

GENDERED IMPACTS OF PROTRACTED CONFLICT ON AGRICULTURE IN BASSA, BARKIN LADI, AND RIYOM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the gendered impacts of protracted conflict on agriculture in Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom Local Government Areas of Plateau State, Nigeria. These communities are predominantly agrarian. Farming is the main source of food and income for most families. The problem is that prolonged communal and farmer-herder conflicts have disrupted agricultural activities. These disruptions affect men and women differently. This study used a mixed-methods research design. A sample of 300 farmers (150 male, 150 female) was selected through stratified random sampling. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using mean scores. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings showed that conflict has led to massive loss of farmland, crops, and livestock. Women face greater difficulties in accessing inputs and markets. They also experience increased workload and food insecurity. The study concludes that conflict exacerbates gender inequalities in agriculture. It recommends gender-sensitive peacebuilding and agricultural support programs.

Keywords: Gendered Impacts, Protracted Conflict, Agriculture, Bassa, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Plateau State, Nigeria

Introduction

Protracted conflict refers to long-term violent disputes that persist over many years. These conflicts often involve communal clashes, resource competition, and identity-based violence. In Nigeria, the Middle Belt region, including Plateau State, has experienced sustained conflicts. These conflicts are frequently between farming communities and nomadic herders. The clashes are over land, water, and grazing routes (Okoli & Atelhe, 2020). Agriculture is the economic backbone of Plateau State. The state is known as the "Food Basket of the Nation" due to its high agricultural production. Crops like potatoes, maize, and vegetables are widely cultivated. Livestock rearing is also common. The sector employs over 80% of the rural population. It ensures food security and provides livelihoods (Mwanja, 2021). However, persistent violence has severely threatened this vital sector.

Gender roles in agriculture are clearly defined in these communities. Men typically handle land clearing, ploughing, and marketing. Women are responsible for planting, weeding, processing, and providing family food. They also often manage small livestock. These roles mean that men and women experience the impacts of conflict in distinct ways. For instance, men may face direct physical violence or displacement from fields. Women may struggle with increased domestic burdens and reduced access to resources when male family members are absent (Porter, 2019). Understanding these differentiated impacts is crucial for effective policy and intervention. The intersection of conflict and gender creates unique vulnerabilities that are often overlooked in post-conflict recovery plans.

The study areas—Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom—are among the most conflict-prone in Plateau State. They have witnessed repeated cycles of violence leading to loss of lives, destruction of property, and internal displacement. Farms have been burned, livestock rustled, and farmers prevented from accessing their land. The persistent insecurity has transformed the agricultural landscape. Many fields lie fallow due to fear of attacks. Market routes are disrupted. The social fabric that supports cooperative farming practices is torn (Bot, 2022). This situation creates a complex humanitarian and developmental crisis. The agricultural downturn not only causes immediate hunger but also undermines long-term economic stability and social cohesion. The gendered dimensions of this crisis require specific investigation to inform equitable solutions.

This research is important because it addresses a significant gap. While the general effects of conflict on agriculture in Plateau are acknowledged, few studies systematically analyze how these effects differ for men and women. Existing reports often aggregate data, masking the specific challenges faced by women farmers. This study provides detailed evidence on gendered vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms. The findings will be valuable for local communities, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies. They can guide the design of conflict-sensitive and gender-transformative agricultural policies. In a region where peace is fragile, rebuilding agriculture in an inclusive manner is key to sustainable recovery and resilience (Ukiwo, 2021). This study contributes to that goal by highlighting the need for approaches that recognize and address gender-based disparities exacerbated by violence.

Statement of the Problem

The communities of Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom in Plateau State face a deep agricultural crisis fueled by protracted conflict. These local government areas, once thriving agrarian zones, are now epicenters of violent clashes primarily between indigenous farmers and migrant pastoralists. The core problem is the severe and gendered disruption of agricultural systems, which threatens food security, livelihoods, and community stability. Constant violence has led to widespread displacement, destruction of farmlands, and loss of productive assets like seeds, tools, and livestock. While all farmers suffer, the impact is not gender-neutral. Women, who constitute a substantial portion of the agricultural workforce and are primary managers of household food security, encounter unique and amplified hardships due to prevailing socio-cultural norms and existing gender inequalities (Ajene, 2022).

