

# Resolving farmer-herder conflict in Agogo traditional area of Ghana: an assessment of the government policy of expulsion

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## Abstract

Violent conflicts, particularly farmer-herder conflicts have, for a long time, been a serious security problem in Agogo Traditional Area of Ghana. This paper explores “Operation Cowleg”, the local community and national level response in dealing with the conflict. However, the study confirms that the policy is not sustainable for two main reasons: i.e (i) most of the cattle are owned by influential Ghanaians with competing interest in the cattle business in Agogo and (ii) the ECOWAS<sup>1</sup> protocol. Based on the findings, the study recommends the following short, medium and long terms solutions: dialogue and settlement committee, creation of buffer zone, socialisation and integration, distribution and relocation, ranching system and proper land arrangement.

**Keywords:** Operation Cowleg; ECOWAS protocol; Social capital; farmers; herdsman.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Community of West African States.

## **1. Introduction**

Violent conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers have, for a long time, been a common security issue in West Africa with consequences on human and animal lives, properties, peaceful coexistence, and orderliness (Bleach, 2004; Olaniyan, 2015; Shettima & Tar, 2008; Tonah, 2006). Conflicts between farmers and herders have been classified as Low Intensity Conflict resulting from environmental degradation, resource scarcity, population growth and climate change (Shettima & Tar, 2008). According to Breusers *et al.* (1998), conflicts between sedentary farmers and pastoralists is an old phenomenon. However, there is a consensus among scholars that farmers-herders' clashes in the coastal countries of West Africa became widespread in the 20th century (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009; Tonah, 2006; 2002).

Before the 20th century, the problem was prevalent in the savanna belts of West Africa i.e. the Guinea, Sudan and Sahel zones (savanna belts), where cattle rearing was predominant as against crop production, which was carried out only during the short rainy season on a small scale. In view of this, the Fulani herdsmen had access to a vast area of grassland (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009, p. 47). Indeed, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed the migration of the Fulani pastoralists from the Sahel into the forest zones of the coastal states such as Ghana, Benin, Nigeria and Côte D'Ivoire (de Bruijn & van Dijk, 2003; Caldwell 1975; Frantz 1990; Swift 1977; Tonah, 2006).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, cases of farmers-herders conflict are widespread across the sub region. For example, in 2013, about 300 people were reported dead in Nigeria due to farmers-nomads conflict (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014, p.78). Also, a clash in 1989 between herders and farmers at the borders between Senegal and Mauritania resulted in multiple deaths, scores of wounded people, and wanton destruction of properties when reactions spread across borders (Homer-Dixon, 1999, pp.17-18; Salmone, 2010). On December 18, 2009, a conflict between pastoralists and farmers in Udeni-Gida, a town in central Nigeria's Nasarawa State, left 32 people dead, scores of houses burned, and several farms destroyed (IRIN, 2012).

Ghana is not immune to the conflict between sedentary farmers and Fulani herdsmen and its negative effects. Between 2010 and 2013, there were as many as 60 media reports of clashes between local farmers and Fulani herdsmen in many parts of Ghana (Bukari & Schareika, 2015, p.6). In addition, according to the April 2010 quarterly report of WANEP<sup>2</sup>, these conflicts constitute a

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<sup>1</sup> WANEP is West African Network for Peace Building.

major security threat, and if unchecked, such conflicts may escalate into armed conflicts (cited in Olaniyan, 2015, p.331). Again, on 7th December 2011, conflict between Fulani herdsmen and Konkomba<sup>3</sup> people in the Gushiegu District of Northern region led to 13 deaths, while 11 people were seriously injured. Also, many houses were burnt, properties destroyed, and many cattle rustled (Abubakari & Longi, 2014, p.103; Olaniyan, 2015, p.335).

With specific reference to Agogo Traditional Area in the Ashanti Region, according to REGSEC<sup>4</sup> reports, a lot of people have been killed, and many farms and properties destroyed since the conflict started (Dadson Committee Report, 2010; Republic of Ghana, 2012a; 2012b). In February 2016, two farmers were allegedly killed in their farms by Fulani nomads (Daily Guide, 2016). A report from the Agogo Youth Association claimed that forty (40) farmers have been killed by the Fulani nomads since 2000 (Citifmonline.com, 2016). Finally, the statistics of murder cases at Agogo, per Agogo District Police Station data from January 2014 to January 2016 shows that, many people died from attacks through the conflict (Agyemang, 2017). In 2012, a Kumasi High Court ruled and ordered the REGSEC to drive out all Fulani nomads and their cattle from the Agogo area with immediate effect (Republic of Ghana, 2012a). In view of this, the national government has tackled the conflict from this angle through an expulsion policy called “Operation Cowleg”. However, despite series of operations by joint military and police, Fulani herdsmen and their cattle are still on the Agogo farmlands. As such, the population of cattle on Agogo lands keep increasing (Olaniyan *et al.*, 2015, p.60; Ghanaweb, 2016). For instance, in the 2012 REGSEC report, the cattle population in Agogo was estimated to be ten thousand (10,000) (Republic of Ghana, 2012b). However, as at January 2017, when I did my fieldwork, the cattle population stood at about thirty-one thousand (31,000) per the statistics available to the veterinary doctor for Agogo. Against this background, the study was conducted to assess the “Operation Cowleg” as a preventive measure for the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo Traditional Area.

