to sustain ourselves as the quantity harvested got finished earlier.... (IDI, 2022).

An interviewee a 32 years old farmer from Logo cluster on the 23 August 2022 explain that;

Ooo..... farmers in the study area produce crops like rice, yams soybeans, cassava, guinea corn and maize among others. Most farmers produced these crops basically for household sustenance. Excesses or surplus were sold and food crops as well as complements not produced by the households were purchased. Communal crises have led to a decrease in the production of these food

crops hence reducing the quantity of food as well as the complements consumed by the farmers (IDI, 2022)

Another interviewee from Gwer east report on the same date that;

Different varieties of produce used to be available in their local markets up to when new harvest starts coming out. This have not been the case since communal crises became common in their land (IDI, 2022).

A young female farmer of age 34 from Avihijime council ward in Gwer east local Government Area on the 19th July, 2022 expressed frustration thus:

... herdsmen attacked us and burnt our yam barn and five bags of unhulled rice. This led to serious food crises in my household where we took refused. We, the affected lived for close to four months on donations from well-wishers and therefore, we could not consume our preferred meal for this length of time not even to talk about our desired number of meals a day.... (IDI, 2022).

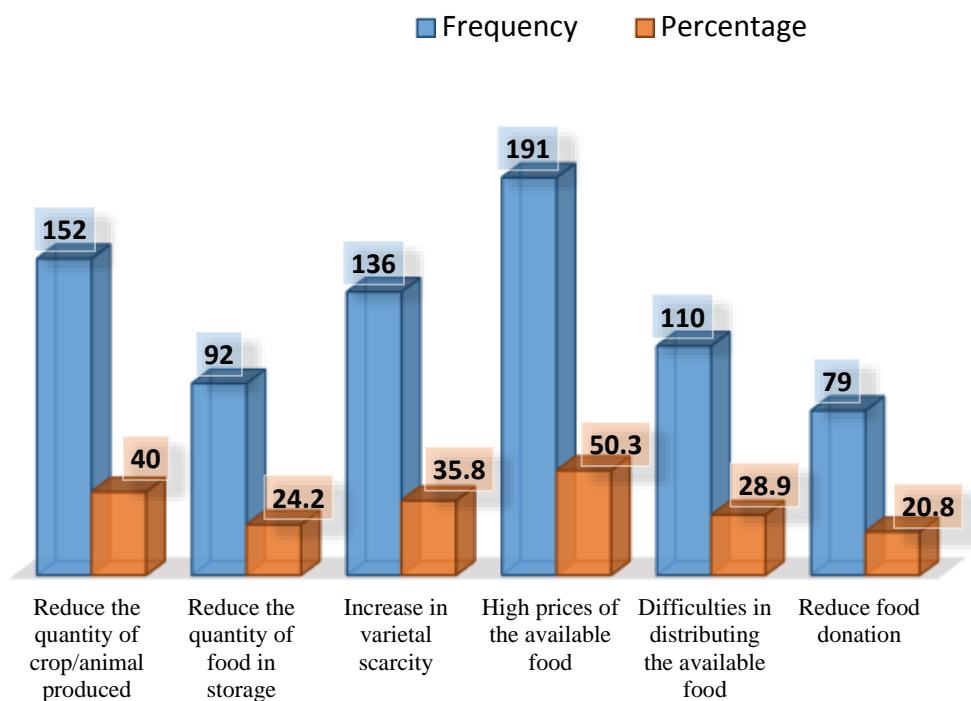


Figure 1: Histogram representation of communal crises on food availability and accessibility in the study area

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

Table 4: Chi-square determining whether difference exist between communal crises and food availability

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.275 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	5.277	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.511	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	380		

Source; field survey, 2022

Table 5 showed the value of chi-square (χ^2) to be 12.275 at 2 degree of freedom (df) and a P-value of 0.000. The P-value of 0.000 is less than the critical value of 0.05 implying that there is a significant effect between communal crises and food availability among farmers in the study area. This therefore, means that communal crises reduce food availability. The study has shown that communal crises reduces the quantity of both crops and animals produced as well as the quantity of harvest in storage resulting to food insecurity. Therefore, the assumption that communal crises have no significant effect on food availability is rejected. The study has revealed that communal crises significantly reduces the quantity of food in the study.