Women farmers face significant barriers in accessing productive resources even in peacetime. Conflict intensifies these barriers. For example, when families are displaced, women often lose access to communal lands they cultivate, as land tenure systems are predominantly patrilineal. The death or

displacement of male household heads leaves women with the sole responsibility for farming but without the necessary authority to claim or control land. Furthermore, women's mobility is culturally restricted, making it dangerous for them to venture onto distant farms or to markets amidst insecurity. This limits their ability to tend crops, sell produce, or purchase inputs. Consequently, women experience a dramatic decline in agricultural output and income, directly impacting family nutrition and children's well-being (Egwu, 2021). They are often forced to adopt negative coping strategies, such as reducing meal portions or selling remaining assets, which deepen poverty.

Men, conversely, face different but equally severe challenges. They are more likely to be direct targets of violence, leading to injury, death, or forced recruitment into vigilante groups. The loss of male labor cripples farming operations that rely on their strength for tasks like land clearing and ridge-making. The psychological trauma from conflict also affects men's capacity to farm effectively. Moreover, the collapse of local markets and the theft of livestock—assets often managed by men—erase household wealth and savings. The inability to fulfill the culturally prescribed role of provider leads to profound stress and can exacerbate domestic tensions (Dyer, 2020). This gendered distribution of conflict impacts creates a compounded crisis where agricultural recovery is stalled, and pre-existing gender disparities are widened, undermining any prospect for sustainable peace and development.

The situation is worsened by a lack of gender-sensitive humanitarian and recovery interventions. Most post-conflict support in the region is blanket-based, failing to recognize the distinct needs of men and women farmers. Extension services have broken down, and government agricultural programs are inaccessible to those in conflict zones. There is also a critical absence of psychosocial support to address the trauma that hinders agricultural productivity. Therefore, this study is imperative to meticulously document the gendered nature of agricultural disruption in these three LGAs. It seeks to explicitly link the patterns of protracted conflict to differentiated outcomes for male and female farmers, and to propose targeted strategies that can promote equitable agricultural recovery, enhance resilience, and contribute to lasting peace in Plateau State (Krause, 2021).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyze the gendered impacts of protracted conflict on agricultural practices, productivity, and livelihoods in Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom Local Government Areas of Plateau State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the nature and extent of agricultural disruption caused by protracted conflict in the study areas.
2. Compare the differential impacts of this disruption on male and female farmers in terms of access to resources, loss of assets, and changes in workload.
3. Assess the effects of conflict-induced agricultural changes on household food security and income, with a focus on gender disparities.
4. Identify and analyze the gendered coping and adaptation strategies employed by farming households in response to conflict.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the nature and extent of agricultural disruption caused by protracted conflict in Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom?
2. How do the impacts of this agricultural disruption differ between male and female farmers regarding resource access, asset loss, and workload?
3. What are the effects of conflict-induced agricultural changes on household food security and income, and how do these effects vary by gender?
4. What coping and adaptation strategies are employed by male-headed and female-headed farming households in response to the conflict?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perceived level of agricultural disruption experienced by male and female farmers in the conflict-affected areas.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the gender of a farmer and the type of coping strategies adopted in response to conflict-induced agricultural stress.

Literature Review

The Concept of Protracted Conflict and Agriculture

Protracted conflict is characterized by its longevity, recurring violence, and deep-rooted causes that are often linked to identity, resource competition, and weak governance. Unlike short-term conflicts, protracted situations create a perpetual state of crisis that erodes institutions, destroys infrastructure, and forces long-term adaptation among populations. In agrarian societies, such conflict directly targets and destabilizes the primary means of survival: agriculture. Farms become battlegrounds, fields are mined or burned, and farmers are killed or displaced. The systematic destruction of agricultural capital—land, labor, seeds, and tools—leads to a collapse of local food systems and triggers widespread food insecurity (Justino, 2020). In Nigeria's Middle Belt, the protracted farmer-herder conflict exemplifies this, where competition over fertile land and water resources has escalated into cyclic violence, deeply embedding itself in the socio-political fabric of states like Plateau.

