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Impacts of Banditry on Food Security in Katsina State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Banditry is one of the major forms of insecurity that has affected the northwest geopolitical zone for the past decade. Banditry has affected all facets of human life among which is food security in the States affected including Katsina State. The objectives of the article are to explain the impacts of banditry on food security and highlight the recent efforts of the Government in tackling banditry to improve food security among others. The methodology adopted to generate data for the study is through the use of focus group discussion involving two groups of five persons each from the LGAs that are affected by banditry which is sampled for the study namely Jibia, Batsari, Safana, Faskari, and Dandume. The results have shown that banditry has negatively affected food security in Katsina State. These negative impacts include killing and kidnapping of farmers, chasing of farmers out of their farmlands, seizing of farmlands, theft of cattle, burning and raiding of grain silos, and blocking of local trade routes. The Federal and State Governments are making efforts towards tackling banditry and improving food security among others. These efforts are still on-going and have not achieved the desired objectives. It is therefore recommended that decisive measures should be adopted to tackle banditry for improved food security.

Keywords: Impacts, banditry, food security, Katsina State

INTRODUCTION

A bandit is a robber or outlaw belonging to a gang, who uses weapons to steal or rob from the people and typically operating in an isolated or lawless area of a country. Banditry is a term used to refer to acts of robbery and violence in areas where the rule of law has broken down (Collins, 2000). Banditry consists of the organization of armed bands for the purpose of attacking state or social institutions or enterprises or individual persons. Participation in such bands and in the attacks committed by them is equally regarded as banditry (Collins, 2000).

Historically, banditry has existed and operated in different parts of the world since the 19th century when bandits riding mostly on horse backs move from their hideouts to attack villages and then retreated back to their hideouts. In Europe, bandits have existed in mainly mountainous areas of Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey (Cassia, 1993). In Asia, bandits have existed in several countries such as Iran, Philippines and India (Bankoff, 1998). In India, bandits are called Daku in Hindi Language which the British colonialist coined as dacoity during the colonial period. Thus dacoity has become a term for banditry in the Indian subcontinent where bandits have operated for many years in north and north central India. One of the notable dacoits was Gabbar Singh who inspired the famous 1975 Bollywood film Sholay (Flames) based on his life. Therefore, banditry has a rich and lucrative history throughout south Asia and despite continued anti banditry efforts, the problem of banditry persists in India presently (Dmella, 2018).

Banditry is another security challenge in Africa where bandits have continued to ravage the horn of Africa, East and Central Africa and the trans-Saharan trade routes.
from Niger Republic all the way to Libya (Aregbesola, 2020). Banditry has existed in parts of Chad and around Lake Chad and they also have significant presence in parts of Southern Africa (Aregbesola, 2020). In West Africa, the prevalence and severity of banditry has contributed to the rising increase in regional insecurity with a potential threat to regional integration of the sub-region (Abdullahi, 2019). Reports have shown that some of the bandits from some countries of the West African sub-region such as Niger Republic and Mali were invited to carry out large scale attacks in some countries of the sub-region. They moved through the porous West African borders with their arms to assist their fellow bandits in carrying out large scale or reprisal attacks.

In Nigeria, banditry came as a result of nearly four decades of unresolved conflicts between settled cultivators and nomadic herding communities that wander on the high plains of northern Nigeria particularly the North West geo-political zone in states such as Zamfara. Banditry in Zamfara State started since around 2009 and increased in 2011 especially after the general elections (Anka, 2017). In fact, Zamfara state has been the epicenter of banditry in Nigeria, where most of the bandit’s leaders were based and from Zamfara state forests they would move riding on motor cycles to other states such as Katsina, to operate and return to their forest dens (Farouq and Chukwu, 2020). Therefore by the year 2010, banditry had started in Katsina State primarily in the seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) that shared boundary with Zamfara state namely Jibia, Batsari, Safana, Danmusa, Kankara, Faskari and Sabua.

Since banditry involved acts of robbery and violence on the people particularly rural dwellers who mainly engaged in farming, cattle rearing and other food production activities it is bound to have impacts on food security. Food security according to the World Food Summit 1996 “exists when all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life” (FAO, 2008). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2010) simply defines food security as the availability of food in terms of production, distribution and consumption.

