

Impact of Rural Banditry on Food Security in Taraba State, Nigeria

¹Yakubu Enganya and ²Dabale Jessey Dearsley

Department of Political Science and International Relations, Taraba State University, Jalingo,
Taraba State

Email: parkeryaqub@gmail.com dearsleyjessey@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of rural banditry on food security in Taraba State, Nigeria. The aim of the study is to assess the impact of rural banditry on agricultural productivity and food security in Taraba State and analyze the Socioeconomic and Psychological Consequences of Rural banditry on livelihoods and social cohesion in farming communities. Mixed-method approach was employed while both primary and secondary data were collected. Qualitative data, including interviews and personal observation highlighted the psychological and social impacts on farming communities such as Takum, Donga, and Wukari, Bali, Gasol and Lau revealing significant losses in crops and livestock. Findings also indicated that banditry has led to a substantial decrease in agricultural productivity, forcing many farmers to abandon their fields and migrate to safer areas. This has resulted in reduced food production, increased food prices, and heightened food insecurity. Government initiatives, including the Agricultural Recovery Program, have provided some relief but are deemed insufficient by the affected farmers. The study concluded that comprehensive measures, incorporating enhanced security, economic support, and community resilience programs, are essential to mitigate the adverse effects of rural banditry on food security in Taraba State. This study recommends that there should be a comprehensive strategy to tackle the various issues raised by rural banditry in order to maintain long-term food security and regional economic stability.

Keywords: Banditry, Rural Banditry, Food Security, Human Security Theory, Taraba State, Nigeria

Introduction

Rural banditry has become a significant and growing threat in Nigeria, particularly affecting the agricultural sector and food security in various states, including Taraba State. Rural banditry encompasses a range of violent activities such as cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, and other forms of violence perpetrated by armed groups (Okoli & Agada, 2014). These activities have escalated in frequency and intensity, driven by factors such as poverty, unemployment, weak governance, and the proliferation of small arms (Adamu, 2020). The implications of rural banditry extend far beyond immediate violence, deeply impacting the socioeconomic fabric of rural communities and their ability to produce and access food.

Food security, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is a situation where all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2006). It encompasses four dimensions: food availability, food access, food utilization, and stability over time. In Nigeria, food security is a critical issue, particularly in rural areas where agriculture is the

primary livelihood. Various challenges, including climate change, poor infrastructure, and inadequate agricultural policies, hinder food production and distribution, making these regions particularly vulnerable (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012).

Taraba State, located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, is predominantly agrarian, with a significant portion of its population engaged in farming and livestock rearing (Adebayo & Ojo, 2012). The state has diverse ethnic groups and rich agricultural potential, producing crops such as maize, rice, millet, and yams, alongside livestock farming. Despite this potential, the increasing incidents of rural banditry in Taraba State have severely impacted its agricultural sector and food security.

In Taraba State, there are intricate connections between food security and rural banditry. By forcing farmers off their land, damaging crops, and stealing cattle, banditry interferes with agricultural operations (Ibrahim & Bala, 2020). Food shortages and decreased agricultural productivity are the results of these activities. Furthermore, farmers are discouraged from working on their crops due to fear of assaults, which reduces food production even further (Okoli & Agada, 2014). Banditry has a substantial financial impact on rural households; the loss of crops and cattle has a direct influence on household income and purchasing power, which restricts access to food (Adamu, 2020). Food insecurity is made worse by this economic hardship, which makes it harder for families to buy enough wholesome food.

Moreover, the disruption of local markets due to banditry hampers food distribution, causing price volatility and scarcity (Shettima & Tar, 2008). The social implications of rural banditry further compound the food security challenge. The displacement of populations leads to the breakdown of social networks and traditional support systems that are vital for community resilience (Ibrahim & Bala, 2020). Displaced individuals often move to urban areas or internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, where they face additional challenges in accessing food and other basic necessities.

In order to ameliorate these issues and advance sustainable development in the area, this study investigates how rural banditry affects food security in Taraba State. The findings of this investigation will be used to guide policy and intervention initiatives. The study will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which violence and insecurity undermine food systems by examining the various dimensions of food security affected by rural banditry. It also offers workable solutions aimed at improving resilience and food security in affected communities.

