

# **Violent Conflict and Food Security: A Study of Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract:**

Violent conflicts remain a threat to livelihoods internationally. Hence, scholars, policy makers and stakeholders are faced with the grave challenge of food security. For about a decade, Nigeria has witnessed great intensity of banditry, especially in the Northwest of the country. The resultant effect of banditry in the region has adversely affected food security- food production, citizens' well-being and, local economy. Citizens have been denied access to farmlands and sources of livelihood through displacement. BirninGwari LGA in Kaduna State, Nigeria is a hotbed of banditry and has been ravaged by bandits. This has affected sources of livelihood as farming, livestock production, mining and human security have been under great threat. The study examined the impact of insecurity on food security in BirninGwari by highlighting how violence affects the level of food availability and nutritional status, year-round in BirninGwari. Both secondary and primary sources of data were employed. The secondary data includes, journals, reports and media sources, while the primary data involves interviews, questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The study finds out that women and children, especially, infants, are the most affected in local communities. by poor nutrition. The study found that violent conflict and a combination of other factors such as inadequate; fertilizer, capital and security reduce food availability. The study suggests that food supply has dramatically fallen and purchasing power of community inhabitants has been limited by insecurity. The study recommends an all-inclusive approach including state and non-state actors, to address banditry and its attendant consequences.

**Key Word:** Violent conflict, Food security, Nigeria, Kaduna, BirninGwari

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## **I. Introduction**

Violent conflicts come with grave consequences as it affects livelihood. Globally, policy makers and scholars have been grappling with the adverse effects of violent conflicts on food. The consequences of conflicts on food security pose a threat to food production, citizens' well-being and, both locally and globally economy. Intense or incessant violence threatens the production of crop, livestock and fish stocks (Olaniyan A.&Yahaya A. 2016; Mustapha U.N. 2019). It also constrains people from access to farmlands and sources of livelihood through displacement (FAO, 2017). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) report suggests that communal violence costs Africa over \$120 billion worth of agricultural production. According to Global Hunger Index (2021) in 2021, conflict violence has led to circa 155 million individuals into acute food insecure, with about 30 million on the verge of starvation.

In Nigeria, food security is considered to be a challenge as Nigerians are food unsecured; although the country is endowed with favourable climatic conditions that favours crop growth and animal rearing for over a decade violent conflict have threatened food production due to the activities of Boko Haram, herder-farmer conflict and armed banditry (Ibrahim H.W. 2021). The impact of this violence has been felt in several parts of Nigeria, especially in North-east and North-western Nigeria. There has been an upsurge in the activities of bandits in Kaduna State.

In 2021, in Kaduna State, eight farmers in Buruku and Udawa villages of Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) were attacked on their farmlands and eventually killed (Daphne E.C. 2022). This forced many farmers to abandon their farms and communities due to fear. BirninGwari LGA has been the epicentre of banditry with livelihoods of farmers and residents under increasing threats (Ibrahim H.W. 2021). Farming, animal husbandry and other activities like mining in his emirate have been consistently threatened. Moreover, certain areas of BirninGwari are regarded as danger zones including some farm areas and the popular Kaduna-Lagos road (Participant One and Participant Two). This situation is increasingly threatening national security.

Kaduna State may face severe danger of food crises. Government at both federal and state levels have expended efforts including; the deployment of 5,000 Agro-rangers to secure farmers across Nigeria including Kaduna State (Oyeleke S. 2020); collaborations between government security bodies and line ministries including such as Ministry of Agriculture Kaduna State (Olufemi A. 2022). Over N21 billion was expended in combating bandits since 2016 (Olufemi A. 2022). Despite these initiatives, banditry is on the increase, with an estimate of over 1,192 people being killed and 3,348 abducted by 2021. Circa 13,623 herds of cattle were rustled between January and December 2021 across the state (Alabelewe A. 2021). These startling figures and events suggest the likelihood of an impending food crisis in Kaduna State. An interesting issue with the crises, is that not enough studies have been done or statistics have been identified to show the quantum of the impact on food security. This study seeks to examine the effect of the crises on food security in Kaduna State using BirninGwari LGA as a case study.

BirninGwari is the hotbed of banditry in Kaduna State. It is the ‘shortest link to the Southwestern part’ of Nigeria by road. It shares boundary with Zamfara, Katsina and Niger, states that have a heavy presence of bandits that rove across vast swathes of coterminous Kamuku forest across the states (Sun, 2021). It has a population of about 250,000, and it has fertile land where the majority of its inhabitants engage in agriculture and pasturing. Figure 1 below indicates the map of Kaduna State with BirninGwari sharing boundaries with Zamfara, Kastina and Niger States.