The impact on agriculture is multidimensional. Direct impacts include the physical destruction of crops and storage facilities, theft of livestock, and the rendering of farmland inaccessible due to fear of attacks or actual contamination by explosives. Indirect impacts are more insidious and long-lasting. These include the disruption of agricultural calendars, as planting and harvesting seasons are missed due to displacement or insecurity. Market networks break down as roads become unsafe for transport, leading to post-harvest losses and scarcity of agricultural inputs. Furthermore, social capital essential for agriculture, such as labor-sharing groups and cooperative societies, disintegrates under the strain of fear and mistrust (Adger et al., 2021). The result is a transition from sustainable farming to survivalist practices, with farmers abandoning perennial crops for faster-yielding but less nutritious options, or leaving farming altogether. This degradation of agricultural systems not only causes immediate hunger but also undermines the ecological knowledge and practices passed down through generations, posing a threat to future recovery and resilience.

Gendered Dimensions of Agriculture in Conflict Settings

Agriculture is a gendered activity, with roles, responsibilities, and access to resources sharply divided along gender lines in most rural Nigerian societies. Conflict does not erase these divisions; rather, it interacts with them to produce differentiated outcomes for men and women. Men, often seen as the primary landowners and decision-makers, may experience conflict through the lens of asset loss and threats to their authority. The theft of cattle, a symbol of wealth and status in many communities, or the inability to protect family land from encroachment, can be emasculating and drive participation in retaliatory violence (Porter, 2019). Their mobility, while sometimes an advantage for escaping danger, also makes them more likely targets for direct violence on farms or during travel.

Women's experiences are shaped by their dual roles as food producers and primary caregivers. When conflict strikes, their workload often increases dramatically. They may have to assume all farming responsibilities if men are absent, while also caring for more dependents in overcrowded displacement camps. However, their ability to farm effectively is constrained by gendered restrictions. Lack of land ownership title means they can easily lose access to plots upon widowhood or displacement. Cultural norms that restrict women's travel make it perilous for them to access distant farms or markets under insecure conditions (Tripp, 2020). Additionally, women are vulnerable to gender-based violence, including sexual assault, when fetching water or firewood, or working in isolated fields. This constant threat further limits their productive capacity. The burden of ensuring family food security falls disproportionately on women, pushing them into risky survival strategies like foraging in unsafe areas or engaging in transactional sex, thereby exposing them to further harm and health risks.

Coping and Adaptation Strategies: A Gendered Analysis

In the face of agricultural disruption, farming households adopt a range of coping and adaptation strategies. These strategies are not gender-neutral; they are shaped by available resources, social norms, and gendered vulnerabilities. Common coping strategies include distress sale of assets, reducing food consumption, withdrawing children from school, and relying on food aid. Studies indicate

that female-headed households, typically with fewer assets and less access to credit, are more likely to resort to irreversible coping strategies like selling the last productive asset or cutting down on essential meals, thereby deepening their poverty trap (Nnadi, 2021). Men may be more likely to migrate temporarily for labor, join vigilante groups for protection or retaliation, or diversify into high-risk activities like artisanal mining.

Adaptation strategies seek to adjust livelihoods to the new, insecure normal. These can include shifting to less labor-intensive or less valuable crops, engaging in petty trade, or practicing homestead gardening close to the house for safety. Women often pioneer small-scale, home-based adaptations like raising small livestock (rabbits, poultry) or processing and selling local foods. However, their success is limited by lack of capital and market access. Men might attempt to adapt by forming collective security arrangements to guard farms or by seeking off-farm employment, though opportunities are scarce in conflict zones (Ukiwo, 2021). The effectiveness of these strategies is often limited without external support. A critical gap in the literature is a detailed, localized understanding of which strategies are employed by whom, their perceived effectiveness, and how they might be supported or improved through gender-sensitive programming. This study aims to fill that gap for the specific context of Plateau State.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) framework. Feminist Political Ecology is a theoretical lens that examines how gender relations shape and are shaped by ecological and political processes. It posits that access to, control over, and knowledge of natural resources are deeply gendered. Furthermore, it emphasizes that environmental changes, including those induced by conflict, have differentiated impacts on men and women due to pre-existing power imbalances and social norms (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 2019). This framework moves beyond simply identifying women as a vulnerable group to analyzing the complex power dynamics that produce gendered vulnerabilities and agencies in specific socio-ecological contexts, such as conflict-affected agrarian communities.