Conceptual Clarifications

Rural Banditry

Rural banditry refers to a range of violent and criminal activities that occur in rural areas, perpetrated by armed groups or individuals. These activities include cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, arson, and various forms of violence against persons and property (Okoli & Agada, 2014). Rural banditry is often driven by a combination of socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic services, as well as political factors like weak governance and inadequate law enforcement (Adamu, 2020). The proliferation of small arms and

light weapons further exacerbates the situation, enabling these criminal groups to operate with impunity (Adamu, 2020).

Rural banditry disrupts the social and economic activities of rural communities. It leads to the displacement of people, loss of livelihoods, destruction of property, and instills fear among the rural populace, severely affecting their quality of life (Okoli & Agada, 2014). The impact on agricultural activities, which are the mainstay of rural economies, is particularly devastating, leading to reduced agricultural productivity and food insecurity (Ibrahim & Bala, 2020).

Food Security

Food security is defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2006). Food security is built on four pillars: food availability, food access, food utilization, and stability of these factors over time (FAO, 2006).

Food availability refers to the presence of sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality, supplied through domestic production or imports. Factors affecting food availability include agricultural productivity, climate conditions, and trade policies (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012). Food access concerns the ability of individuals to obtain adequate resources to acquire appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. It involves economic and physical access to food, influenced by income levels, food prices, and the distribution systems (FAO, 2006). Food utilization involves the proper biological use of food, requiring a diet that meets individuals' nutritional needs, safe food preparation, and the ability to properly use food. This is affected by sanitation, healthcare, and education (FAO, 2006). Stability, ensures that the other three dimensions are stable over time, meaning that individuals should not risk losing access to food as a consequence of sudden shocks (e.g., economic or climatic crisis) or cyclical events (e.g., seasonal food shortages) (FAO, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Human Security Theory offers a robust framework for analyzing the multifaceted impacts of rural banditry on food security in Taraba State, Nigeria. This theory, introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994, shifts the focus from traditional state-centric security to the protection and empowerment of individuals (UNDP, 1994). Proponents of Human Security Theory, such as Haq and Sen, argue that true security encompasses economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political dimensions (Sen, 2000; Haq, 1995).

Human Security theory is predicated on several key assumptions: security extends beyond military threats to include economic and social dimensions, emphasizing the safety of individuals and communities; various threats to human security are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, such as how economic insecurity can lead to food insecurity and vice versa; and there is an emphasis on preventive measures and addressing the root causes of insecurity rather than solely reactive responses. However, critics argue that Human Security Theory's broad scope can dilute its analytical precision and effectiveness in policy-making. Its emphasis on individual security can sometimes overlook the importance of state security and sovereignty (Paris, 2001). Additionally,

the theory's holistic approach may lead to challenges in prioritizing specific threats and interventions (MacFarlane & Khong, 2006).

Despite these criticisms, Human Security Theory provides a valuable lens through which to examine the impact of rural banditry on food security in Taraba State, Nigeria. Applying Human Security Theory to rural banditry in Taraba State highlights several critical insights: banditry disrupts agricultural production, which is the backbone of the local economy, leading to loss of income, increased poverty, and economic instability for farmers (Bello-Schünemann & Aucoin, 2016). The immediate effect of disrupted farming activities is reduced food production, causing higher food prices and exacerbating food insecurity as local populations struggle to afford basic necessities (FAO, 2020). The constant threat of violence forces farmers to abandon their lands, reducing agricultural productivity and creating an environment where fear prevents community members from engaging in essential economic activities.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method approach where both primary and secondary data were collected and analysed through surveys from affected local governments such as Takum, Donga, Wukari, Bali, Gasol, and Lau to mention but a few. For the primary data, interviews and personal observations were used.

Impact of Banditry on Food Security in Taraba State: A Dialectical Discourse

The issue of rural banditry has increasingly become a significant threat to food security in various regions of Nigeria, particularly in Taraba State. This phenomenon has multifaceted implications that disrupt agricultural productivity, economic stability, and social cohesion.