**Diagram no1: Map of BirninGwari**



Source (Shu'ibu et al., 2018)

## **II. Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of insecurity on food security in Kaduna State. Using BirninGwari as a case study, the objectives of the study will highlight;

1. How violent conflict has affected the level of food availability year-round in Kaduna communities
2. The impact of violent conflict on the nutritional status of Kaduna State citizens
3. The recommendations to addressing the impact of violent conflict on food security Kaduna State.

## **III. Methodology**

The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary data include journals, reports and media sources, while the secondary data includes surveys using questionnaires, Four Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

In carrying out the study in Gayam and Kakangi, communities were visited to collect data in BirninGwari LGA of Kaduna State. BirninGwari is the most affected by the activities of bandits in Kaduna State and it shares borders with other states such as Zamfara and Niger. Adopting BirninKwari as a case study may inform other studies on the complexity of violent conflicts and food security in Kaduna State as well as policy actors.

Gayam and Kakangi communities were purposely selected because of low attacks in the communities. Out of the circa 250,000 population of BirninGwari population, 200 questionnaires were administered to elicit the perception of inhabitants on the impact of violent conflict on food availability and nutritional status. Two interview participants were drawn from each community with a community leader and security agents interviewed in each community. The FGD involves groups of men and women with a combination of farmers, herders, hunters, food vendors, mothers and health workers; because of the security risk attached to banditry, the participants prefer their identities to be anonymous. Part of the limitations to the study include lack of access to hospitals or health centres to collect data on nutrition. Moreover, some key informants declined to participate in

the study because of the security risk attached to the study under investigation. The household-to household survey was also constrained by security threat. The researcher was able to obtain data through the support of a local fixer.

#### **IV. Debates on Conflict and Food Security**

Scholars have argued about the impact of conflict on food production, livelihoods and food security, this has been a major challenge for farmers especially in Africa where a number of its population are largely subsistent farmers (Paul et al., 2015). While these, constitute a major setback for farmers and households, they have often invented strategies to cope even amid conflict. Some studies in the extant literature have explored agricultural coping strategies in conflict regions. Studies have found that households have developed strategies such as labour relocation, hiding of livestock, economic cooperation, change in land use pattern and farming methods (Arias et al, 2012; Fernández et al, 2014; Menon & Rodgers 2015).

Some of the effect of violent conflicts is that it affects the livelihoods and well-being of populations. This involves shortages in food and commodity supply at both domestic or global markets and the inability to cope with skyrocketing prices (Deaton A. 1999; Kruger D.I 2007; Miller G.&Urdinola B. 2010). Invariably, the high prices of food commodities and its supply have made a lot of households' struggle for food consumption. Most households have difficulty of choices in consumption and lack the needed balanced diet, thereby resulting in unwanted calorie in-take. (Ruiz I. &Carlos V. 2013).

Studies suggest that violent conflict can affect nutrition adversely. of violent conflict includes early-life exposure of children to undernutrition. This is more common in poor households, whose children did not enjoy a balanced diet even before the conflict. Studies have shown that most anthropometric results on children's nutrition within the ages of 0-5 suffer great undernutrition (Verwimp P.2012; Duque V. 2016).

Other studies have also explored the long-term effect of early-exposure to conflict as it adversely affects the physical and cognitive development outcomes as an adult a number of case studies have been reported from different post-conflict zones such as Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (Akbulut-YukseIM. 2014; Domingues& Barre T. 2013).

The commonalities of studies in the extant literature suggest that food consumption, nutrition and livelihood are the major outcomes of violent conflicts. Studies have also shown that households overtime develop coping strategies such as labour relocation, hiding of animals, cooperation and changing the pattern of land use. Therefore, these studies will build on the existing studies to examine the impact of violent conflict in one of the LGA's in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

#### **V. Data Analysis and Presentation**

This section analyses both qualitative and quantitative data collected in both Gayam and Kankangi communities of BirninGwari LGA. Data on food availability and nourishment were collected and analysed.

##### **Food Availability and Nourishment Status in Study Communities**

Data were collected on food availability and, nourishment status of infants, and adults across sex groups in both Gayam and Kakangicomunities. A comparative analysis of issues related to year-round food availability and nourishment status in these communities. The outcome is presented below. Table 1 highlights the level of food availability in both communities.

**Table no1: Level of Food Availability**

<b>How often do communities have food</b>	<b>Kakangi(%)</b>	<b>Gayam(%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<b>all year round ...</b>			
Very frequent	33.3	66.7	100
Frequent	39.1	60.8	100
Not frequent	70.6	24.1	100
Never frequent	50	50	100

Table 1 indicates that inhabitants in farming communities had lower quantities of food compared to commercial centres. This suggests that the percentage of indigenes of living in Kakangi has insufficient food all year round compared to Gayam. Participant One (Senior vigilante member) suggests that the shortage of food in Kakangi is attributed to the challenges of both farm inputs and most especially, attacks by farmers on farmlands and cattle rustling.

