

Exploring the Causes and Management of Pastoralists-Farmer Conflicts in Ghana

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Abstract

Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are not new to our farming communities in Ghana but in recent years the magnitude of these conflicts have increased especially in the Agogo traditional area of the Ashanti region of Ghana. This paper explores the causes of the conflicts and conflict management strategies used. In order to achieve the said objective a qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were employed to study some 90 farmers who were directly affected by the conflicts in the study area. Data were collected using semi structured questionnaire administered through personal interviews. The data were analyzed using content analysis and descriptive statistics. The study found out that, the conflicts between farmers and Fulani pastoralist in the study area was caused by five major factors which include; destruction of food crops by cattle and the killing of innocent citizens of the area which has brought fear and panic among citizens. Since the 1990s till today, the Fulani herdsmen have either shot and killed or butchered not less than 12 people in the study area. The conflicts were managed using several conflict management strategies, however what proved very effective was coercion and adjudication.

Keywords

Pastoral-farmer — conflicts — management

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1. Introduction

This article presents empirical results of one of the pastoralist farmer conflict cases in Ghana. The study is built around the Agogo Fulani conflicts in the Asante Akyim North District. Agogo traditional area is one of the largest

settlements in the Asante Akyim North District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The area has a human population of about 34,500 with majority of its labour force into farming. However, farming in this area has become unattractive due to the conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in the area. Conflicts between these groups of people have been in existence since the 1990s and the management of it has been very difficult [1]. In 2001, the government of Ghana pushed the herdsmen away from the Agogo traditional area but in 2003 the herdsmen came back. The situation became worst and complex when some Ghanaian cattle owners engaged some of the herdsmen to look after their cattle for them. They acquired portions of forestland from the Agogo Traditional Council for grazing through a lease agreement that was an offence under the Forest Protection Act, 1974, (NRCD 243). In the agreement the cattle owners and their herdsmen were to fence their animals and dig boreholes for them to drink, rather the herdsmen roam across the traditional area during day and night creating nuisance to farmers and community members. Their strategy for providing year-round food for their herds is to move their livestock to pasturage, rather than bringing fodder to their herds [2, 3]. Climatic conditions (wet and dry seasons) and the availability of pastures, determines their time and pattern of movement [3]. The dry seasons are most demanding for the herdsmen, usually, they move to places where vegetation is abundant and move back home when there is new grass [4].

In recent times however, their pasture and transit

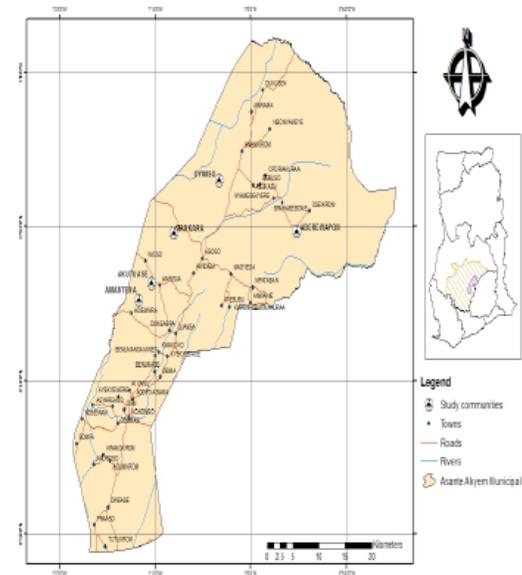
routes are shrinking in the face of climate change and spreading cultivation. Despite these challenges, their populations continue to rise, with host communities unable to absorb their increase. To put Agogo's situation into proper perspective, there has been a court ruling that recommends a flush out of the herdsmen from the traditional area. However, flushing the herdsmen from Agogo to other places is likely to cause similar problems when proper measures are not put in place. In the context of natural resource conflicts, there has been a call for conflict management rather than resolution since natural resource conflicts often involve complex issues that cannot be completely resolved [5]. Land use conflicts have always been with us, due to the multiple actors and competing demands. But it is still unclear which management strategy is more effective and what causes of the conflicts need to be tackled first. This study seeks to contribute to these scholarly debates with some empirical findings.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Area