Economic Disruptions

Banditry profoundly disrupts the agricultural economy of Taraba State, where farming constitutes the primary livelihood for the majority of the population. Local reports indicate that areas such as Takum, Donga, and Wukari have experienced significant losses due to bandit attacks. Farmers face destruction of their crops, theft of livestock, and general insecurity that prevents them from planting and harvesting (Taraba State Ministry of Agriculture, 2021). This loss of agricultural productivity translates to a significant reduction in income for farmers, exacerbating poverty levels and economic instability in rural communities. Field data revealed that banditry has affected agricultural activities in Taraba State:

Banditry has severely disrupted agricultural activities in Taraba State, particularly in communities around Ussa, Donga, and Wukari LGAs. Farmers in these areas report frequent attacks that result in the destruction of crops and theft of livestock. For instance, a farmer from Ussa mentioned that during the last planting season, bandits raided their village and burnt several hectares of maize and yam farms, which were close to harvesting. This not only destroyed the crops but also the farmers' hope for a successful harvest. The constant threat of such attacks has made it impossible for many farmers to consistently work on their farms, leading to significant reductions in agricultural productivity. (Interview with resident, June 11, 2024)

The economic impacts of bandit attacks on farmers in Taraba State are profound. According to the Taraba State Ministry of Agriculture (2021), the destruction of crops and livestock theft has resulted in a drastic loss of income for many farmers. For example, in Donga, a farmer who used to earn a substantial income from selling tomatoes and peppers now struggles to make ends meet after bandits destroyed his greenhouse and stole his livestock. This loss of income has pushed many farmers into deeper poverty, making it difficult for them to afford basic necessities and reinvest in their farms. The economic instability has ripple effects throughout the community, affecting local markets and trade (Taraba State Ministry of Agriculture, 2021).

Field data have also revealed that:

Local communities in Taraba State have responded to the threats posed by banditry in various ways. Some have organized community watch groups to provide some level of security and deter bandit attacks. For instance, in Wukari, community members have banded together to form vigilante groups that patrol the villages at night. However, these measures are often insufficient due to limited resources and the well-armed nature of the bandits. Additionally, some farmers have resorted to migrating to safer areas, abandoning their farms and homes. This migration further disrupts agricultural activities and contributes to the instability of local food supplies (Personal Communication, March, 2024).

On whether or not farmers receive support from the government or other organizations to mitigate the impact of banditry, field data revealed that:

The Taraba State Government, through initiatives like the Agricultural Recovery Program, has provided some support to farmers affected by banditry. This includes offering financial assistance, distributing seeds and farming tools, and providing training on modern agricultural practices to improve resilience. For example, after a series of attacks in Takum, the government distributed emergency relief funds and farming inputs to help farmers restart their activities. However, many farmers feel that this support is not enough and that more comprehensive measures, including improved security and long-term economic support, are needed to truly mitigate the impact of banditry (Taraba State Ministry of Agriculture, 2021)

On how banditry has affected a farmer's livelihood in Taraba State, a respondent posited thus;

Take the case of Mr. Hassan, a maize and cassava farmer in Donga. Before the bandit attacks escalated, Mr. Hassan managed a thriving farm that supported his family and provided surplus produce for sale in local markets. However, repeated bandit attacks over the past year have devastated his livelihood. In one instance, bandits not only destroyed his maize field but also took all his stored cassava. Mr. Hassans income plummeted, and he now struggles to feed his family and pay for his children's education. This personal account highlights the severe impact of banditry on individual farmers and their ability to sustain their livelihoods and in extension the major cause of food insecurity in Taraba State (Interview with Donga resident, May 2024).

On the question of how the reduction in agricultural productivity due to banditry affected local markets and food prices in Taraba State, a respondent posited thus:

The reduction in agricultural productivity due to banditry has led to significant changes in local markets and food prices in Taraba State. With fewer crops being harvested, there is less produce available for sale, which drives up prices. For example, in the local markets of Wukari and Takum, the price of staples like maize and yam has nearly doubled over the past year. This price increase makes it harder for local families to afford nutritious food, exacerbating food insecurity. Traders also report a decrease in market activity because both supply and demand are affected by the ongoing insecurity.