To understand the reason why Gayam has more food than Kakangi, a food-producing community, data from FGD Gayam community suggests that the food supply in Gayam comes from other communities such Dogon Dawa, Tabanni, Kazage. Traders from Gayam suggest that the supply of food from other villages to their markets has been drastically reduced and the demand from customers has also declined as people are fleeing away from BirninGwari. Further inquiries were made about the reasons for inadequate food. Table 2 below highlights the reasons given by respondents, both communities put together.

**Table no2: Reasons for Food Shortage**

<b>State the reason(s) for food shortages</b>				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	10	17.5	17.5	17.5
Because our land is attacked by herders	1	1.8	1.8	19.3
Farm is not yielding enough crops	1	1.8	1.8	21.1
Inadequate land	1	1.8	1.8	22.8
It is because government provide security	1	1.8	1.8	24.6
Lack of capital	5	8.8	8.8	33.3
Lack of fertilizer	2	3.5	3.5	36.8
Lack of financial support from the government	1	1.8	1.8	38.6
No finance	1	1.8	1.8	40.4
No cooperative	1	1.8	1.8	42.1
Lack of knowledge of improved agricultural service from government, lack of land and poor soil facility	1	1.8	1.8	43.9
Lack of land for farming	9	15.8	15.8	59.6
No money	1	1.8	1.8	61.4
Lack of seedlings and fertilizer	1	1.8	1.8	63.2
Farmers are scared to go to farm	1	1.8	1.8	64.9
No farm	2	3.5	3.5	68.4
No farmers	1	1.8	1.8	70.2
No fertilizer and good farming product	1	1.8	1.8	71.9
No fertilizer and manure	1	1.8	1.8	73.7
No insecticide to treat our crops.	1	1.8	1.8	75.4
Cattle rustling	1	1.8	1.8	77.2
Bandits attack our food stores	1	1.8	1.8	78.9
Pest	2	3.5	3.5	82.5
Poor methods of storage	1	1.8	1.8	84.2
Poor market	1	1.8	1.8	86.0
Farmers are attack on their way to market	1	1.8	1.8	87.7
Fishing is dangerous and dry season quickly sets in	1	1.8	1.8	89.5
Investors are scared of BirninGwari	1	1.8	1.8	91.2
We only produce for household consumption	1	1.8	1.8	93.0
Reserved seedlings are destroyed by bandits	1	1.8	1.8	94.7
Weather condition	3	5.3	5.3	100.0

From Table 2 above, the respondents give various reasons for food shortages. Some respondents suggest that the decline in food supply is as a result of inadequate land, fertilizers, capital and support from the government in terms of loans, security, extension services and technical support. Another major factor in food shortages is security for both farmers and herders.

Farmers are most affected; they are attacked on their farms or while transporting their farm produce. Moreover, various stores are attacked by bandits and stored food is carted away by bandits. Data from all the KII's suggest that food availability is affected by two situations namely; the activities of bandits and the inability

of government to both find a lasting solution to the insecurity and to cushion the adverse effect of the destruction caused by bandits.

### Poor Nourishment

The investigation into how frequently families experience poor infant nourishment suggests a high level of poor nutrition in both LGAs.

**Table no3:** Prevalence of Poor Nourishment among Infants

How often do families experience poor nourishment among infants...	Gayam (%)	Kakangi (%)	Total (%)
Very frequent	41.7	58.3	100
Frequent	21.4	78.6	100
Rarely	66.7	33.3	100
Very rarely	66.7	33.3	100

Table 3, shows the level of nutrition among infants in both communities. It also indicates a correlation between food shortages and poor nourishment. The prevalence of poor nourishment is high in Kakangi. Participant Three (Community leader) suggest that this is because Kakangi suffers grave threat from bandits and health workers are inadequate to educate inhabitants as the health workers are scared of being kidnapped. The respondents in the FGD revealed that as conceiving and breastfeeding mothers suffer from lack of enough food dietary requirements, this invariably affects children from infancy and within the ages 0-10 year. Participant Three further suggested that:

Our children and I believe in other communities in BirninGwari suffer from a number of ailments and some even leading to deformities like Kwashiorkor. Travel to Kaduna [metropolis], sample some children compare them to that of Kakangi and indeed BirninGwari, you will spot the difference.

#### Participant Three

Respondents during the FGD were of the opinion that because of the shortage of food, people are left with no option but to buy what is readily available, what their money can buy, and even if they get tired of eating the same food. This statement suggests that the inhabitants have limited choice of the types of food they eat and, they cannot afford to enjoy a balanced diet.