## **2. The policy of expulsion in West Africa**

The policy of expulsion refers to an eviction or forcibly expelling of immigrants from their present location to their countries or places of origin. This policy

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<sup>3</sup> Konkomba is an ethnic group found in the Northern region of Ghana.

<sup>4</sup> Regional Security Council for Ashanti Region, a body (made up of all the security agencies) that oversees the entire security in the Region.

has been practiced in a number of West African countries such as Nigeria, Mauritania, Ghana, Senegal, Côte D'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone (Hagberg 2000; Opong 2002; Olaniyan *et al.*, 2015; Tonah, 2005). According to Tonah (2005, p.164), West African countries have resorted to this policy in tackling economic hardships, rising crime rates and high unemployment in the host country or as a response to conflict between migrants and the host communities. In this regard, migrants are classified as "aliens or foreigners" by the host countries. In 1983, the Nigerian government under President Shehu Shagari embarked on nationwide eviction of all foreigners from the country, forcing millions of West Africans to flee to neighbouring countries. It turns out that, most of the migrants were Ghanaians who went to Nigeria to look for greener pastures in the 1970s due to the collapse of the Ghanaian economy (Tonah, 2005, p.164). In 1989, the government of Senegal forcibly expelled Fulani pastoralists following clashes between the herdsmen and the indigenous farmers (Schmitz, 1999, pp. 329-30). The Sierra Leone government repatriated Fulani herdsmen to their country of origin, Guinea, during the 1920s and 30s economic depression and subsequently curtailed their immigration (Kposowa, 2000, pp.303-4). In 2012, the Fulani herdsmen in some villages in the Plateau State, Nigeria were expelled by the Special Task Force, which was mandated with the maintenance of peace and order in that crisis torn state following clashes with the indigenes (Olaniyan *et al.*, 2015, p.62).

### **3. The history of the expulsion policy in Ghana**

The policy of expelling migrants in Ghana can be traced to the Aliens Compliance Order. The government under Kofi Abrefa Busia passed a law, the Aliens Compliance Order in 1969 (Antwi Bosiako, 2008; Gould, 1974, Peil, 1971; Tonah, 2005). The law, among other things stipulated that; those without resident permits were to leave the country within 14 days, while mandating all migrants to regularise their stay in the country. In view of this, over 100,000 nationals of several West African countries, many of whom had come to seek economic refuge in post-independent Ghana were expelled from the country (Gould, 1974, p.357; Tonah, 2005, p.164). This is the basis of expulsion policy in Ghana, though it differs from the eviction of Fulani nomads in terms of approach, scale and law. It must be emphasised that, the Ghana as a State has twice embarked on a nation-wide expulsion of Fulani herdsmen from the country.

According to Tonah (2005, p.165), the policy of expelling Fulani nomads was first adopted in 1988/89, after a series of clashes between the nomads and

host communities. These clashes began to gain attention in the Ghanaian media during the late 1980s. The media reports hold that the Fulani herdsmen were responsible for the farmer-herder conflicts and the worsening security situation in many parts in Ghana. Again, concerns were raised about the number of Fulani herdsmen migrating into Ghana. In view of this, it was claimed that the Fulani nomads from all parts of West Africa “were making Ghana their homeland, permanently occupying traditional lands, and attacking the local people” (Tonah, 2005, p.165). Furthermore, the herdsmen were accused of environmental degradation and deforestation wherever they settled. Besides, the migration of Fulani as well as their herds of cattle from neighbouring countries to Ghana through unapproved routes was blamed for the occurrence and spread of livestock diseases such as rinderpest, foot and mouth disease, and anthrax in parts of the country (Bhasin, 1988; *Daily Graphic*, 16th April, 1988 cited in Tonah, 2005, p.165).