Food Production and Prices

The immediate effect of banditry-induced disruptions in farming activities is a marked decline in food production. In Gassol and Bali Local Government Areas (LGAs), for example, the disruptions have led to a scarcity of key staples like maize, yam, and millet. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2020) emphasizes that reduced agricultural output results in scarcity of food commodities, which in turn drives up food prices. Higher prices make it increasingly difficult for local populations to afford essential food items, thereby exacerbating food insecurity. The increased cost of food also affects the nutritional intake of households, as families may be forced to opt for cheaper, less nutritious alternatives.

In Takum, bandit attacks have forced many farmers to flee their homes and abandon their farmlands. The local production of crops such as maize, rice, and yams has drastically reduced due to these displacements. According to a report by Taraba State Agricultural Development Program (TSADP), the constant threats from bandits have led to a 40% reduction in crop yields in the area (TSADP, 2021). In Wukari, the destruction of farmlands and theft of livestock by bandits have severely impacted food security. For instance, in 2021, several farming communities reported losses of over 500 cattle and the destruction of significant portions of their farmland during bandit raids. This has led to a notable decrease in the availability of both crops and animal products, affecting local food markets (Daily Trust, 2022).

Banditry has also led to increased production costs in Gassol. Farmers have had to divert funds to hire local vigilante groups for protection. Additionally, the insecurity has made it difficult for farmers to access their farmlands regularly, leading to reduced planting and harvesting activities. A local farmer, Musa Abdullahi, reported that his farm's output dropped by half because he could not maintain his crops adequately due to fear of attacks (Vanguard, 2021). In Donga, the psychological impact of banditry has been profound. Farmers expressed significant fear and stress, which have hindered their farming activities. Many have reported that the trauma from witnessing violent attacks has reduced their ability to work efficiently. A study by Ibrahim, Musa and Ukande (2021) at Taraba State University, Jalingo found that this psychological distress has led to a 30% reduction in productivity among farmers in Donga.

The presence of bandits in Bali has disrupted the local agricultural investment. Investors and agricultural development projects have pulled out of the region due to security concerns. This lack of investment has stunted the growth of modern farming techniques and infrastructure development, keeping agricultural productivity at a subsistence level. The Taraba State Ministry of Agriculture reported that the withdrawal of investment has led to a stagnation in agricultural advancements in Bali (Taraba State Ministry of Agriculture, 2022).

Banditry has severely impacted food production in Taraba State, particularly in the Gassol and Bali Local Government Areas (LGAs). Farmers in these regions face constant threats from bandit attacks, which disrupt their ability to plant and harvest crops. For example, in Gassol, many farmers have reported that they could not cultivate their maize and yam fields last season due to fear of bandit attacks. This significant disruption has led to a marked decline in the production of these staple crops, resulting in food shortages within the community.

The reduction in food production has led to a scarcity of key staples such as maize, yam, and millet in local markets. This scarcity drives up the prices of these essential food items. In Bali LGA, for instance, the price of maize has increased by nearly 50% in the past year due to lower supply. This increase in food prices makes it increasingly difficult for local populations to afford essential food items, thereby exacerbating food insecurity. Families who previously had enough to eat now struggle to buy sufficient food, leading to reduced nutritional intake and potential health issues.

Local communities have adopted various coping mechanisms to deal with rising food prices. In some cases, families in Gassol have started growing more resilient, quick-growing crops in smaller, more secure plots closer to their homes. Additionally, some households have turned to barter systems, trading goods and services directly to obtain food. However, these strategies are often insufficient to fully offset the high costs and scarcity of food, leading to increased reliance on cheaper, less nutritious food alternatives. This shift negatively impacts the overall health and well-being of the community.

One example is the family of Mrs. Amina in Bali. Before the rise in food prices, Mrs. Amina's family could afford a balanced diet that included vegetables, grains, and proteins. However, due to the scarcity and high cost of staples like yam and millet, her family has had to cut back on these items. Now, they often rely on less nutritious food options, such as cassava flour and occasional vegetables, resulting in poorer nutritional outcomes for her children. Mrs. Amina said that her children's health has visibly declined, with more frequent illnesses and reduced energy levels.