Any form of violence that leads to insecurity in rural areas where majority of the people are farmers is bound to affect food security anywhere in the world. The United Nations in September 2020 observed that attacks by Al-Shabaab insurgent group will deepen food insecurity into the year 2021 in Mozambique (Channels, 2020). In Nigeria, the Federal Government has realized that banditry has posed a serious threat to farming communities in the northern parts of the country. Therefore in April 2017, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in conjunction with the Minister of Interior initiated the formation of a special unit of Agro-Rangers Corps to protect farmers and farming investments throughout the country (The Sun, 2017). The use of the Agro-Rangers was expected to forestall attacks on farmlands and boost farmer’s confidence to work on their farms without fear of attacks, thereby guaranteeing the Federal Government avowed food security plans (NSCDC, 2020). On the occasion of the June 12 Democracy Day Speech President Buhari announced the deployment of 5,000 Agro-Rangers to offer protection to farmers and farming investments across the country (Oyeleke, 2020). In December, 2018 the Minister of Interior observed that the persistent attacks on residents of Zamfara state by bandits would affect food security in Nigeria as a whole during an on-the-spot assessment of the activities of bandits in the state (Agency Report, 2018).

In the month of May 2020, some farmers in Katsina state warned that the resurgence of nefarious activities of bandits if not properly tackled by security agencies and state government, would create unprecedented food crisis in the state (Sardauna, 2020). The President of All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), on the occasion of World Food Day 16th October, identified the present challenges of attaining food security which included corona virus pandemic, occurrence of flood disasters, drought in some parts, and insecurity especially banditry in the North West (FRCN, 2020). This paper therefore examines one of the challenges of food security which is banditry in the north-west geo-political zone using Katsina state as a case study. The aim of the paper is to examine the impacts of banditry on food security in Katsina state. The objectives of the study are to:

(i) Examine agricultural production and food security in Katsina state.
(ii) Explain the impacts of banditry on food security in Katsina state.
(iii) Highlight the recent efforts of the government in tackling Banditry to improve food security.
(iv) Recommend measures towards tackling banditry to improve food security in the state.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted to collect data for the study included field visit to the LGAs where banditry is endemic in Katsina State. These LGAs were eight in number which included Jibia, Batsari, Safana, Danmusa, Kankara, Faskari, Dandume and Sabua. Out of these eight, five LGAs representing 61.00% were purposively sampled for the study, with three LGAs located in the northern part namely Jibia, Batsari and Safana. Then two other LGAs that are located in the southern part of the state namely Faskari and Dandume. This sample ensured that all the parts of the state that were affected by banditry were sampled and represented in the study.

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Jibia LGA was visited on 30th September, Batsari LGA on 1st October, Safana LGA on 9th October, Dandume LGA on 10th October and Faskari LGA on 11th October 2020.

During the field visits to the five sampled LGA, direct observations were made on the agrarian nature of the LGA especially as the visit was conducted during the crop harvesting and preparation time of the year.

In each LGA, two Focus Groups were formed consisting of five persons each to make the focus groups consisting of a total of fifty (50) persons. The focus groups discussed questions relating to agricultural production and food security, impacts of banditry on food security, recent efforts of the government in tackling banditry and recommendations towards tackling the banditry to improve food security. The two authors acted as facilitators for the focus group discussions in all the sampled LGAs. The participants also narrated incidences of bandit’s activities and attacks which affected food security in Katsina state which were tabulated and included in the study. The use of the Focus Group was considered a good way of gathering in-depth information about a community’s thoughts and opinions on the topic of impact of banditry on food security. Secondary sources of data were collected through desk research from journal articles, conference paper, textbook, keynote addresses, security assessment reports, daily newspapers and internet sourced materials that are relevant to the study. The data collected from the field visits, Focus Group discussions and the secondary sources were analyzed using discipline analysis in form of tabulations, percentages and averages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Agricultural production and food security in Katsina state