Tonah (2005, p.166) further asserted that, the increasing complaints about the destructive activities of Fulani nomads by the farmers led to strain of relations between the two groups characterised by raids and armed conflict. As a result, the Ghanaian government initiated a nation-wide expulsion programme, “Operation Cowleg” and “operation livestock solidarity” in April 1988. “The aim of the programme was to flush out Fulani herdsmen unlawfully occupying lands belonging to local farmers and to check the spread of livestock diseases” (Tonah, 2005, p.166). Tonah posit that, Fulani pastoralists were issued two weeks’ ultimatum to leave the country, after which any herds found with them on Ghanaian soil would be confiscated to the state. Accordingly, joint military and police personnel, in conjunction with officials of the Animal Health and Production Department were set up to carry the task (2005, p.166). The foregoing has been summarised by Olaniyan *et al.* (2015, p.54):

the aim of the policy is to put an end to incessant conflict between the indigenous population and the herders, who are often classified as strangers. Here “stranger” connotes the usual meaning of someone who is unknown, but also carries a stronger sense of unease and fearfulness.

A decade later, the second nation-wide expulsion of the pastoralists was executed in 1999/2000. “The main difference between the two expulsion exercises was that, while the second exercise was decentralised and executed by the various Regional and District Assemblies throughout the country, the first exercise was directed and coordinated by the central government” (Tonah, 2005, p.169). Though the exercise was nation-wide, the momentum was in the

forest and middle belts of the country as the presence of the Fulani herdsmen in the forest zone of Ghana has provoked so much controversy (Tonah, 2005, p.169). There was no a single day without a negative reportage on the farmer-pastoralist conflicts in the Ghanaian media. Indeed, the media reports accused the Fulani of allowing their cattle to destroy food crops, damaging the environment, polluting sources of water, raping women, brandishing dangerous weapons and among others (Tonah, 2005, p.169). These reports were not different from the 1980s cumulating to the first expulsion. This is well captured by *Ghanaian Chronicle* of 7th July, 2000:

The main complaint against these Fulani herdsmen was the danger they and their livestock posed to the environment. Their animals devastated farmlands, caused soil erosion through over-grazing and polluted water bodies which sometimes served as sources of drinking water for the host communities.... To make matters worse, the Fulani herdsmen, these days, are adding new dimensions of terror to their already destructive activities. Most of them go about armed with dangerous knives and sometimes even guns, which they use to intimidate those farmers who confront them. There have even been reports of these herdsmen raping some women they encounter in the bushes (cited in Tonah, 2005, p.169).

In view of this, the government in 1999 directed all the Regional Security Councils and Districts to flush out “alien Fulani herdsmen” from their territories under “Operation Cowleg” II. Again, a task force constituting police and military personnel were set up across the various districts to carry out the exercise (Tonah, 2005, p.169). Though the total number of Fulani herdsmen and the number of cattle herds seized nationwide during the expulsion exercise are not exactly known. However, Tonah asserted that, in the “West Mamprusi district alone, a total of 2,406 cattle were initially confiscated from the herdsmen. Out of this number, only 296 cattle belonged to the “alien herdsmen”. Interestingly, most of the herdsmen arrested had to be released as it turned out that they were hired herdsmen keeping cattle belonging to indigenous farmers” (Tonah, 2005, p.170).

#### **4. Theoretical framework: The Social Capital Theory**

The above explanations reiterate the social capital theory that underpins the study. The social capital theory has so many variations and has been used by authors differently depending on the context. In this study, social capital refers to a network of people, which enables an individual or a group of people to achieve certain benefits and engage in actions which would otherwise be

impossible. By adopting Pierre Bourdieu's analysis (1986), social capital is a person's or a group's aggregate resources linked to a collective network of more or less institutionalised relationships. The network emphasizes the social structure in which the individuals operate. This includes the characteristics, the position, and the potential benefits available to the individuals within the networks (Burt, 2000; Granovetter, 2005; Lin, 2008; Sabatini, 2006; Sciarrone, 2002). In this sense, the network is sustained as the group provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital. This capital can be both material and symbolic. As such, the basis of the solidarity is the profits, which members accrue from being in the group (Bourdieu, 1986). This more or less institutionalised network may be operating covertly or overtly with a single agent or a small group of agents mandated and charged to represent the group, to speak and act in its name with the aid of this collectively owned capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

The theory of social capital is an important analytical tool when studying farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana, specifically, the case of Agogo. This is because there is a continuous migration and settlement of the Fulani herdsmen in the area, in spite of the Dadson committee recommendations, a high court ruling ordering the eviction of the herdsmen and their cattle, and failure to implement the evacuation plan by the REGSEC<sup>5</sup> (Agyemang, 2017). Of importance, is the failure of the government's policy "operation cowleg" to expel the herdsmen and their cattle from Agogo. This operation has been done on numerous occasions. As at 2017 when I did my fieldwork, the cattle population stood at about thirty-one thousand (31,000) per the statistics available to the veterinary doctor for Agogo (Agyemang, 2017). Accordingly, review of literature concerning the topic in Ghana, particularly, the southern part, and the fieldwork indicate a network of mutual relations and economic gains between the "big men" such as chiefs, politicians, land owners, middlemen and the Fulani herdsmen (Agyemang, 2017).