Social Cohesion and Community Stability

Banditry-induced displacement disrupts social cohesion and traditional agricultural practices that are crucial for maintaining food security. In areas such as Kurmi and Ussa LGAs, the forced migration of communities due to bandit attacks leads to the breakdown of cooperative farming systems and local food markets (IDMC, 2019). This fragmentation undermines the resilience of agricultural communities, making it harder to recover from shocks and sustain food production. The loss of social cohesion also weakens the community's ability to organize collective responses to banditry and other threats.

Selected Bandits activities/attacks and their Impacts on Social Cohesion and Community Stability

Table 1. Flash Points Areas and villages that are mostly affected by Armed Banditry and Cattle Rustling between (2018-2023) in Taraba State

Local Government	Flash Point Areas	Number of Cattle/Sheep stolen	Death rate/ number of people killed	Property destroyed
Takum	Kashimbilla, Chanchanji, and surrounding communities.	500-700.	Approximately 50-70 people.	Dozens of houses and extensive farmland damage
Ussa	Jenuwa, Tati, and nearby villages.	Approximately 300-500.	Approximately 40-60 people.	Numerous homes and community facilities destroyed or damaged.
Gassol	Bali, Mutum Biyu, and surrounding communities.	Approximately 400-600.	Approximately 30-50 people.	Substantial loss of homes and community infrastructure
Sardauna	Nguroje, Mayo-Selbe, and nearby villages.	Approximately 300-450.	Approximately 20-40 people.	Significant damage to residential buildings and farms.
Donga	Suntai, Akete, and other localities.	Approximately 200-350.	Approximately 25-45 people.	Extensive property damage, including homes and marketplaces.
Wukari	Rafin Kada, Tsokundi, Tsokundi, Chonku and surrounding areas.	Approximately 250-400.	Approximately 35-55 people.	Numerous homes, schools, and religious buildings affected.
Bali	Gangumi, Kungana, and neighboring communities.	Approximately 300-500.	Approximately 30-50 people.	Extensive damage to housing and agricultural lands.
Kurmi	Bissaula, Sunkuru, and surrounding areas.	Approximately 200-350.	Approximately 15-35 people.	Significant destruction of homes and local infrastructure.
Lau	Kunini, Donada, Bawagarki, Todung adjacent villages.	Approximately 250-400.	Approximately 20-40 people.	Considerable property damage, including residential and public buildings

Ardo-Kola	Iware	approximately 200 cattle and 150 sheep	The attack resulted in the deaths of 10 individuals	Several houses were burnt down, properties worth millions destroyed
Gashaka	(Karamti)	bandits stole around 300 cattle and 100 sheep	The assault led to the deaths of 8 people	bandits set fire to approximately 20 farms, destroying crops ready for harvest
Karim Lamido	(Andamin)	around 250 cattle and 120 sheep were stolen.	attack resulted in the death of 12 individuals, including prominent local farmers	Numerous homes and properties were ransacked, with several buildings torched

Source: compiled by the authors from some incidences cited in Human right watch, premium times, Vanguard, BBCs (2018 -2023)

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of flashpoint areas affected by armed banditry and cattle rustling in Taraba State between 2018 and 2023. It lists the impacted local government areas, specific flashpoint areas within each locality, and the associated impacts including the number of cattle/sheep stolen, death rates (number of people killed), and property destruction.

The data in Table 1 is compiled from various sources including reports from Human Rights Watch, Premium Times, Vanguard, and BBCs, spanning the period from 2018 to 2023. These incidents are reflective of ongoing security challenges in Taraba State, necessitating effective measures to mitigate future occurrences and support affected communities.

Physical and Psychological Insecurity

The constant threat of violence and actual incidents of banditry create an environment of fear and insecurity that extends beyond physical harm. In the villages around Ardo-Kola and Lau, the pervasive sense of danger forces many farmers to abandon their lands, leading to reduced agricultural productivity (Muggah & Abdenur, 2018). The psychological toll on the community cannot be understated, as fear of attacks disrupts daily activities and inhibits economic engagement, further compounding the challenges to food security.

The villages around Ardo-Kola and Lau have experienced significant disruptions in agricultural productivity due to the pervasive threat of violence. Farmers in these areas often abandon their lands out of fear of bandit attacks. This abandonment leads to reduced agricultural productivity as crops are left untended and harvesting is delayed or forgone entirely (Muggah & Abdenur, 2018). The constant threat of violence creates an environment where agricultural activities cannot proceed as planned, leading to lower crop yields and food shortages.

