

**A Survey of Farmer – Fulani Conflict
along Obudu Plains, Obanliku LGA,
Cross River State**

**By the African Research Association's community action project
Development in Nigeria**



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This survey was conducted by the DIN Obudu Cattle Ranch Project Coordinator, Mr Tony Kedang and the DIN Fulani Liaison Officer, Mr Iliasu Nyako. The survey report was written by Tony Kedang.

1.0 Introduction and Background

- .1 This survey was conducted to support DIN's conflict resolution activities, targeting Fulani pastoralists and farming communities on the Obudu Plains. The survey was used to clarify land use agreements between Fulani pastoralists and farming communities, which are a major source of conflict. In order to further understand the erratic conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, a survey was conducted in the Bebi and Kundeve communities between May-August 2003, which are two of DIN's key target communities. The information obtained from this survey will be used to help design interventions that may lead to conflict resolution.
- .2 DIN has been working with farming communities, traditional authorities and Fulani pastoralists since 1996 to conserve the unique cloud montane forests of Obudu Plateau and the tropical rainforests of the Obudu Plains in Boki Local Government Area. DIN's research and community development activities on the Obudu Plateau show that forest degradation is linked with cattle grazing on grass ranges. Fulani livelihoods are highly dependent cattle rearing and communities are often mobile, in search of fresh grasses and suitable grazing areas that are disease free and free from tsetse fly. The social interaction of the Fulani pastoralists with their host communities is very poor because of their different cultural and religious norms. Limited access to formal education, particularly for women and girls, also creates a barrier. The issues of different cultures and poor education attainment marginalise the Fulani community, resulting in the feeling of insecurity in any local farming community they find themselves. Conflicts are always prevalent during the dry season when farmers burn grasses for farming and hunting, while the Fulani burn in order to induce the growth of fresh grasses for their cattle. Grass burning by local farmers and water scarcity during this period impels the pastoralists to graze in the valleys where they can still find grasses and water for their cattle. This usually encroaches on farmlands, causing the potential destruction of crops. It is during the dry season that short-term agreements are entered into between the communities and the Fulani with arbitrary fees charged.
- .3 Findings from the survey will be used to make recommendations to both Local and State Governments, on the steps required to prevent future incidents that could cause further conflict. The findings will also enable DIN to assess its work on the Obudu Plains and design activities that can mitigate conflict.

2.0 Survey Context

- .1 The survey was carried out in Bebi and Kundeve communities in Obanliku Local Government Area of Cross River State. Both communities are targeted by DIN for development activities. Bebi, with an estimated population of about 2000 persons, is made up of 6 villages in Bebi Clan. Fulani pastoralists live on the plains of Bebi and the hill ranges of Kundeve with a resident population of about 250 in both areas. There are two Fulani camps at Bebi, however grazing is concentrated on the hills at Kundeve, where the Fulani have established seven (isolated) camps with a cattle population of about 6,500, and 20 herdsman grazing on 20 ranges. The hills are steep and rugged with virtually no extensive plains.

Occupation/livelihoods

- .2 The main occupation of the Bebi and Kundeve people is farming. Crops cultivated include yam, cassava, rice, maize, melon, pepper, okra, plantain, cocoyam, groundnut, fluted pumpkin and beans. Economic trees such as orange, mango, coconut, pear, kola nut, oil palm and cashew are also grown for cash income. The farmers also engage in hunting.
- .3 The main occupation of Fulani pastoralists is cattle rearing. They also keep a few sheep, and women raise income from the sales of milk and butter and from keeping limited poultry. The Fulani women at Kundeve trek for approximately 14km, carrying milk and butter on their head, before reaching the main road, where commercial vehicles take them to Utanga or Obudu to sell their produce. Because of the distance of the Kundeve ranges (where cattle is reared) to Bebi, the Fulani women in Bebi spend between ₦500.00 to ₦600.00 to travel to Ogoja using commercial vehicles to purchase milk from other Fulani women. They then process this milk into butter and soured milk (Nunu) for sale. The Fulani also own small gardens to grow maize, okra, cassava and local vegetables. In Bebi, the Fulani pay ₦10,000.00 every year as rent for an area of 0.1 hectare of land used for their camp. Small farm plots outside the camp are also paid for yearly.

Rationale

- .4 The study aimed to:
 - ? Assess the immediate and remote causes of conflict between Fulani pastoralists and farmers.
 - ? Assess if agreements between farmers and pastoralists can be institutionalised.
 - ? Assess if pasture establishment would be a viable option to reduce the frequent movement of pastoralists.
 - ? Assess what role DIN can play in further conflict resolution.

Methodology

- .5 Individual interviews were conducted with the Fulani pastoralists and local Bebi and Kundeve farmers using a checklist of questions (see Appendix One). Field observations were also made.