This study is based on the premise that, the network between the Fulani herdsmen and the "big men" makes the herdsmen stay in Agogo more comfortable and protects them from the "Operation Cowleg". The social capital, therefore, was employed in explaining why the government's policy is not only sustainable but also ineffective.

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<sup>5</sup> Regional Security Council.

## 5. Overview of Study Area

Agogo is a town in the Asante Akim North District, one of the new districts in Ghana, created in 2012. It was carved out of the then Asante Akim North Municipal and established by Legislative Instrument 2057 (Republic of Ghana, 2012). The district was inaugurated on 28th June, 2012 with Agogo as its capital (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

FIGURE 1: DISTRICT MAP OF ASANTE AKYEM NORTH



Source: Ghana Statistic Service, GIS

Demographically, the population of the Asante Akim North District, according to the 2010 population and housing census, is 68,186 representing 1.4 per cent of the Ashanti region's total population. Males constitute 48.8 per cent and females represent 51.2 per cent. About 53.5 percent of the population resides in the rural areas. The population is very heterogenous, though the Asante are the *indigenes*<sup>6</sup>. People from ethnic groups such as Ewe, Komkomba, Fulani, Kusasi, Frafra, Mamprusi, Gonja, Dagomba, Mossi, Akyem, Kwahu among others are all represented in Agogo (Agyemang, 2017). Politically, there are two parallel structures of authority in Agogo. The first is the Asante Akim North District Assembly, which is the highest political and administrative body,

<sup>6</sup> Indigenes refers the first people to occupy the area, and as such regarded as the aborigines. In this study, the Asante are referred to as the indigenes, while the other ethnic groups are referred to as settlers based on the Asante perspective and traditions.



which exercises deliberative, legislative and executive functions (Republic of Ghana, 1993). The second structure of authority is the Agogo Traditional Council (ATC), which encapsulates the chieftaincy institution with functions such as land allocation, dispute and conflict resolution, maintenance of law and order, as well as upholding traditional customs. Economically, agriculture employs about 72.7 percent of the labour force. Industry employs less of the populace due to the fact that the Asante Akim North District is an agrarian economy. There are however some private entrepreneurs in wood processing, batik making and *gari*<sup>7</sup> processing (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

## **6. Methodology**

A qualitative research strategy was applied as the methodological approach to find answers to a number of research questions. This included the use of semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), participant observation, text and document analysis. This method was chosen as against quantitative, because the objects of interest (farmers and herdsman) in this study are fundamentally different from the objects of interest in the natural sciences. Also, the main objective of the paper is to study and understand a social phenomenon (conflict). Considering the objects and the social phenomenon, methodologically, it was prudent to adopt interpretivism which attempts to understand human experiences, values and actions.

In this study, Agogo is the study area and a case study design was adopted. By choosing this research design, the purpose is to “subject my respondents into an intensive examination” and access their knowledge on the mitigation responses adopted to resolve the conflict (Bryman, 2012, p.71). Finally, a case study design is especially good for examining the “why,” “how” and “what” questions which are particularly typical of this study (Yin, 2013a; Yin, 2013b, p.328). In selecting the focus communities for the study, a critical case approach was employed. A critical case approach involves the selection of cases that are likely to “*yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge*” (Patton, 2001: p. 236). As such, the selection of Bebome, Bebuso, Abrewapong, Agyanafo and Nyamebekyere villages together with Agogo township was because, these villages were part of the areas mentioned specifically in the court ruling (Republic of Ghana, 2012a, p.19). The findings are based on an extensive eight-week period

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<sup>7</sup> Gari is a flour made from cassava.

(two months) of field data collection across six communities in the Agogo Traditional Area, Ghana.

Under the semi-structured method, one hundred and seven (107) respondents voluntarily responded with the assistance of informants. Statistically, seventy (70) farmers, twelve (12) herdsmen, five (5) cattle owners, three (3) police officers, four (4) lecturers, two (2) chiefs, four (4) informants, a former Member of Parliament, a veterinary doctor, an immigration officer, the District Coordinating Director, a member from accident and emergency unit at APH<sup>8</sup>, representative from AARB<sup>9</sup> and a journalist.