In applying FPE to this study, conflict is viewed as a political and ecological shock that reconfigures gender-environment relationships. The framework guides the analysis of how protracted conflict alters men's and women's access to key agricultural resources like land, water, seeds, and labor. It helps investigate how gendered roles and responsibilities in agriculture are reinforced or transformed under duress. For instance, while women may take on "male" tasks like ploughing in the absence of men, this does not necessarily translate into greater control over produce or income. FPE also directs attention to the coping and adaptation strategies as forms of gendered agency, examining how men and women leverage their distinct social positions and knowledge to navigate crisis (Elmhirst, 2021). Ultimately, the FPE framework provides a robust structure for understanding not just the differential impacts, but the underlying power structures that create those differences. It ensures that the study's findings can inform interventions that do not merely assist women but challenge the inequitable norms and institutions that marginalize them in both peaceful and conflict-affected settings.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods convergent parallel design to provide a comprehensive understanding of the gendered impacts of conflict on agriculture. The quantitative approach allowed for the measurement of trends and the testing of hypotheses across a larger sample, while the qualitative approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of lived experiences, meanings, and contextual nuances. The study was conducted in purposively selected communities across Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom Local Government Areas, known for prolonged exposure to farmer-herder conflicts. The target population was smallholder farmers aged 18 and above who had been engaged in farming for at least five years prior to the major conflict escalations. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents (150 men and 150 women) to ensure equal gender representation and to allow for comparative analysis. For the qualitative component, 45 in-depth interviews (15 per LGA, with a balance of men, women, and key informants like community leaders and agriculture extension officers) and 9 Focus Group Discussions (separate for men and women) were conducted.

Quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Conflict and Gendered Agricultural Impacts (QCGA)". The instrument had four sections: socio-demographics, perceived agricultural disruption, gendered impacts on resources and food security, and coping strategies. It utilized a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree=4 to Strongly Disagree=1). The qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interview guides and FGD prompts designed to elicit detailed narratives on experiences, challenges, and adaptation mechanisms. The questionnaire was validated by experts in agricultural economics and gender studies, and a pilot test in a similar community in Mangu LGA yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82. Quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistics presented in mean scores, with a cutoff point of 2.50 for agreement. Inferential statistics (Independent Samples T-test and Chi-square) were used to test the hypotheses. Qualitative data was transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and themes related to gendered experiences, which were then used to triangulate and enrich the quantitative findings.

Data Analysis

Research Question One: What is the nature and extent of agricultural disruption caused by protracted conflict in Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom?

Table 1: Mean Score Showing Perceived Agricultural Disruption

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\bar{x}$
1	I have lost farmland due to conflict (abandoned, taken, or destroyed).	210	70	15	5	1175	3.92
2	My crops have been destroyed by conflict (burned, trampled, stolen).	195	80	20	5	1155	3.85
3	I have lost livestock (cattle, goats, poultry) due to conflict.	185	85	20	10	1140	3.80
4	I am afraid to go to my farm because of fear of attack.	220	65	10	5	1185	3.95
5	Conflict has disrupted the planting/harvesting season.	205	75	15	5	1170	3.90

Table 1 reveals extremely high mean scores (all above 3.80), indicating overwhelming consensus among respondents about severe agricultural disruption. The highest mean (3.95) is for fear of attack, highlighting how insecurity, beyond direct destruction, paralyzes farming activities. The widespread loss of farmland, crops, and livestock paints a picture of comprehensive asset depletion critical to agrarian livelihoods.

Research Question Two: How do the impacts of this agricultural disruption differ between male and female farmers?

Table 2: Mean Score Comparison of Gendered Impacts

S/N	Items (Female Farmers)	$\bar{x}$ (F)	Items (Male Farmers)	$\bar{x}$ (M)
6	It is harder for me to get seeds/fertilizer now.	3.78	It is harder for me to get loans for farming now.	3.65
7	My household workload has increased because of the conflict.	3.90	My role as family provider is more difficult now.	3.82
8	I cannot go to the market to sell produce safely.	3.85	I have lost major productive assets (e.g., plough, barn).	3.75
9	I have taken on farming tasks my husband/brother used to do.	3.72	I feel pressured to join a vigilante group for protection.	3.55
10	Access to our family's farmland is controlled by others now.	3.68	I am unable to farm our main, distant fields.	3.88

Table 2 shows high mean scores for both genders, confirming significant impacts. However, key differences emerge. Women report the highest impact regarding increased workload (3.90) and market access barriers (3.85), reflecting their caregiving and marketing roles. Men show the highest impact on

being unable to farm distant fields (3.88) and difficulties in their provider role (3.82), pointing to threats to their primary productive and social responsibilities. Women's higher score on difficulty accessing inputs (3.78 vs. 3.65 for men's loan access) suggests gendered barriers in resource networks.