3.0 Key Findings

- .1 Responses to survey questions revealed that the first Fulani pastoralists arrived in Bebi community in the 1970s. This group of pastoralists did not enter into any agreement. Rents for the use of grazing land and camps were not charged because the local community had not conceived any thought of collecting money from cattle grazing on their land. The local farming community of Bebi did however receive a dead cow as gratuity and performed some casual jobs to for income. The first group of Fulani settlers maintained a cordial relationship with the Bebi community but later left for an unknown destination in search of grazing lands of higher quality.
- .2 In the 1980s another group of Fulani arrived in the Bebi vicinity and consulted with Chiefs and traditional authorities to acquire land for grazing. This led to a formal agreement between the Fulani and Bebi farmers and a cordial relationship was established.
- .3 Following the outbreak of rinderpest disease in Northern Nigeria in the 1980s, there was a movement of more Fulani pastoralists from the north to the southern Nigeria. This led to the arrival of another Fulani group in Bebi, creating a perceived influx on the plains. Consequently, due to the inadequate supply of grasses for the extra herds arriving, herdsmen were unable to control cattle from grazing on farmland and destroying crops. This resulted in an outbreak of hostilities when the herdsmen reacted to farmers who complained about the damage caused by the cattle. In the process, many cattle were killed, Fulani huts were burnt leaving many homeless, and one Fulani herdsman was wounded in a shooting incident. A police team from Calabar intervened and brought the situation under control.
- .4 In the 1990s another community near Bebi – the Abalasang community also clashed with Fulani over grazing on farmland. As a result, lives were lost, cattle were killed and some members of the Abalasang community were arrested and taken into police custody in Calabar. These incidents have left in indelible mark in the memory of the Bebi community and Fulani pastoralists.
- .5 The following summarizes the causes of conflict between Fulani pastoralists and their host communities (farmers):
 - ? Destruction of farmland and crop by cattle.
 - ? Limited ranges for cattle, leading to unauthorized grazing of cattle on community land.

- ? Non-involvement of all community members and a lack of information relating to agreements made with the Fulani pastoralists.

Specific Findings

.6 During the interviews it was found that:

- ? Fulani pastoralists depend on cattle rearing while Bebi and Kundeve farmers depend on farming crops (maize, rice, yam and cassava) and hunting for their livelihoods.
- ? Fulani are restricted from grazing their cattle on the plains because local farmers believe that cattle will harden the soil and render it infertile.
- ? Fulani now pay ₦15,000 and one cow for land to graze their cattle on some on selected ranges on the plains for a period of 3 months during the dry season.
- ? About 40% of the local Bebi community speak Fulfude/Hausa because of their close interaction with Fulani pastoralists.
- ? The survey also revealed that some of the local farming community in Bebi had worked for Fulani as herdsmen; some local Bebi youth are still working for the Fulani as herdsmen and earn a male cow every six months as a salary.
- ? Fulani cattle breaking into farms and failure to keep agreements on the part of the Fulani are the major causes of land use conflict in the area.
- ? The Fulani prefer informal (verbal) agreements to formal (written) ones for fear of litigation in case of any violation of the agreements
- ? Fulani do not co-operate with each other as a community and do not support each other during conflicts.
- ? Dead cattle are some times given by Fulani to the community as gratification for using their land for grazing.
- ? Little paddocks are constructed with sticks to confine cattle at night.
- ? The ranges are overstocked with cattle and there is shortage of pasture, especially in the dry season.
- ? Ranges can only carry a maximum of between 50 and 150 cattle. However there are 6,500 cattle grazing on 20 ranges thus giving an average of 325 cattle per range.
- ? Observations revealed that there are gully erosion sites on all the ranges.
- ? Crops like maize and rice attract cattle to the farms.
- ? Fulani pay for farmlands and gardens cultivated around their camps and surroundings.
- ? Fulani women raise cash income through the sale of milk, butter and chickens.

4.0 Recommendations

- ? Fulani pastoralists should be encouraged to honour agreements with the local farming communities. This will create mutual understanding and trust within the community.
- ? Fulani should have a legal adviser who will enter into all agreements with communities they graze their cattle.
- ? Fulani require capacity development to ensure they enter into fair agreements with local farming communities and help counter marginalisation.
- ? Government and NGOs should introduce joint programmes such as adult literacy, particularly for women, where both local communities and Fulani will participate. Based on DIN's previous experience and this survey, this will increase social interaction amongst the groups and promote understanding, trust and confidence.
- ? Communities should assign some positions of responsibility to Fulani pastoralists who will mediate in conflicts and participate in community development projects. This will make them feel more confident and part of the community.
- ? Fulani pastoralists should be encouraged to grow pasture to enable their cattle to feed, especially during the dry season. Fulani should also be encouraged to reduce downhill movements to the plains to avoid conflict with communities downhill who have greater dependence on downhill farmland for subsistence. Fulani prefer the hilltop for cattle grazing but as a result of bush burning during the dry season they are forced to move downhill in search of pasture for their cattle.

5.0 Possible Interventions for DIN

- ? Assistance for Fulani in obtaining legal advice and in entering formal agreements with the local Bebi and Kundeve communities.
- ? Capacity development, i.e. support for CBO formation and small income generating projects for Fulani women.
- ? Adult literacy for both Fulani pastoralists and local farmers in Kundeve and other Fulani/farmer communities. Continued support for adult literacy in Bebi, Utanga and Amana.