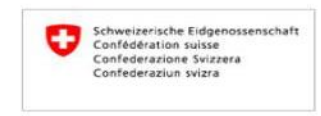




# Sécuriser le foncier agro-pastoral et prévenir les conflits agro-pastoraux en Afrique du Centre et de l'Ouest

## COLLOQUE RÉGIONAL

N'Djaména, 23-25 novembre 2021



**J2 – Session 4 : Quels systèmes d’information et de défense des droits par les usagers doit-on promouvoir ? Comment peuvent-ils parvenir à mieux défendre leurs droits et par cela influencer sur une gouvernance plus responsable ? Quels appuis ? Quels Outils ?**

## **The media coverage of agro-pastoral conflicts in Nigeria: What are the challenges for Herder Organizations**

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# The media and communication

- ❖ The Media is the most most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent look guilty and guilty look innocent. That's the power because they control the mind of the masses” **1**
- ❖ Let me begin this paper by quoting extensively from paper “**The Use and Abuse of the Media in Vulnerable Societies**” **2** by Mark Frohardt and Jonathan Temin and they quoted Jamie Mezl who observed that the Mass Media reach not only people's homes and houses but also their minds, shaping their thoughts, opinions and sometimes their behavior.
- ❖ Frohardt and Temin further observed the that the media outlets can actively be used to promote conflicts, they can also contribute to conflicts involuntarily. It is a double edged sword. They two respected analyst further stated that “such passive incitement to violence most frequently occurs when journalists have poor professional skills, when the media culture is underdeveloped, or when there is little or no history of independent media. Under such circumstances, journalists can inflame grievances and promote stereotypes by virtue of the manner in which they report, even though their intentions may not may ne neccesarily malicious and they are not being manipulated by an outside entity”



# General Situation of Media Reporting of Agro-Pastoral Conflicts in Nigeria.

- ❖ Most participants will shudder to look at the media reportage of Agro-Pastoralists in Nigeria. Pastoralists or Herders or to use the term I hate to use “The Fulani Herdsmen” is the bogey man of the Nigerian Press. Pastoralists in Nigeria are predominantly Fulanis (even though other ethnic groups like the Shuwa Arabs, the Kwayam, the Challa and others are also engage in mobile livestock production) and many other groups keep some form of livestock either large or small ruminants for variety of purposes but the Fulani Herders are singled out for much media malignment both in the the conventional and non conventional media.
- ❖ The media reports could just me summarised in one word; **bad**. If you run a google search on “Fulani Herdsmen” probably you would think the Fulani Pastoralists are engaged in war against everyone, every where in Nigeria, which is not the case. You will find in many communities where Fulani Herders are living peacefully with their neighbours.



# General Situation of Media Reporting of Agro-Pastoral Conflicts in Nigeria. (contd)

- ❖ Let me state also that both farmers and Herders are victims of conflicts. Conflicts can emanate from either side but which ever way, the Herder is gets to be be blamed.
- ❖ In recent years the especially in the last six or seven years the reports the hostility had been intense. There is a political angle to this. The fact that the President of Nigeria is himself a cattle breeder and comes from the semi-sahelian livestock producing belt of the country had intensified the media hostility. Almost every government policy at the federal level to improve livestock production and minimise conflicts are viewed from the angle of a perceived bias by the President, even though the initiators and drivers of the policies come different ethnic, religious and geo-political backgrounds.



# General Situation of Media Reporting of Agro-Pastoral Conflicts in Nigeria. (cont'd)

- ❖ In an interview I granted to a Nigerian author and blogger Elnathan John in 2014, I spoke about the challenges those of us in the livestock sector face. I said ***“In East Africa they face the same kind of challenges. The media view their mode of production as backward and outdated, the people who are into the production as uncivilized, as people who are violent, as people who are prone to attacking others for no reason without viewing what are the underlying causes that really bring about these issues of conflict. We have always considered farmers and pastoralists as cousins in terms of production, trade and relations. But with time, factors ordinarily that shouldn’t have been there, have infiltrated into the relationship. The issues are developmental challenges like the issues of damages to crop or farming along cattle routes or the issues of access to pasture or access to market, these are the kind of things that Pastoralist and Farmers face and they have been there as old as history itself. So the media perception has not been good. The latest I heard was pastoralists using helicopters to attack people or pastoralists damaging oil rigs in Coastal areas. People create myths and sensationalize things that are not even there and gloss over the real things.”***