All the participants 100% in the Focus Groups observed that Katsina State was among the states of the federation that were agrarian in nature. Majority of the population were engaged in agriculture as full time or part time farmers. According to El-Ladan and Sani (2012), Katsina State has more than 80,000 farming families and cultivating more than 1.5 million hectares of farmlands becoming one of the largest producers of maize and cotton in the country. Other crops produced included food crops such as millet, guinea corn, beans, soya beans, potatoes, sesame, rice, wheat etc. cash crops produced included groundnut sand wheat. Majority of the farmers engaged in rainy season or rain-fed farming as the state was blessed with abundant land for the cultivation of wide variety of crops (Ladan, 2017a). The table below shows the monthly schedules of rainy season farming. From (Table 1), it can be observed that schedules of the farming season starts in the month of March/April and continues up to the month of October.

From the clearance of land and taking manure to the harvesting of crops, farmers have to visit the farmlands several times depending on the month and prevailing production activity. Most of the farms are located in the outskirts of the towns and villages far away from homes of the people. Some farmers use domestic animals such as donkeys as means of transportation to the farm while others use the power of bulls to make ridges for planting crops.

In some parts of the state where irrigation farming is practiced, the dry season farming commences as soon as the rain-fed farming stops. Katsina State has sixty (60) dams that are categorized as large, medium and small scale dams which are utilized for irrigation purposes (Zango and Rafindadi, 2015). According to El-Ladan and Sani (2012), the three large dams at Zobe, Jibia and Sabke had a combined water capacity of 350,000,000 ha and a combined irrigable land of 15,450 ha. There is also irrigation farming along streams and rivers that are found in the state. In addition some dams are presently under construction and rehabilitation to further boost the irrigation farming potentials of the state. One of the dams under construction is Unguwar Mazadu dam in Dandume LGA and those under rehabilitation include Dallanje dam in Bindawa LGA. The crops produced under irrigation farming include mainly vegetables such as pepper, tomatoes, onions, cabbage, garden egg and food crops such as wheat and rice. Table 2 shows the monthly schedules of irrigation farming in Katsina State.

Animal rearing is practiced on the plains of the state with pastures provided by the Sudan Savannah vegetation type found in the state. In fact, Katsina state possesses a large livestock population mainly made up of cattle, goats, sheep, donkey and camels. These livestock are reared by the indigenous Hausa and the Fulani people who are historically cattle reapers producing milk, sour milk (Nono) and cheese. The livestock reared by the people are used as sources of income, milk, oil and food in general. In addition the bye product of the livestock are allowed to decompose with corn stalks, grasses, shrubs and household refuse to become manure that is taken to the farm (Ladan, 2017b).

Fishing activities are carried out along the rivers of the state and on small, medium and large scale dams such as Zobe dam, Jibia dam, Daberam dam, Sabke dam, Ajiwa dam and Mairuwa dam that are located in different parts of the state. Some of the fish caught are sold at stalls and markets close to such dam examples include Dannahola fish selling stalls in Daura LGA and fish selling stalls close to Zobe dam in Dutseinma LGA.

The crops produced using both rainy season and dry season farming including the livestock and fishes were sold at local markets in the LGAs while some of the products are transported to the weekly markets that abound in the state. The weekly markets refer to the...
Table 1: Monthly schedules of rainy season farming in Katsina state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months of the year</th>
<th>Crop production activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March/April</td>
<td>Clearance of land and taking manure to the farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>First rain falls and the planting season commenced especially in southern LGAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Continuous falling of first rains and the planting of crops continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Weeding of unwanted plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Inspection of crops planted on the farmlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Continuous inspection of crops planted on farmlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Harvesting of crops, preparation and transportation home including food storage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Monthly schedules of irrigation farming activities in Katsina State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of a year</th>
<th>Crop production activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September/October</td>
<td>Clearing of land for irrigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Transplanting of crops in the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November/December</td>
<td>Weeding of unwanted plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Watering of crops on farmland and gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Continuous watering of crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Harvesting of crops and transportation to the home or market</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ladan (2016)

Most families experience food insecurity when the head of the households are dead. These farmers are heads of households who are married with children and their death adversely affects the other family members in terms of food supply. Example of killing of farmers by bandits took place at Yargamji village of Batsari LGA where on 6th July 2020, famers were on the farm working after an overnight rain, the bandits numbering over 200 shot sporadically killing 15 farmers and injuring several others (Aminu, 2020). On 10th September, 2020, three famers were also killed by bandits in Dandume LGA, one of the most agrarian areas in the state (Erezi, 2020). In fact most of the people killed by the bandits in the villages of the five LGAs sampled for the study are either farmers or cattle rearers whose death means their families and dependents suffered from food shortage at the family level. In some cases, the families of the deceased farmers or cattle rearers have no option than to move to internally displaced persons camps where their source of food could be guaranteed for some time by the Government.