Five (5) focus group discussions were held; one for the herdsmen and four for the farmers. The discussions were held at Bebome, Bebuso, Abrewapong and Nyamebikyere respectively. Each discussion was made up of five (5) respondents, with overall respondents of twenty (25).

Analysis of secondary sources was used to complement the primary data. The secondary data involved an intensive research from books, journals, magazines, newspaper reports, articles, internet materials and unpublished works related to the study. Specifically, the study reviewed literature on the farmer-herder conflict with respect to the causes, effects, mitigation and preventive policies, as well as factors that attract the nomads to Agogo. The review of scholarly works served as both theoretical and empirical base for the analysis of data collected. Other data were sourced from the Agogo Police Station (CID) including;

- Dadson Commission report in 2010 after disturbances in Agogo concerning the conflict
- 2012 Kumasi High Court ruling concerning the activities of the Fulani herdsmen
- 2012 Evacuation plan to eject the cattle and Fulani herdsmen by REGSEC
- Copy of the lease/indenture between the paramount chief and some cattle owners (Alhaji Karim Grusah and Alhaji Ali Mamudu)
- Statistic of murder in Agogo from January 2014-January 2016
- Reported cases on the conflict from January 2009-April 2010

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<sup>8</sup> Agogo Presbyterian hospital.

<sup>9</sup> Asante Akyem Rural Bank.

- List of cattle owners and herdsman at Agogo as at 2012
- Pictures, briefs, protests and medical reports

## **7. Empirical findings**

### *7.1. The government expulsion policy: The “Operation Cowleg” in Agogo*

In the case of Agogo, several expulsion exercises have been carried out since the conflict began. Despite the evictions, there is still the presence of the Fulani herdsman in the area. Again, the conflict still exists, and becomes very tense during the dry season, especially from December to March every year. The last operation was carried out in the January 2016, hence the need to assess this policy which is the local community and the government’s plan of action towards farmer-herder conflict in Ghana.

During the fieldwork, all the respondents; the farmers, herdsman, cattle owners, and officials explained that the available mitigation or preventive measure at both the local and the national levels is the “Operation Cowleg”. It involves the expelling of the Fulani herdsman and their cattle by a task force of military and police. Indeed, expelling the herdsman and the cattle from Agogo was also one of the recommendations by the Dadson committee set up by the REGSEC in 2010. The committee was initiated after a demonstration by the locals against the activities of the herdsman (Dadson Committee Report, 2010, p.45). It is also important to state that in 2012, the Kumasi High Court ruled and ordered the evacuation of the herdsman and their cattle from all Agogo lands. The ruling was given after the farmers took the matter to court to seek justice (Republic of Ghana, 2012a, p.19).

However, the responses gathered indicate that, the key local community and the government’s intervention towards the conflict is not sustainable due to the social capital involved in the cattle business in Agogo. Apart from that fact that, there are a lot of actors involved; there are also many factors contributing to the failure of the policy. A Professor at the Department of the Animal Science, KNUST<sup>10</sup>, explained the unsustainability of the Operation Cowleg:

The policy of expelling or moving some component of people out of the Agric sector will not work. Because, rearing cattle is also part of the local economy. Also, there is an ECOWAS protocol that allows free movement of people and goods across member states. Finally, some owners of the cattle are indigenous Ghanaians. A lot of the time, if there is a herd of cattle for example 100 or 200,

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<sup>10</sup> Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

the ownership could belong to several people (six or four people) who are civil servants. So, it is better to consider a policy that will take care of the owners (Personal Interview: 3/2/2017).

A political science lecturer, with focus on conflicts in Africa at the Department of History and Political Studies, KNUST, elaborated further on the failure of the policy:

Apart from the ECOWAS protocol, most of the cattle are owned by Ghanaians, so how can you drive them away. In Agogo, the Fulani herdsmen are also scattered all over. If the military and the police go there, they cannot locate all their hideouts to drive them away. How many times can we continue with it? Can the nation station these people (the task force) forever? No, they will surely come back. Even we (Ghana) do not have enough security men. It is not sustainable. (Personal Interview, 3/2/2017).

According to the Krontihene of Agogo, the “Operation Cowleg” is not sustainable, as the task force cannot eject all the Fulani herdsmen from Agogo due to influential forces (powerful cattle owners). He further explained that when the military and the police task force were in Agogo, the killing was ongoing. He posited: “Mr. Kwasi Badu, a fetish priest was killed by a Fulani herdsmen last year (January 2016) during the operation.” The killing of the priest is captured in the murder report available at the Agogo Police Station with the same date. In his view, the military and the police were protecting the Fulani herdsmen and the cattle, as they did not submit any report to the district assembly at the end of the operation. Yet, the assembly incurred a cost of GH¢ 4.85 billion (\$970,000,000) meant for developmental projects on the operation. (Personal Interview, 9/1/2017).