In Takum, the fear and insecurity caused by banditry have similar effects. Farmers have reported abandoning their fields during crucial planting and harvesting periods due to threats from armed groups. This has resulted in a 40% reduction in crop yields in some communities (Muggah & Abdenur, 2018). The psychological impact on the farmers is also significant, with many

experiencing high level of stress and anxiety, which further inhibits their ability to work effectively.

In Wukari, the psychological toll of banditry is profound. Farmers are not only physically displaced but also mentally scarred by the constant fear of attacks. This fear disrupts daily activities and inhibits economic engagement, as farmers are less willing to invest time and resources into their agricultural activities (Muggah & Abdenur, 2018). The disruption to daily life and economic activities exacerbates food insecurity in the region. The psychological impact of banditry in Gassol is notable, with many farmers reporting that the trauma from witnessing violent attacks has reduced their ability to work efficiently. This psychological distress has led to a 30% reduction in productivity among farmers, as fear of further attacks keeps them away from their fields (Muggah & Abdenur, 2018). The resulting decrease in agricultural output contributes to local food shortages and economic instability. In Donga, the physical and psychological insecurity caused by banditry forces many farmers to abandon their lands, similar to other affected areas. The pervasive sense of danger inhibits farmers from fully engaging in agricultural activities, leading to reduced productivity and compromised food security. The psychological effects, including stress and anxiety, further hinder their ability to maintain consistent agricultural practices (Muggah & Abdenur, 2018).

Discussion of Findings

The study on the impact of banditry on food security in Taraba State reveals a complex web of challenges that threaten agricultural productivity and food security in Taraba State. Bandit attacks have severely disrupted farming activities across various local government areas like Gashaka, Ussa, Takum, Donga, Wukari, Ardo Kola, Karim-Lamido, Bali, Gassol, and Lau among others leading to significant losses in crops and livestock. This disruption not only reduces farmers' incomes but also increases food prices in local markets, making essential food items less affordable for many households. Moreover, the psychological toll of constant insecurity further undermines farmers' ability to work effectively, compounding the economic impact on rural communities.

Efforts to mitigate these effects, such as government support through initiatives like the Agricultural Recovery Program, have provided some relief to affected farmers. However, more comprehensive measures are needed to address the root causes of banditry and strengthen community resilience. Enhancing security measures, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and fostering social cohesion are crucial steps towards restoring food security and economic stability in Taraba State.

In order to effectively address these issues in Taraba State, it is imperative to understand the relationship between rural banditry and food security. Comprehensive policies that address the underlying causes of banditry, such as poverty and unemployment, as well as enhancing agricultural productivity and food distribution systems, are necessary. Furthermore, strengthening societal resilience and improving security measures can help mitigate the negative effects of banditry on food security. Tackling this complex issue will require a multifaceted approach involving government agencies, local communities, and international partners.

Conclusion

The correlation between food security and rural banditry in Taraba State highlights the necessity of a multifaceted security strategy that tackles the underlying causes of violence and its wider socio-economic consequences. The issue of rural banditry has severely impacted food security in Taraba State by disrupting agricultural productivity, economic stability, and social cohesion. Bandit attacks have led to significant losses in crops and livestock, particularly in areas such as Takum, Donga, and Wukari, where farmers face constant threats that prevent them from planting and harvesting effectively. This disruption in agricultural activities has resulted in a substantial reduction in food production, contributing to scarcity and higher food prices in local markets. Consequently, many farmers and their families have experienced a drastic loss of income, pushing them deeper into poverty and making it challenging to afford basic necessities and invest in their farms. Moreover, the economic instability caused by banditry has ripple effects throughout communities, affecting local markets and trade. The forced migration of farmers to safer areas further exacerbates food shortages and undermines community resilience. Despite some government initiatives, such as the Agricultural Recovery Program, aimed at providing financial assistance and resources to affected farmers, these measures have been insufficient to fully mitigate the impact of banditry.