# General Situation of Media Reporting of Agro-Pastoral Conflicts in Nigeria. (cont'd)

- ❖ The media bias against Pastoralists is almost similar in other African countries but maybe not as intense as in Nigeria. If you look at media reports in Kenya, Burkina Faso, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Cameroon, Congo and other areas the situation is almost similar.
- ❖ As in most countries, whether developed or developing, Nigerian media whether conventional or unconventional control the narrative and dictate public discourse. The Pastoralists' voice is missing except to add colour to stories. Newscast portray Pastoralists as the villains and carriers of violence. Violence on Pastoralists by vigilante groups, cattle rustlers, livestock seizures and poisoning, internal expulsions, even by some security forces are under-reported or skewed.
- ❖ There is consistent negative media reportage of Pastoralism and about Pastoralists. Some these reports bother on ethnic profiling.

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# General Situation of Media Reporting of Agro-Pastoral Conflicts in Nigeria. (cont'd)

What could be responsible for this?

- ❖ Most Journalists have poor understanding of the Pastoralists production system which is viewed as outdated and unproductive even though Pastoralism is a resilient system of production and Pastoralists are competent experts in their field.
- ❖ Neglect and exclusion of Pastoralists in policy formulation and implementation.
- ❖ Fake News and Hate Speech. Globally Hate Speech and Fake News spread especially on the internet is a source of worry to all persons. Many countries have enacted legislations to combat hate speech especially in Germany, Israel, Rwanda etc.
- ❖ Weak Pastoralists voice in the media space and the social media.
- ❖ Militarization and securitization of Pastoral spaces and a perception of confluence between Pastoralism and Insecurity.





# Challenges of Pastoralists Organizations in Nigeria in Response to Negative Media Coverage.

- ❖ As indicated earlier the media space is dominated by people who are heavily influenced by crop production backgrounds. They have little or no understanding of Pastoral production systems. Other are influenced by negative media portrayal of Pastoralists or motivated by political factors that have little or no bearing to Agro-Pastoral conflicts.
- ❖ The weak capacity of Pastoralists Organizations in responding media attacks, disinformation, misinformation, fake news and hate speech.
- ❖ Almost all the Pastoralists Organizations I know in Nigeria don't have a clear communication strategy and don't have a media/communications units hence disorganized responses or cross-communicating without coordination.



# Challenges of Pastoralists Organizations in Nigeria in Response to Negative Media Coverage.

- ❖ Media securitization of resource use conflicts between Pastoralists and Farmers without understanding the dynamics of the conflicts and actors. There is a dearth of knowledge in the media of the sociology of rural populations. There is also the challenge of isolating suspected criminals from genuine herders, genuine herds from stolen herds and differentiating between ethno-religious conflicts and resource use conflicts.

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# What Can Be Done to Reverse the Trend?

- ❖ Building the capacity of Pastoralists Organizations to articulate their views and positions.
- ❖ Pastoralists Organizations should have a clear Communication Strategy. This should also apply to Farmer organizations because agricultural reportage is generally low except where conflicts are involved.
- ❖ Need to have consistent Media Engagement
- ❖ Producing and disseminating Media Contents
- ❖ Coordination by Pastoralists Organizations and Farmer organizations in their responses
- ❖ Positive Media Engagement (Trips by Journalists to field and engagement with Pastoralists directly). Trips by Elnathan John to Painkore Grazing Reserve, Media tour of Kachia Grazing Reserve by Daily Trust newspaper, Trip by Emmanuel Akinwotu of British Guardian to Damau Grazing Reserve, Trip by BBC Correspondent to Gwagwalada Grazing Reserve, Interaction with Senior Editors and reporters, Media Appearance on NTA, Channels, AIT, TVC News, etc



# Thank you.



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