Impacts of banditry on food security in Katsina State

All the participants in the discussion (100%) observed that banditry has brought negative impacts on food security in Katsina state. This is because banditry characterized by killings, kidnappings, threats, robberies, theft, burnings, raiding and blocking of local trade routes which are highlighted below:

Killing of farmers

This is one of the most devastating impacts of banditry in Katsina state whereby farmers were killed by the bandits.

Kidnapping of farmers

This is another devastating impact of banditry where farmers were kidnapped when they go to the farm to work. In case where famers were kidnapped, they were taken to the forest and will not be released till large sums of moneys are paid as ransom. This payment of ransom impoverishes the famers and in some cases the farmers had no option but to sell their properties including their farmlands to get money to pay ransom. In Dandume LGA some of the farmers in the villages sold their farmlands to buy a house at Dandume town to escape kidnapping. One of the most recent cases of kidnapping
was at Mallamawa village of Jibia LGA on 4th October 2020, where 22 farmers working on the farmlands were kidnapped while some managed to escape (Ibrahim, 2020). One of the farmers that narrowly escaped lamented that:

“In these villages, we depend mostly on two things as source of livelihood farming and cattle rearing. Farming has become difficult due to insecurity. Domestic animal rearing has also become difficult as bandits have rustled our cattle and presently they are abducting us on our farms. Am calling on the government to come to our aid as we cannot migrate to the cities since we have no job to do in the cities and all that we have are in the villages. Anybody that is used to village life cannot stay in the city as the city consumes wealth”.

Chasing farmers out of their farms

Bandits chased farmers out of their farms when they saw them working there. As the bandits were well armed they ran after the famers on their motorcycle with the intention to hurt or kill and the farmer had no option than to run since the farmers were not armed. For example, on the week of 3rd of May 2020 at the outskirts of Maigora, Sabon Layin Galadima and Unguwar Tsamiya villages of Faskari LGA some farmers were on their farmland in preparation for the farming season when they were chased out by the bandits telling them “who said to you there will be farming this season?” From these incidences of chasing farmers out of their farmlands, other farmers became scared to begin preparation for the farming season as the bandits even moved in broad day light on their motorcycles to see if there was any evidence of farming activity to destroy it. In certain instances it was the sound of gun shots coming from the forest or sound of gun shot in the air that chased farmers out of their farmlands. This was the instance outside Shekewa and Yargamji villages of Batsari LGA in the first week of October 2020.

Seizing of farmlands

This occurs where farmlands are located very close of the forest hideout of the bandits. It also occurs outside villages that have been completely deserted due to incessant attacks by the bandits. The bandits seize the farmlands and use them as grazing fields for the large number of cattle they acquired illegally through cattle rustling activities. In some areas where the bandits have not seized the farmlands, the bandits drive their cattle into the farmlands to eat up crops that have started to germinate after the first rains were recorded. This was the case between 10th – 12th May 2020 at farmlands located outside Gauren Dutse, Yar Laraba and Shekewa villages of Batsari LGA.

Theft of cattle

Bandits engage in theft of cattle or cattle rustling in all the five LGAs sampled for the study. When the bandits attack villages, they shot sporadically into the air to scare away the villagers and create an atmosphere of chaos as the villagers run for safety. The bandits then direct a group among them that specialize in cattle theft to enter the houses and steal cattle from where they are kept. Besides farming, cattle’s rearing is another source of livelihood in the villages. Therefore the theft of cattle deprives the villagers of their source of livelihood and halt cattle rearing activities. It deprives the villagers of source of farm labour use to make ridges to plant crops. According to the Focus Groups the large farmlands in the LGAs were cultivated with the use of oxen and since they were rustled such large farmlands were left uncultivated.