The study was undertaken in the Agogo traditional area in the Asante Akim North Municipal Assembly (Fig. 1). The Municipality is located in the eastern part of Ashanti Region and lies between latitude $6^{\circ} 30'$ North and $7^{\circ} 30'$ North and longitude $0^{\circ} 15'$ West and $1^{\circ} 20'$ West. It covers a land area of 1,160 sq. km with an estimated population of 169,976 in 2010 (projection from 2000 Population Census). The area has a mean annual temperature of 26 Degrees Celsius. The topography of the area is generally undulating with gentle slopes making it conducive for food crop farming.

Two major types of soil are found in the study area i.e. Forest Ochrosol and Savanna Ochrosol. The two soil types support food crops such as cereals, oil palm, cassava, plantain, cocoa, vegetables, yam, maize, cassava, groundnut and vegetables. The district lies within the most semi-deciduous forest belt. Most of the original forest has been degraded into secondary forest and grassland making the area very suitable for grazing by animals.



1.png

Figure 1. Map of the study area showing the study communities

2.2 Data collection

In this study, the researcher combined qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and used the two to support each other. Eggestad [6]. compared this process with taking pictures: an x-ray camera gives a different picture than a normal camera. Neither one of the two pictures is more true than the other, but different pictures may be helpful in different situations. Under the qualitative method, the researcher used exploratory interviews to obtain multiple perspectives on the causes and management of the conflicts. The rationale for using this method was because in the context of conflicts where contradictory claims may exist open or exploratory interviews have been recommended as appropriate technique [7].

Primary data for this study was largely obtained through field interviews with affected farmers in the farming communities. The interview involved 90 respondents in three conflict communities in the traditional area. In each community 30 farmers were purposively, selected for the interview. The selection of this respondent size was informed by the literature recommendation that for a comprehensive and representative analysis in such an exploratory social research, 30-50 respondents is ideal [8]. The mean age of the respondents was 53.4 years (See TABLE 1)

Table 1. Study communities, number of people interviewed and age distribution of respondents

Community	Age Cohort								Total	Mean
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84			
Abrewapong	-	1	8	7	4	8	2	30	54.8	
Onyinso	1	3	6	4	6	10	-	30	53.2	
Mankara	-	3	4	10	8	5	-	30	52.2	
Total	1	7	18	21	18	23	2	90	53.4	

2.3 Data analysis

The questionnaire were coded and entered into a spread sheet for analyzes. In the analysis emerging and recurring themes were constructed into meaningful statements and the content of the statements were analyzed based on counts (frequencies). The aim of the content analysis was to transform and classify the many words of the text into considerably fewer content categories as recommended [9].

3. RESULTS

3.1 Perception of farmers about the causes of the conflicts in Agogo traditional area

Opinions and perceptions of the farmers were solicited on the causes of the conflicts and the reasons why they want the herdsmen flushed out of the area. There were multiple responses from the respondents however five key issues came up strongly (see TABLE 2). They include shooting and killing of innocent citizens especially farmers, destruction of food crops like plantain, maize and water melon by the herdsmen, pollution of water bodies by cattle (Fig. 3) and herdsmen raping women in their farm which has created fear and panic among inhabitants of the land. Since 1990, the Fulani herdsmen have either shot and killed or butchered not less than 12 people in the study area.

Table 2. Views of respondents about the causes of the conflicts in the study area

Cause	Response*	
	No	%
Shooting of innocent citizens by herdsmen	82	91
Destruction of food crops	71	79
Raping of women on their farm	60	67
Herdsmen causing bushfire	45	50
Pollution of water bodies by herdsmen	31	34

*Multiple responses (Total N=90)

The study found out that one of the reasons why the Fulani herdsmen were shooting and killing farmers (Fig. 2) was because they spray their plants with insecticides. The Fulani herdsmen usually kill farmers who dare to spray their plants with insecticides or weedicides since that kills their cattle when they graze on those crops. Secondly, the reason why they set fire and destroy large tract of farmlands was because they wanted fresh grass for their cattle. They usually set fire to the dry bush in order that fresh weeds will germinate for their cattle.