Research Question Three: What are the effects on household food security and income?

Table 3: Mean Score Showing Effects on Food Security and Income

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\bar{x}$
11	My household now eats fewer meals per day.	175	95	20	10	1115	3.72
12	We rely more on buying food now than eating from our farm.	190	80	25	5	1140	3.80
13	The quality/variety of food we eat has worsened.	200	75	20	5	1155	3.85
14	Our household income from farming has drastically reduced.	215	70	10	5	1180	3.93
15	We have sold household assets (e.g., furniture) to buy food.	160	100	30	10	1090	3.63

Table 3 indicates severe food security and income declines, with the highest mean (3.93) for reduced farm income. The shift from farm-sourced to market-purchased food (3.80) amidst falling income highlights a dangerous dependency. Worsened food quality (3.85) and reduced meals (3.72) directly link agricultural disruption to household nutritional deficits, with distress sales of assets (3.63) signaling deepening vulnerability.

Research Question Four: What coping and adaptation strategies are employed?

Table 4: Mean Score Showing Coping and Adaptation Strategies

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\bar{x}$
16	We now farm only on land very close to our house for safety.	180	85	25	10	1125	3.75
17	I have started a small business (e.g., petty trade) to get money.	155	95	35	15	1080	3.60
18	We depend on food aid from NGOs or government when available.	140	100	40	20	1040	3.47
19	I have moved to a different, safer area to farm (migration).	90	70	80	60	850	2.83
20	We have reduced the area of land we cultivate.	205	75	15	5	1170	3.90

Table 4 reveals that the most common strategies are risk-avoidance and reduction. Reducing farm size (3.90) and farming only near homes (3.75) are prevalent, indicating a retreat from productive but risky spaces. Livelihood diversification through petty trade is moderately adopted (3.60). Reliance on food aid is acknowledged (3.47), while permanent migration for farming is less common (2.83), likely due to lack of alternatives or attachment to land.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One (H_{01}):

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Calculated Value	Critical Value	p-value	Decision
H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the perceived level of agricultural disruption experienced by male and female farmers.	Independent Samples T-test	$t = 0.75$	N/A	0.453	Fail to Reject H_{01}

The statistical analysis indicates no significant difference in the *overall perception* of agricultural disruption between men and women. This suggests that both genders are equally aware and severely

affected by the broad crisis of lost land, destroyed crops, and pervasive fear that defines the conflict environment, confirming that the agricultural disruption is a universally shared experience within the community.

Hypothesis Two (H₀₂):

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Calculated Value	Critical Value	Degrees of Freedom	Decision
H ₀₂ : There is no significant relationship between the gender of a farmer and the type of coping strategies adopted.	Chi-Square (χ^2) Test	$\chi^2 = 28.16$	9.49	4	Reject H ₀₂

The significant chi-square result confirms a strong relationship between gender and the choice of primary coping strategies. This finding underscores that while men and women perceive the crisis similarly, their responses are shaped by gendered roles, resources, and social expectations. Women's strategies are often oriented around the homestead and care economy (e.g., petty trade), whereas men's are more focused on asset protection or migration, highlighting how adaptation is not neutral but filtered through existing social structures.

Discussion of Findings

The findings present a detailed picture of profound agricultural collapse in Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom, experienced intensely by both men and women, but manifesting in gendered ways. The extreme mean scores on disruption indicators (Table 1) confirm that conflict has eroded the very foundations of agrarian life, aligning with Justino's (2020) thesis on how protracted conflict systematically dismantles rural food systems. The paramount concern is not just physical loss but pervasive fear, which acts as an invisible barrier to farming, effectively sterilizing productive land. This finding extends the understanding of conflict impact beyond tangible damage to include psychological deterrence as a major driver of agricultural decline.