Burning and raiding of grain silos

During large scale attacks that involve large number of bandits which lasted for some hours, the bandits engaged in the burning of local grains silos (called rumbu in Hausa language). These grain silos contained foodstuffs that were stored by the farmers which could last for many months but were burnt by the bandits which created lack of food for the villagers. In some cases, the grain silos were raided and the food stolen by the bandits creating a food scarcity in the households. The bandits also burgled local shops that sold foodstuffs and stole the food items which made foodstuffs to be scarce even in the local shops of the villages. Example here includes the attack on Dankar and Tsauwa villages of Batsari LGA on 14th February 2020. The attack on Unguwar Gizo in Faskari LGA on 29th May 2020 is another example of these kinds of attacks.

Blocking of local trade routes

These are local trade routes that are found along roads linking rural markets where buyers and sellers of foodstuffs pass through especially on market days. The bandits blocked such routes to intercept the vehicles with the traders inside. The bandits snatched foodstuffs intended for sale at the markets; money meant for the purchase of foodstuffs or even kidnapped the traders till
Table 3: Selected bandits activities/attacks and their impacts on food security.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and location</th>
<th>Nature of activity or attack</th>
<th>Impacts on food security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} – 5\textsuperscript{th} November, 2019 at Chambala and Shekewa villages, Batsari LGA</td>
<td>Bandits chased out farmers out of their farmlands when they went to harvest crops.</td>
<td>Farm crops lie un-harvested leading to wastage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17\textsuperscript{th} December 2019 around Jibia dam, Jibia LGA</td>
<td>Bandits moved on motorcycles on cattle routes passing around Jibia dam.</td>
<td>Some irrigation farmers whose farms are located close to the routes abandoned their farmlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18\textsuperscript{th} December 2019 around Jibia dam, Jibia LGA</td>
<td>Bandits move on motorcycles on cattle routes passing inside Jibia dam.</td>
<td>Fishermen fishing decide not to stay on the dam site throughout the night to avoid attacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} January, 2020 at Mata Mulki village of Batsari LGA</td>
<td>Bandits kidnapped 6 teenage girls working on the farm but drop them and fled into their forest hideout.</td>
<td>Fear of going to the farm to work by the girls and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18\textsuperscript{th} April 2020 at Makaurachi and Dauna of Safana LGA</td>
<td>Bandits continued reprisal attacks in Safana LGA killing 23 people who were farmers.</td>
<td>Loss of heads of households who are bread winners for their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20\textsuperscript{th} April 2020 at Sabon Layin Galadima Faskari LGA</td>
<td>Bandits attacked the village at night burning and stealing some domestic animals.</td>
<td>Loss of cattle rearing, source of income and farm labour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22\textsuperscript{nd} May 2020 at farmland outside Dandume town, Dandume LGA</td>
<td>Bandits attacked a farmer on the farm forcing him to hand over two bulls. Bandits attacked the village killing 3 farmers, stealing foodstuffs kept in grain silos.</td>
<td>Halt to farming as ridges could not be made since the bulls were stolen. Loss of bread winners and shortage of food supply due to the theft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12\textsuperscript{th} July 2020 at Mai iyali village of Faskari LGA</td>
<td>Bandits attacked a farm house to rustle 39 cows and 6 sheep from a cattle rearer.</td>
<td>Halt to cattle rearing, source of manure, farm labour and income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14\textsuperscript{th} September 2020 at Daulai village of Safana LGA</td>
<td>Bandits attacked the village, kidnapped 7 persons and bugled shops to steal foodstuffs.</td>
<td>Threats to personal security of the villagers and shortage of foodstuffs that the people could buy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Work (2020).