The view of the Krontihene was also shared by a researcher and senior journalist at Hello FM<sup>11</sup>, Kumasi. According to him, the policy of expelling the herdsmen and their cattle from Agogo is a good one; however, the problem is the implementation. Through his investigations and covering of the situation, anytime the task force is sent to the bush, they were unable to eject all the herdsmen and the cattle due to favoritism. He recounted that, at times, some kraals are designated as “special” or “no go” area because it belongs to certain influential people. This makes alien herdsmen to resist or rebel against the task force. Those who are driven away also return immediately they heard or saw that their colleagues were not sacked.

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<sup>11</sup> Hello FM is a private radio station in Kumasi, Ghana.

Furthermore, the cattle owners and the herdsmen accused the task force of been bias. According to them, they are not resisting or rebelling against the order, however, they are against selective justice. They indicated that favoritism, nepotism, corruption and bribery characterised the activities of the “Operation Cowleg”. Apart from been selective in the sacking, some officers take bribes from some herdsmen and leave them to stay. Alhaji Karim Grusah, a cattle owner and a leaseholder further elaborated on the selective justice:

... am a Ghanaian, a citizen of Ghana as well. If it is relocation, am ready to move my cattle from Agogo. But, to sack or drive my animals away without finding me a place is impossible, because I have documents covering the land. Again, sacking my animals and leaving some peoples’ animals behind is totally unfair and unacceptable. With that one, am not going anywhere. (Personal Interview, 6/2/2017)

Also, a lecturer at the Department of Animal Science, University of Education, Mampong Campus, reaffirmed the position of the unsustainability of the policy. He further criticized the government of covering up the matter by saying:

Personally, what is the essence of the operation? Where do they take them (herdsmen and cattle) to? If you are not taking them to their homelands, then it is ‘cos 90’ work (zero or no work done). Do they drive them to Burkina or Mali? These are politicians; they formulate and implement the policies, so what do you expect? This is just a camouflage thing to show they are in charge. Nothing else! (Personal Interview, 27/1/2017).

The farmers also vent their displeasure about the “Operation Cowleg”. According to them, the expulsion policy by the government is not sustainable because it has been done on several occasions without any fruitful outcome. Most of the farmers accused the task force of protecting the herdsmen against possible retaliation from the people. Some respondents also accused the task force of taking bribes from the Fulani herdsmen and allowing them to stay. Others also alleged that the security officers rather beat them for complaining. This is summarised below:

The operation is to protect Fulani herdsmen and the cattle. Although, there are nomads from Sokoto (Nigeria), Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, with cattle here (Agogo), however, about 70% of the cattle are owned by Ghanaians who are very influential. They only hire the herdsmen to tender the animals. Some of the herdsmen are also invited to come, through middlemen, connection men, and intermediaries. So, it is very difficult for the task force to evacuate all the cattle

and the herdsmen from Agogo. The policy is just a burden on the Assembly. The money meant for roads construction, electrification, water provision is all spent on security. (Personal Interview, 19/1/2017)

On the parts of the Divisional Police Commander as well as the head of immigration for the study area, the expulsion policy is not sustainable in terms of solving the conflict, however, is a way of protecting lives and properties. They also mentioned that the ECOWAS protocol forbid expelling citizens from member states. As such, it is very difficult to drive all the cattle and the herdsmen away because some of the owners are very influential people in government, security service, chiefs, and civil servants.

The Asante Akyem North Municipal Assembly located in Agogo was contacted about this intervention policy. According to the deputy municipal coordinating director, the policy is not sustainable. He explained that, it has become an annual practice of sending military and police to Agogo during the dry season when the conflict escalates. He indicated that, the conflict and the “Operation Cowleg” constitute a toll on the Assembly, because the cost of the operation – patrol cars, fuel, accommodation, feeding, and allowances – is borne by the Assembly. This takes the chunk of the resources meant for developmental activities. With this, all ongoing projects or yet to be rolled out projects are stopped in order to fund the operation. Again, the Assembly bears the cost of treatment or funeral expenses of victims. He concluded by saying “even this year (2017), is likely there will be another one, as the police patrols and intelligence has indicated.” The above explanation confirms the social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986).