3.2 Perception of cattle owners about the causes of the conflicts in the Agogo traditional area

On the contrary, the cattle owners who were interviewed had a different view of the causes. According to them



Figure 2. A farmer shot by Fulani herdsman in Agogo traditional area



Figure 3. Pollution of drinking water source by cattle in Agogo traditional area

sometimes their cattle stray into people’s farms but the farmers often kill the cattle instead of reporting the destruction to them. That is how the conflicts begin. Secondly, some farmers plant their food crops along walkways and river bodies attracting the cattle during grazing. Thirdly, some thieves come with sophisticated weapon to steal their cattle therefore the need to protect them. When they were asked why they did not fence their cattle as required of them in the agreement they signed with the traditional council, they indicated that the grass in those areas are getting finished while fencing require huge capital investment.

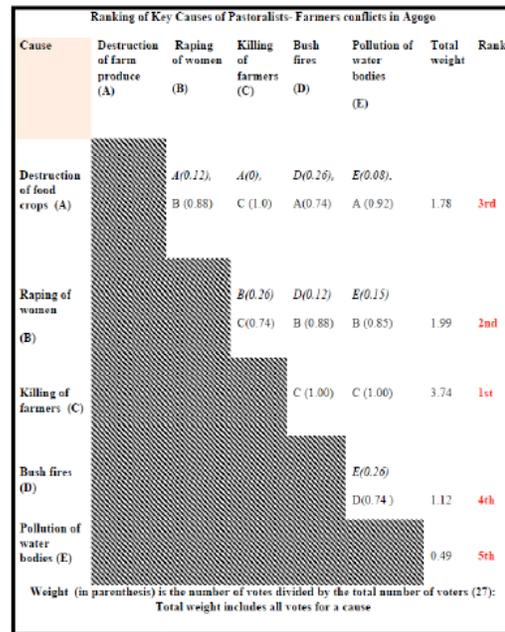


Figure 4. Pairwise ranking of the causes of Pastoralists-farmer conflicts in Agogo

3.3 Ranking of the causes of the conflicts in the study area

In order to differentiate between the importance of the causes of the conflicts, pair -wise ranking was adopted to further analyze the cause of the conflicts in a focus group discussion. Pair-wise ranking is a structured method for ranking a small list of items in priority order. It helps to prioritize a list and make decisions in a consensus-oriented manner. The pair-wise ranking method was adopted to rank the causes of the conflicts because the researcher was also interested in knowing which of the causes carried weight and needs to be tackled first. This method helped the farmers to put weight on the causes and prioritize them in order of importance.

Once the idea of pair wise comparisons was introduced during the focus group discussion, the process worked very well and efficiently. People provided very rational reasons for their choices especially when it was slightly more difficult to make a decision e.g. they argued that you need to tackle the killing of farmers first before you look at the destruction of food crops, therefore provision of security must be seen as a priority. Details about the outcome of the ranking are summarized in Figure 4.

3.4 Conflict management strategy used in the study area

The study found out that the citizens of Agogo have employed several strategies to manage the conflicts since it started in the area. These strategies included avoidance, mediation, negotiation and adjudication. The respon-

dents have in one way or the other resorted to one of these strategies when their farms were being destroyed by the herdsmen. Twelve percent (12%)(TABLE 4) said they avoided open confrontation with the herdsmen when their farms were being destroyed. However, majority (97%) of the respondents came together for a settlement in court (adjudication). Few (6%) went in for negotiation. In most cases the cattle owners were avoiding the farmers who sought for compensation. Details of the responses on specific conflict management strategy used are summarized in (TABLE 3).

Table 3. Conflict management strategies used by respondents

Actors	Responses*	
	No.	%
Mediation	5	6
Avoidance	12	13
Negotiation	5	6
Adjudication	88	97
Coercion	78	87

*Multiple responses (Total N=90)

3.5 Has the conflict completely been resolved?

During the data collection respondents were asked whether the conflicts in the Agogo traditional area has completely been resolved. Majority (about 98%) responded that the conflict was still pending though the intensity has reduced. Few (2%) were of the view that the conflicts were resolved. This was because the cattle no more come to their farms (see TABLE 4).