Hypothesis Two: Communal crises have no significant effect on food accessibility

Table 5; Linear Regression predicting the effect of communal crisis on food accessibility

Variable	Unstandardized Beta (B)	Standard error for unstandardized beta Se B	Standardized beta β	t-value	significant level/P
Constant	1.055	0.309		3.417	0.01
Communal crisis and food accessibility	.412	0.097	0.229	4.253	0.00
R square	.232				

Source: Field Survey 2022.

Note: Regression is significant at $P < 0.05$ level (2-tailed)

The regression presented on the above table shows that communal crisis has effect on food accessibility in the study area. Communal crisis, $B = .412$, $\beta 0.229$, $P \text{ value} = 0.00$ i.e. $P < 0.05$. The table clearly shows that an increase in communal crisis by one (1) unit would lead to reduction of food accessibility by .412 units as observed in the table. The study therefore rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis that communal crises have significant effect on food accessibility. It then means, efforts should be made to reduce communal crisis in other to improve on food accessibility.

Discussion of findings

The purpose of this paper has been to assess the effect of communal crisis on food security in Tivland area of Benue state. According to the respondents, in table 2, two types of communal crises exist in the study area, the intra and inter communal crisis. Land crisis was mostly between indigenes, and strangers., these crises occur between farmers and grazers of animals especially cattle. This finding agree with the finding of Otite (2014) who looks at conflict as: ...a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals. Such conflicts may take place between individuals.... Inter-group as well as intra-group conflicts are perennial features of social life.

In table 3 the study found out that communal crisis leads to increase in food prices by 50.3% and further led to a decrease in food availability. It is equally important to note that the affordability situation of the farmers was further worsen by low revenue. Inhabitants of the study area depended primarily on income from farm produce and with a decrease in production, farmers had little or nothing to sell and afford what they do not produce. The decrease in inhabitants' availability and accessibility capacity has led to about 24.2% reduction in the quality and the quantity of food consumed. It has equally led to a decrease in the nutritive value of the diet of the inhabitants as they tend to consume mostly one food type (mostly what they produce) continuously for 2-4 months. This finding is in line with Sambe, Avanger and Alakali (2013), who confirm that communal crisis has been the dominant cause of famine in sub-Saharan African countries hit by crises such as Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia and Mozambique. Sambe, Avanger and Alakali (2013), further state that communal crisis affect ability to produce, trade and access food is often directly and indirectly affected as a result of violence. Messer Cohen and Marchione (2002) also affirmed that communal conflict crowds out normal economic activities such as food production and destroys the necessary infrastructure and cut off access to food supplies thereby subjecting people in such zones to high risk of food insecurity.

Also in table 4 & 5, the tested hypotheses showed that communal crises reduce the quantity of both crops and animals produced as well as the quantity of harvest in storage resulting to food insecurity. This finding also cerebrated with Simmons (2013) who asserts that production equipment, animals, seed supplies, and food stocks are often casualties of communal crisis, deliberately destroyed by competing factions. Such destruction reduces food availability in the short term, but it also prevents a resumption of productive activities and recovery of livelihoods in post-crisis periods and that crisis results in outright loss through the destruction of food and food-producing assets.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that communal crises have result to food insecurity as the crises have contributed to insufficient food. The study also concluded that the measures put in place to resolve or minimize/prevent communal crises have not been effective reason why the crises keep reoccurring and causing more destructions. Since communal crises are both caused by internal and external factors, the affected local government areas, as well as the neighboring local government areas or the States should come together and form a common alliance. This will facilitate the identification of the root cause of the crises, the fishing out of the defaulters, and the proper settlement of the crises, dialogue as a virtue should be embrace by communities having the challenge of land/any matter concerning their welfare, sensitization of Farmers/herdsmen: There is need for the educational interventionist role of the Extension Service in farmers'/herdsmen conflicts, law prohibiting open grazing should be revisited with strong emphasis on enforcing the law accordingly and deployment of security forces to the affected area will also yield positive result.

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