## **8. Discussion and Analysis**

The findings revealed an expulsion policy “Operation Cowleg” as the main mitigation response towards the conflict. However, the policy is ineffective and unsustainable due to the social relations and networks surrounding cattle business in Agogo. First, most of the cattle are owned by influential Ghanaians, including policymakers and politicians, who are unwilling not only to implement the Dadson committee and court orders, but also not to support the government in ejecting the Fulani herdsmen. Again, there are other actors involved with competing interest in the cattle business in Agogo. The actors, mostly the influential people in the Ghana have patron-client relationship with the Fulani herdsmen. Therefore, the cattle owners, been the influential people are able to influence the “Operation Cowleg”, hence, the issues of bribery

and corruption in the operation, and selective justice. This makes the driving out of the settler herdsmen and their cattle, mostly owned by Ghanaians very difficult. This is because, there is a more or less institutionalised network between the “Big men” been the owners and the Fulani herdsmen, with the basis of the solidarity been the profits, which each accrued from been in the group (Bourdieu, 1986).

The other issue related to the nomads from the other countries is the ECOWAS protocol that allows free movement of people and goods across member states. This agreement is also based on social capital as a network. As indicated by the officials contacted in this study, the government of Ghana is very cautious in dealing with the nomads to avert any possible retaliation from neighbouring countries. As already explained, Ghana expelled migrants from other African countries under ‘aliens compliance order’ in 1969 and paid for the consequences in 1983 when Nigeria retaliated. This, according to the officials, makes the expelling of the Fulani nomads from other African countries very difficult. Therefore, by virtue of the nomads being citizens of member countries of ECOWAS, are protected by the protocol. In view of this, the herdsmen from member countries are entitled to the potential benefits available to individuals within the institutionalised relationship of the ECOWAS protocol. This confirms the social capital network (Burt, 2000; Granovetter, 2005; Lin, 2008; Sabatini, 2006; Sciarrone, 2002). This study, therefore, deduce that the social capital surrounding the cattle business in Agogo and the social cooperation between Ghana and other ECOWAS countries are the main reason for the failure of the “Operation Cowleg” in Agogo.

## **9. Implications of the study findings**

Considering the key research findings and the consequences of the conflict on social-economic development of Agogo and the failure of the policy of expulsion “Operation Cowleg”, some measures should be put in place to either eliminate or effectively mitigate the conditions that enable the conflict to flourish. The study, therefore, presents the recommendations gathered from respondents during the fieldwork. The recommendations are grouped into short, medium and long terms.

### *9.1. Short term recommendations*

First and foremost, formation of dialogue committee among the stakeholders to address concerns of the farmers and the herdsmen. Indeed, it was evident

during the fieldwork that there used to be such committees in the various villages at the initial stages that received petitions. This helped to mitigate the conflicts as both farmers and the herdsmen channeled their grievances to the committees. However, lack of transparency led to the collapse of these committees. In view of this, a body comprising of all the stakeholders should be formed, and a monthly meeting be institutionalised. This body should have offices in the various towns and villages in Agogo to receive petitions and concerns from both parties. It must be noted that both the farmers and the herdsmen have their leaders in Agogo. Again, the leaders of both parties should pledge and advise their members not to attack each other, rather channel their grievances to the committee.

Next to the dialogue committee is settlement committee to deliver justice for minor cases between the farmers and the herdsmen. mitigate the effects of the conflict. During the fieldwork, most of the cases especially destruction of farms, foodstuffs and killing of cattle were dealt with peacefully by the police commander of Agogo with the culprit paying a compensation. Indeed, I witnessed many 'out of court settlements' at the police station during the field study. However, most of the farmers raised concerns about the conduct of the value officers and the middlemen in terms of the compensations they were awarded. Therefore, the study proposes an established of special tribunal or settlement committee by the government in Agogo. The mandate of this tribunal is to settle minor cases between the farmers and the herdsmen only. It should be chaired by a judge and made up of the police, value officers, and the district security council who will do the valuation and cost estimation of the damages caused and award a befitting financial package to the deserving farmers and cattle owners.

Furthermore, creation of a buffer zone to prevent the conflict. As indicated by the officials (lecturers, immigration officer, veterinary doctor, divisional police commander), the Agogo land, both stool lands and forest reserve of the Afram Plains section is very large. In view of this, a clear demarcation should be made for all the nomadic activities and cattle rearing to be moved away from the crop growing areas. The forestry commission and the chiefs of Agogo should decide where to allocate to the cattle owners for their business. The zone (the demarcation) should be large to the extent that, even if the cattle graze beyond their designated areas, they would not cause damage to farms. The forestry officers, the district assembly and the security should collaborate to regulate the nomadic activities, where possible, from going beyond the zone.