Table 4. Views of respondents about whether the conflict has been resolved

	Responses*	
	No.	%
Yes	2	2
No	88	98

*Multiple responses (Total N=90)

3.6 Degree of satisfaction with the conflict management strategies used

Even though majority (98%) of the farmers believed that the farmer-herder conflicts in the Agogo traditional area has not been completely resolved (TABLE 5) on the other hand, majority (66%) of the farmers were satisfied with the conflict resolution in court (adjudication). Those

	Responses*	
	No	%
Satisfied	59	66
Not Satisfied	11	12
Very much satisfied	7	8
Very much dissatisfied	12	13

*Multiple responses (Total N=90)

(about 12%) who were not satisfied or very much dissatisfied (13%) attributed their dissatisfaction to the lackadaisical manner in which the government of Ghana and for that matter the Asante Akim North district Assembly is implementing the court's ruling (TABLE 5).

3.7 Policy recommendation

There have been some attempts to prevent pastoral conflicts in some parts of Africa. Lessons can be drawn from these pastoral systems to inform policies in Ghana. To put these efforts into perspective, the researcher compared some approaches in three developing countries in West Africa. The West African countries of Mauritania, Niger, and Mali have each established a 'Code Pastoral'. This Code seeks to regulate traditional forms of open access to rangeland resources while also taking into account modern legislative measures to protect individual and group-specific land rights. In the example of Mauritania, the Code stipulates that local conventions regarding land use are to be negotiated between all land users: sedentary farmers, local government bodies, and nomadic herders. Options for mobility are to be conserved, and wetland access is guaranteed for pastoral users [10].

The Support Programme for Pastoral Herding Sector in Niger ("PASEL" in French) was established by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) to reduce the incidence and intensity of conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists on key transhumant routes. It has reduced violence by integrating all relevant levels of government and traditional authorities within a hierarchy of progressively senior dispute resolution processes; by demonstrating win-win benefits for both bordering communities and pastoralist; by clearly marking the resulting borders; and by working with community leaders and administrative authorities in concert to ensure that when disputes emerge, they are resolved transparently and equitably.

4. CONCLUSION

This article has examined some causes and management of pastoral conflicts in the Agogo traditional area of Ghana. The study has also made some policy recommendations. In Ghana, policies pursued by successive colonial and post-colonial governments have tended to neglect the needs of

pastoralists in the country. Beside the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance there seems not to be any policy that seeks to regulate pastoral livelihoods in Ghana. This has exacerbated problems and insecurities of pastoralist host communities, particularly in relation to access to scarce natural resources. Government must ensure that state policies give due recognition to pastoral livelihoods in the country.

Second, the effectiveness of mediation to resolve the conflicts in Agogo was constrained by some problems including lack of support from the Agogo traditional council. Local community members generally rely on the customary system in dealing with conflicts. However, the traditional council in Agogo was not used for settlements because their neutrality was tainted as results of the contractual agreement they have with some of the cattle owners. In this study, most of the farmers did not use the traditional council for mediation. For the use of structures such as the District Assembly, no settlement was observed. The farmers could not use the District Assembly effectively because it requires money and time to travel to the district office when cases happened. Given these realities, the claim by an observer like Bercovith [11] that mediation is 'cheap, flexible, adaptable and effective can be misleading when placed in the context of the pastoral-farmer conflicts in Agogo.

The researcher also observed that lack of police post in some of the communities exacerbated the problem. Under such conditions one can argue that where an efficient law-enforcement facility like police post exists in the community, resolution by making direct police complaint may be cheaper and effective in managing situations. One observation that was positive was the use of the media. The researcher observed that the use of the media, press conference and demonstrations (Coercion) by the farmers was very effective. The use of the media for example was observed to be effective both at the local and national levels. The media stimulated debates and forced the government to intervene. Using the media to bring the issue into the public domain also provoked the opposing actors and relevant institutions to respond.

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