Large sums of monies were paid. For example, on Sunday 5\textsuperscript{th} January 2020, the bandits blocked a section of Jibia to Batsari road to kidnap 38 traders returning from Jibia weekly market. Also on three consecutive days 21\textsuperscript{st}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} and 23\textsuperscript{rd} February 2020, the bandits mounted a road block along Runka to Marina road in Safana LGA to rob travelers of their money and cell phones. On 20\textsuperscript{th} October 2020 the bandits again blocked the Danmusa to Runka road to rob traders coming to the weekly market at Runka, Safana LGA. In certain cases, the bandits even attacked the weekly markets where these traders meet to exchange their goods for money. For example, on the 17\textsuperscript{th} October, 2020 the bandits attacked Gurbi weekly market in Jibia LGA killing two traders, injuring one woman and kidnapping some people who came to the market on that day. The (Table 3) shows selected bandits activities and attacks and their impacts on food security. From Table 3, it can be observed that there are serious threats posed by banditry to food production in all the five LGAs. Since November 2019, the attacks have affected food security as bandits chased out farmers from their farms which affected harvesting of crops. The movement of bandits on motorcycles armed with guns close to areas where fishing and irrigation farming are taking place has adversely impacted on these activities. From the table, it can also be observed that the bandits engaged in killing, kidnapping, burning and stealing of foodstuffs and domestic animals. All the activities shown above have negatively impacted on food security.

In villages where the bandit’s attacks are incessant or there are real threats of attacks, many people especially women and children flee such areas to become internally displaced persons (IDPs) who take shelter at IDP camps.
or at the houses of friends and relations. On the date of the field visit to Faskari IDP, 10th October 2020 the number at the camps was 1,123 persons that fled from eight villages. The IDPs depended on the food provided by the local and state governments which to a large extent was not adequate. Also some of the IDPs that stayed with friends and relatives eat from the food cooked in the houses which made the food inadequate. According to the respondents in Dandume town, most of the large scale farmers that produced large amount of crops had abandoned farming due to the threats of attacks on the farm lands and at their homes in villages. Also the threat of kidnapping had forced the large scale farmers to abandoned farming in Dandume and Faskari LGAs and fled for safety at nearby Funtua town.

Recent efforts of the government towards tackling banditry and improving food security

The governments at the local, state and federal levels have made efforts to tackle banditry with a view to improving food security among others.

(i) In September 2019, the State Government initiated a dialogue session with the bandits with the State Governor himself traveling to the closest village bordering the forest hideouts of the bandits. These dialogue sessions with the bandits led to an amnesty programme on the bandits by the state government which brought relative peace and security for three months after which there was a resurgence of the banditry by December, 2019 which resulted to almost daily attacks in Dutisinma LGA during the month.

(ii) Katsina State Government was among the 19 state governments that requested the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) to deploy agro-rangers corps to the states to provide security to enable farmers, fishermen and cattle rearers carryout their activities without fear of attacks. These agro-rangers were deployed to Borno state which enabled farmers to go back to their farms but only six rangers were deployed to Katsina state who were inadequate to cover even one LGA.

(iii) There were joint police and military operations that cordoned and engaged bandits in gun duels in the forest areas of the five LGAs. In the process of these joint operations cows, sheep and goats in the custody of the bandits were recovered and handed back to their rightful owners (Isah, 2020).

(iv) There was another joint military operation between Katsina and Zamfara state that included aerial attacks on bandits’ camps which lead to the rescue of kidnapped victims from the Rugu forest that borders the two states. Two of the captives rescued were farmers from Zandam village of Jibia LGA on 24th April 2020 who went to the farm to drop manure in preparation for the 2020 farming season.

(v) In the month of June 2020, Nigerian Army Operation Accord on several occasions responded to distressed calls when bandits attacked villages such as Kauran Bugaje in Jibia LGA and Mararrabar Maigora in Faskari LGA. Several bandits were killed others arrested with their operational weapons and motorcycles confiscated by the army.

(vi) Following protest against the rising insecurity in Katsina, the state capital on 16th July 2020, the federal government sent to Katsina top national security officials including Inspector General of Polie (IGP), National Security Adviser (NSA), Chief of Defense Intelligence, Director General National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and Director Department of State Security (DSS) to discuss with the state government and other relevant stakeholders to map out strategies on the way forward and proffer solution to the problem of banditry in the state.