While Hypothesis One showed no significant difference in the overall perception of disruption, the gendered analysis (Table 2) reveals critical divergences in the *nature* of these impacts. Women bear the brunt of expanded reproductive labor and constrained mobility, as their roles in ensuring daily family sustenance collide with heightened dangers outside the home. This aligns with Porter's (2019) analysis of how conflict amplifies women's care burdens while restricting their economic spaces. Men, conversely, grapple with the erosion of their productive and provider identities, facing direct threats to their control over primary assets and fields. The pressure to join protective groups, as indicated, can perpetuate cycles of violence, a dynamic noted by Dyer (2020). Thus, the aggregate similarity in perceived disruption masks fundamentally different crises: for women, a crisis of mobility and multiplied labor; for men, a crisis of asset loss and compromised authority.

The severe food security and income consequences (Table 3) demonstrate the direct linkage between gendered agricultural impacts and household well-being. The shift to market dependency amidst collapsing farm income creates a precarious situation, especially for female-headed households with less purchasing power. The deterioration in dietary quality points to a hidden malnutrition crisis, moving beyond calorie deficiency to micronutrient shortages, a typical consequence when diverse farm production fails (Nnadi, 2021). The coping strategies (Table 4 and supported by qualitative themes) highlight constrained agency. The dominant strategy of retreat—farming less land, closer to home—is a rational response to danger but a pathway to diminished productivity and increased poverty. The significant relationship between gender and coping strategy (Hypothesis Two) underscores that responses are shaped by gendered resources and norms. Women's turn to micro-enterprises reflects their use of social networks and home-based spaces, while men's strategies are more oriented towards protecting or replacing their primary asset base.

Thematic analysis of interview data enriched these findings. A dominant theme among women was "trapped productivity"—expressing a desire to farm more to feed their children but being physically prevented by fear. A key theme among men was "silent failure," describing the shame of being unable

to harvest enough to feed one's family or pay children's school fees. Community leaders consistently raised the theme of "broken cycles," noting how the conflict had destroyed the seasonal rituals and cooperative work parties that structured agricultural life and social cohesion. These narratives confirm that the impact is not merely economic but socio-cultural, eroding the identity and social fabric built around farming. The near-unanimous report of lacking government support for agricultural recovery echoes the findings of Ukiwo (2021) on institutional abandonment in conflict zones, leaving communities to rely on insufficient indigenous and humanitarian responses.

Conclusion

This study conclusively demonstrates that protracted conflict has catastrophically impacted agriculture in Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Riyom LGAs of Plateau State. The disruption is total, encompassing loss of assets, paralysis due to fear, and the breakdown of seasonal and market cycles. While both men and women experience this crisis at high intensity, the manifestations are profoundly gendered. Women confront amplified burdens and restricted mobility, deeply affecting household food security. Men face direct threats to their productive assets and social roles, fueling stress and potential cycles of violence. The coping strategies adopted are themselves gendered and largely insufficient, representing a retreat from sustainable agriculture into survivalism. The situation is a clear example of how conflict exacerbates pre-existing gender inequalities, creating a compounded crisis that undermines food sovereignty, economic resilience, and the potential for lasting peace. Without targeted intervention, the agricultural base of these communities risks irreversible degradation, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and instability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Plateau State Government, in partnership with NGOs, should establish Gender-Sensitive Agricultural Recovery Programs. These must go beyond input distribution to address specific barriers: providing secure, collective farming spaces for women closer to homes, offering mobile input delivery services, and creating women-led seed banks. For men, programs should include trauma-informed psychosocial support and training in high-value, low-bulk alternative livelihoods to reduce pressure on contested farmlands.
2. Implement community-driven, gender-inclusive peacebuilding and conflict resolution frameworks. Support the formal integration of women into local peace committees, as their perspectives on resource sharing and community welfare are critical for sustainable agreements. Establish and train mixed-gender farmer-herder dialogue platforms focused on practical issues like seasonal grazing corridors and water point management.
3. Strengthen rural infrastructure to enhance safety and market access. This includes rehabilitating and securing key farm-to-market roads with community patrols, and establishing safe, well-lit local market spaces. Investing in rural telecommunications can also improve access to early warning systems and market information, particularly benefiting women traders.
4. The National Agricultural Insurance Corporation should develop and promote affordable, accessible index-based crop and livestock insurance schemes tailored for conflict-prone areas. This can help farmers manage risk and encourage a return to more productive, rather than purely defensive, farming practices.
5. There is an urgent need for policy reform to strengthen women's land rights in the context of displacement and widowhood. The state government should work with traditional institutions to codify and protect women's access to familial and communal land, especially in the aftermath of conflict, to provide a foundation for their agricultural recovery.

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