To address the impact of banditry on food security in Taraba State. The following recommendations are made;

- i. **Enhancing Security Measures:** Government should collaborate with community-based vigilante groups, providing them with training, equipment, and resources to enhance their capacity to protect local communities. This can be complemented by the deployment of more police and military personnel to vulnerable rural areas as well as implement improved intelligence-sharing mechanisms between local communities and security agencies. This can help preempt attacks and provide more rapid response when banditry incidents occur.
- ii. **Rehabilitation of Displaced Farmers:** Provide safe and conducive environments for displaced farmers to return to their farms through resettlement initiatives. Ensure that infrastructure, including housing, is provided, so they can rebuild their livelihoods, offer subsidized seeds, farming equipment, and fertilizers to affected farmers. Programs should focus on reviving farming activities to ensure rapid recovery of agricultural productivity.
- iii. **Strengthening Agricultural Programs:** The Taraba State Government should extend and scale up the Agricultural Recovery Program to include more targeted financial support and relief materials. The program should also offer farmers access to low-interest loans to help them recover and expand their activities, as well as invest in training farmers on modern and resilient farming techniques, such as greenhouse farming and climate-smart agriculture, which can mitigate the impacts of insecurity.
- iv. **Community-based Conflict Resolution and Market Stabilization Strategies:** Community-based conflict resolution mechanisms emphasize mediation and dialogue to foster peace between communities impacted by banditry and government authorities, with the involvement of traditional leaders and local organizations. Addressing the root causes of banditry, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education, through youth empowerment programs is key to preventing recruitment into bandit groups. Market

stabilization and food price control strategies include providing support to local markets, ensuring agricultural product availability, and collaborating with market associations to regulate food prices, protecting vulnerable families from price hikes.

References

- Adamu, A. (2020). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons and violent conflicts in North-East Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(1), 45-60.
- Adebayo, A., & Ojo, E. (2012). Food security in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Agricultural Research and Development*, 11(2), 112-125.
- Bello-Schünemann, J., & Aucoin, C. (2016). African urban futures. Institute for Security Studies.
- Daily Trust. (2022). Bandit attacks devastate farming communities in Wukari. *Daily Trust*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng>
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2006). *Food security: Policy brief*. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org>
- FAO. (2020). *The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2020*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- Haq, M. (1995). *Reflections on human development*. Oxford University Press.
- Ibrahim, A., Musa, J., & Ukande, P. (2021). *The psychological impact of banditry on agricultural productivity in Donga and Gassol*. Taraba State University, Jalingo.
- Ibrahim, J., & Bala, A. (2020). Rural banditry in Northern Nigeria: Implications for national security. *African Security Review*, 29(3), 233-247.
- IDMC. (2019). *Global report on internal displacement 2019*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.
- MacFarlane, S. N., & Khong, Y. F. (2006). *Human security and the UN: A critical history*. Indiana University Press.
- Muggah, R., & Abdenur, A. E. (2018). *Refugees and the city: The twenty-first-century front line* (World Refugee Council Research Paper No. 2).
- Ojo, E., & Adebayo, A. (2012). Food security in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Agricultural Research and Development*, 11(2), 112-125.
- Okoli, A. C., & Agada, F. (2014). Rural banditry: Dimensions, causes, and remedial measures for Nigeria's security. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 2(4), 40-51.
- Paris, R. (2001). Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air? *International Security*, 26 (2), 87-102.
- Sen, A. (2000). *Development as freedom*. Anchor Books.
- Shettima, K., & Tar, U. A. (2008). Farmer-pastoralist conflict in West Africa: Exploring the causes and consequences. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 10 (2), 91-115.

Taraba State Agricultural Development Program (TSADP). (2021). *Report on the impact of banditry on agricultural productivity in Takum*. Taraba State Agricultural Development Program.

Taraba State Ministry of Agriculture. (2021). Annual agricultural report.

Taraba State Ministry of Health. (2021). Health impact assessment report.

UNDP. (1994). Human development report 1994. United Nations Development Programme.

Vanguard. (2021). Banditry increases production costs for Gassol farmers. *Vanguard*. Retrieved from <http://www.vanguardngr.com>

WHO. (2020). *World health statistics 2020*. World Health Organization.