(vii) On the 2nd of July 2020, the State Government organized a prayer session involving over 200 people mostly Qur’anic reciters at Banu Coomassie mosque, Katsina to seek for divine intervention to end banditry in Katsina state. The State Governor himself was at the prayer session with other top government functionaries. Again on August 2020 the state government directed local government councils to hold more prayer sessions seeking for divine intervention which were held at the local government headquarters.

(viii) The Nigerian Army established a Super Camp 4 at Faskari, Faskari LGA on 6th July 2020 code named “Operation Sahel Sanity” with troops, weapons and operational vehicles that have responded to distress calls by villagers and engaged bandits in gun duels and also raided the forest hideouts of the bandits among other operations. From the 6th – 30th July 2020, the operation succeeded in killing 80 bandits, rescued 17 kidnapped victims, arrest bandits’ informers, recovered 943 cattle and 632 sheep and goats.

(ix) Local government councils continued to assist vigilante groups in the fight against banditry in the state. For example, Dandume local government council assisted the local vigilante group headed by Dan Zaki with office accommodation, some operational materials and allowances to enable them complement the security forces in the fight against banditry in the LGA and neighboring LGAs such as Faskari and Sabua.

(x) The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) concluded plans in early November 2020 to construct a run way and ancillary facilities for the deployment of four unmanned Aerial Combat Vehicles (UACVs) or drones in Gusau, the Zamfara State capital which was to serve the entire North West including Katsina state. This construction and deployment of UACVs were to enhance surveillance and combat abilities of the troops deployed to the North West thereby boosting the effectiveness and efficiency of air operations in the fight against banditry (NAF, 2020).
Conclusion

In Nigeria, various forms of insecurity such as insurgency and banditry have negative impacts on food security in the country. One of the most recent was the fatal attacks by Boko Haram insurgents on farmers working on rice fields in Zabarmari in Jere LGA of Borno state on 28th November, 2020. This attack portends danger to food security as many farmers are very scared to go to their farms to engage in irrigation farming among other food producing activities. Banditry, particularly in the North West has also negatively impacted food security in states such as Katsina. The implications of the impacts means that there is reduction in the number of farmers due to their killings, there is impoverishment of farmers due to kidnappings, farmers are not willing to go to their farmlands as they will be chased out, cattle rearing has become difficult, there is reduction in the quantity of crops stored in grain silos, there are risks of attacks when farmers visit local weekly markets and many farmers have become dependent on food provided either at IDP camps or at the houses of friends and relatives. These clearly indicate the negative impacts of banditry on food security in Katsina state. The negative impacts have also completely affected the farming schedules of both rain-fed and irrigation farming in the state. The Federal, State and local Governments have made efforts towards tackling the banditry but the situation still persists with even reports that bandits are imposing taxes on some farmers in some LGAs to allow them to cultivate their crops. The Governments have to continue the efforts and even adopt new measures towards tackling the banditry to improve food security in Katsina state.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in order to end banditry towards improving food security in Katsina state.

(i) NSCDC should deploy enough agro-rangers corps to Katsina state with a view to provide security for farmers as they presently harvest crops and to ensure that the irrigation farming season commences smoothly.

(ii) Troops of Operation Sahel Sanity stationed in Faskari; Faskari LGA should strive to device new strategies in confronting the bandits and ending banditry in Katsina state. This is important considering the fact that the bandits still carry out attacks in the LGA despite the presence of the troops.

(iii) Local government councils should contact their members of House of Representatives with a view to assist the vigilante groups with operational materials and logistics to enable them confront the bandits.

(iv) Farmers should be enlightened on the need to desist from planting crops such as maize, millet and sorghum which will provide cover to bandits to enable them come close to village settlements undetected to rest during the day time and attack in the evening or night time.

(v) The Federal, State and Local Governments including the communities should come together to hold a conference with a view to mapping out strategies to end banditry in Katsina state. This would enable IDPs to return to their homes and farmlands to end the dependence on food handout from the government.

(vi) The State Government should work out a compensation plan to assist cattle owners whose cattle were rustled by the bandits and such people have no means of livelihood at present. The compensation scheme should be in cash or some number of cows, sheep or goats can be given to them to start cattle rearing to mitigate their sufferings and lessen the traumatic experiences.

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