Finally, the immigration service at the various entry points to Ghana should be proactive and regularise the number of nomads who enter the country during dry seasons. Even though there is an ECOWAS protocol, emphasis should be placed on the national identification of the person; where the person is going to reside, and the duration. These records will help to determine the identities of the nomads in case of breach of law. In short, the migration of the nomads into Ghana should be checked.

### *9.2. Medium term recommendations*

Firstly, socialisation and integration of the leaders of the Fulani herdsmen into the various unit communities in Agogo to foster unity. Indeed, the life of the herdsmen is totally different, however, the hostile attitude by the local community have also contributed to animosity and hostility. The settled herdsmen are totally excluded and alienated from all community activities. This has led to the reliance of middlemen and intermediaries in securing their basic needs such as food and other items from the Agogo market. In fact, the herdsmen have their leaders in Agogo, who meet the security agencies anytime an issue pops up. These leaders should be integrated in the various unit committees and appointed into council of elders at the various villages. Gradually, this will reduce the tension and animosity between the farmers and the herdsmen.

In addition, is distribution or relocation policy to mitigate the causes and effects of the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo. Both the cattle owners and the herdsmen indicated that they want a place to rear their cattle and are willing to move to another place if only the government secures them a land. This study proposes distribution of the herdsmen and cattle across the regions of Ghana to reduce cattle population in Agogo.

Finally, land tenure or arrangement must be a stakeholders' decision, with proper demarcation for farming and animal rearing. It was evident that some herdsmen and cattle owners have a lease or land agreements covering their stay in Agogo. But such arrangements are usually done by individuals such as family heads, chiefs or member of a family without the consent of other family members. In view of this, chiefs or family heads should involve town planners and other family members in such decisions. This will prevent future occurrences of farmer-herder conflicts.

### *9.3. Long term solution*

The long-term solution is confinement or ranching system as local community and national level responses. As the government of Ghana is about to roll out

“one district, one factory policy”, the cattle business should also be considered. It is a fact that the cattle have importance towards the Ghanaian economy. Apart from the products such as meat, milk that provide nutritional value for Ghanaians, the cattle business also employs a lot of people including butchers at the abattoir. With the ranching system, it will not only end the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo, but also provide an employment through growing of grass for commercial pasture and forages.

In addition, there must be a pastoral code to regulate the activities of cattle rearing in Ghana as in Mauritania, Mali and Niger; the pastoral code 1996, pastoral charter 2001 and ordinance pastoralism 2010 respectively. This should also spell out how conflict between the pastoralists and residents of the area would be dealt with. This will mitigate the cause of conflict between farmers and herders in Ghana.

## **10. Conclusion**

The farmer-herder conflicts in other parts of the sub-region such as Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Nigeria normally involve the two groups-farmers and herdsmen. These conflicts most often involve issues of ethnicity. However, in the case of Agogo, there are many stakeholders with economic interest in the pastoral activities in the area. Apart from the farmers and the Fulani herdsmen, there are “Big men” such as chiefs, politicians, land owners, civil servants, middlemen, security officers, some indigenes behind the conflict (Agyemang, 2017). These “Big men” have a patron-client relationship with the Fulani herdsmen; as the “Big men” are the cattle owners with the Fulani herdsmen been the caretakers. Inference, the social bond between these influential people and the herdsmen undermines the government’s policy of expulsion. This makes it very difficult to flush out all the herdsmen and their cattle from Agogo hence the failure of the operation cowleg. Finally, this finding concerning the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo contradicts the observations by (Olaniyan, 2015, p.335; Tonah, 2006, p.160) that farmer-herder conflicts in Africa involve elements of ethnicity.

## **Biographical Notes**

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**List of interviews**

A lecturer of Animal Science, University of Education, Mampong Campus -  
27/1/2017

Alhaji Karim Grusah, cattle owner at Agogo - 6/2/2017

Aminu Dramani, Political Science Lecturer, KNUST - 3/2/2017

Deputy District Coordinating Director - 20/1/2017

DSP Azugu, District Police Commander at Agogo - 25/1/2017

Focus Group Discussions - 19/1/2017

Head of Immigration, Asante Akyem North District - 27/2/2017

Nana Kwame Nti, Krontihene of Agogo - 9/1/2017

Ohene Boadi Bossman, Divisional Commander of Konongo Divisional  
Command

Prof Osafo, Animal Science Lecturer, KNUST - 3/2/2017

Sampson K. Nyamekye, journalist at Hello FM - 22/2/2017

Veterinary Officer of Agogo - 20/1/2017