In Gayam, the researcher observes that most of the foods sold in the market are grains and tubers. Participant Two (Senior Police Officer) corroborates this observation as the Participant asserts that traders try as much as possible not to incur loses that is why they do not sell perishable food items like meat, dairy products, fish and vegetable as most facilities for storage are destroyed by bandits and because of the low purchasing power of costumers. This suggests that the targeting of public facilities has an adverse effect on food supply.

### Nourishment Status of other Groups

As shown in Figure 2, poor nourishment is high in both the study communities. The experience of poor nutrition experienced by families is not only common among infants, but also across other ages and sex. The researcher classified the adult population into three categories. Men from the ages of 36-100 were classified as men, while those between the ages of 36-100 were categorized as women. Men and women of all sex within the age of 18-35 were classified as youth. Table 4 below shows the level of poor nourishment among all the categories of the adult population.

**Table no4:** Level of Poor Nourishment by Sex and age

Nourishment Status	Gayam (%)	Kakangi (%)
Women	36.2	33.4
Men	33.1	31.2
Youth	25.2	27.5
None	5.5	7.9
Total	100	100

The figures above suggest that the prevalence of poor nourishment is high in women followed by males and youth. Even though the opinion of the respondents shows not much difference between men and women, the data suggest that women are mostly affected by violent conflict as they suffer malnutrition more than the other

categories of adults. Moreover, Participant Four (Senior member of Farmers' Association) and Participant Three (Community leader) were of the opinion that women suffer more from the impact of banditry as they are faced with feeding children, and that some of them have been turned to widows because their husbands were killed in their farmlands. The participants further suggest that special attention needs to be focused on women because there are a lot of women that are suffering in border villages close to Zamfara and Niger States.

The respondents of the FGD in Gayam argue that more intervention needs to be targeted at women and children because of the volume of undernutrition. Some of the respondents argue that it is impossible to reel out statistics of under nutrition, but they are convinced that there is a high degree of under nutrition among women and children.

It can be deduced that women and children are the most impacted by the adverse effects of crises as they experience poor nutrition. Moreover, further studies will be needed to measure the depth and degree of effective policy intervention.

## **VI. Findings of the Study**

In the aspect of food availability, the study found out that food-producing communities have less quantity of food compared to commercial parts of BirninGwari. The commercial parts remain gathering points where food items are marketed.

Broadly speaking, violent conflict threatens food production through a combination of direct violence and other non-violent factors. The direct factors include cattle rustling, attacking of farmers, farmlands, transportation of farm products and food stores. The non-violent factors include; The indirect factors include inadequate; land, fertilizers, capital and support from the government in terms of loans, security guarantees, extension services and technical support. A consequence of both factors suggests that food supply from farmlands to markets has dramatically declined and the demand from consumers because inhabitants purchasing power has been constraint by violence or by the migration out of BirninGwari.

The findings of the study show a correlation between violence and poor nutrition. It identified poor nutrition among infants and other categories of adults. Children suffer poor nutrition, especially within infants, because conceiving and breastfeeding mothers face inadequate food and dietary requirements.

Further findings about poor nutrition among adults indicate that there is a high prevalence of poor nourishment among women followed by males and youth. Women, as the most affected by banditry and are challenged by feeding children and as have become breadwinners of their families. In a broad sense, poor nutrition among inhabitants is caused by poor purchasing power, in the ability of traders to store and sell perishable food items such as meat, dairy products, fish and vegetables because most facilities for storage have been destroyed by bandits.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This study highlights the impacts of violent conflict in Kaduna State using BirninGwari LGA. Banditry has adversely affected food availability, nutrition and livelihood. The study reveals that women and children, especially, infants, are the most affected by conflict because they experience poor nutrition. More information about women and children on nutrition status could not be obtained from hospitals and health centres because of security risks and the absence of health workers. Given this challenge, this study recommends that future studies that measure the depth and degree of the impacts of violent conflict on nutrition, further studies need to be conducted using data from health centres.

The study further reveals that violent conflict and other indirect factors such as inadequate; fertilizer, capital and security contribute to the decline in food availability. Additionally, food supply has drastically declined because of the purchasing power of community inhabitants because of insecurity. This study recommends a multi-stakeholder approach including state and non-state actors in tackling banditry and its adverse effects.

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### Key informants

S/NO	Name	Location	Date
1	Participant One (Senior vigilante member)	Gayam	15/03/2022
2	Participant Two (Senior Police Officer)	Kakangi	16/03/2022
3	Participant Three (Community leader)	Gayam	15/03/2022
4	Participant Four (Senior member of Farmers' Association)	Kakangi	16/03/2022

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