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Articles

“Civil Liability for Delicts Caused by Emerging Digital Technology: A Suggestion to South Africa”
by *Jacqui Meyer* 296–335

“The State of Psychiatric Health Care in South Africa 30 Years into Democracy”
by *Hoitsimolimo Mutlokwa* 336–355

“The Conceptualisation of an Essential Facility: A Comparative Analysis
of the Positions in South Africa and the European Union”
by *Ndivhuwo Ishmel Moleya and Tapiwa Shumba* 356–383

“The Presentation of Witness Testimony in Civil Matters — Time for a New Approach? (Part 1)”
by *Thino Bekker* 384–405

“Creating a Corporate Governance Expectation Gap”
by *Werner Schoeman* 406–418

“The Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020, Section 7 versus Civil Proceedings”
by *Nombulelo Queen Mabeka* 419–436

“The ‘Silent War’ of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Realisation of
the Right to Quality Education in South Africa”
by *Siyabulela Christopher Fobosi and Nomthandazo Ntlama-Makhanya* 437–451

“Rethinking Women’s Roles in Pastoral Governance: Empowering Women
to Mitigate Pastoralism-Related Conflicts in Nigeria”
by *Jane Ezirigwe* 452–469

Notes and Comments

“Kukithi La (“This is Our Home”): An Interplay Between Common Law and Customary Law in
“Family House” Disputes in Shomang v Motsose NO and Others 2022 5 SA 602 (GP)”
by *Maphuti Tuba and Refilwe Makaleng* 470–483

“Cession and the Application of the Consumer Protection Act 2008: A Discussion
of the South African Securitisation Programme (RF) Ltd v Jaglal-Govindpershad
and South African Securitisation Programme (RF) Ltd v Lucic Cases”
by *AM Tait* 484–496

“The Concept of Public Trusteeship and the Water-Energy-Food-Climate (WEFC)
Nexus in Discretionary Decision-Making: Insights from Thungela Operations v
Department of Water and Sanitation (Water Tribunal, 26 April 2023)”
by *Germarie Viljoen* 497–513

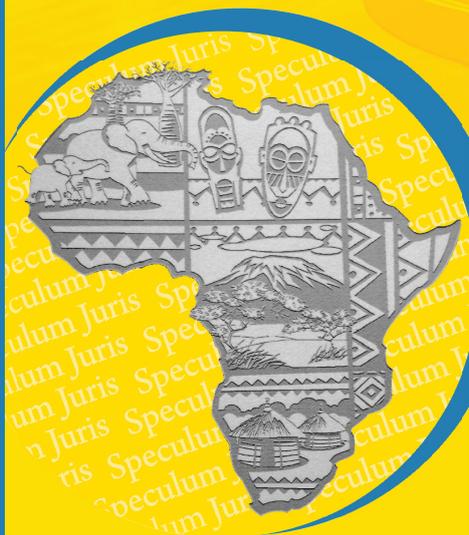
“Determining the “Proper” Application and Scope of Section 45 of the Companies Act through the Lenses
of Trevo Capital Ltd v Steinhoff International Holdings (Pty) Ltd [2021] 4 All SA 573 (WCC)”
by *Justice Mudzamiri and Arthur van Coller* 514–527

“Premeditated Murder and Private Defence: From Life Imprisonment to Acquittal,
Khan v S (A89/2023) [2024] ZAGPPHC 190 (15 February 2024)”
by *Jolandi Le Roux-Bouwer* 528–537

“Telling the Untold in Rape: Khamphepe J’s Separate Judgment in Tshabalala v S; Ntuli v S”
by *Pamela Nyawo* 538–549

“A Discussion of the Power to Impose “Provisional Measures” During a Trade
Remedy Investigation in South Africa: Association of South Africa v the International
Trade Administration Commission Case Number: 2022/010681”
by *Clive Vinti* 550–563

“Comment on the White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee
Protection, the Constitution and International Law”
by *Gabriella La Foy* 564–572



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Rethinking Women’s Roles in Pastoral Governance: Empowering Women to Mitigate Pastoralism-Related Conflicts in Nigeria

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Abstract

The ways that agricultural lands are used and governed have direct implications on the multiple actors involved, and the eruption of conflict or not. Women are stakeholders in the use of agricultural land. Yet, women are expected to thrive in agricultural systems that are unfortunately neither designed by them nor for them. The valuable roles women play in sustaining farming and pastoralist livelihoods; the extent to which they are involved in governance and the degree to which their needs are addressed by policymaking institutions are poorly understood. The roles that women play in the conflict that ensues are often neglected in designing participatory processes. This article adopts a socio-legal approach to argue that women are unjustifiably excluded in the governance processes and structures of pastoralism in Nigeria, constraining equity in resource governance. It provides justifications for women’s participation in the governance of natural resources in ways that promote equity and mitigate conflict.

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Keywords: gender; inclusive governance; pastoral governance; gender and pastoralism-related conflict; pastoralism; conflicts

1 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria remains the country with the most incidents of conflicts involving pastoralists as well as the most fatalities of such conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa,¹ and beyond. The conflict has increased over the last few years,² with a recorded death toll of about 2,500 in 2016 resulting from clashes between pastoralists and farmers in the ECOWAS region.³ Nigeria is also the largest livestock producer,⁴ and the biggest market for cattle trade in the ECOWAS region, with Nigerians consuming about 50 per cent of beef in the West African region.⁵ Women are victims and can sometimes be active actors in pastoralism-related conflicts. These facts and data underscore the need to examine the discourse on pastoralism and conflict with a gender lens, to ensure that their importance informs participatory processes, reforms, and future interventions.

It is a well-established fact that the ways that agricultural lands are used, managed, and governed have direct implications for the multiple actors involved in its use, and the eruption of conflict or not. Women are stakeholders in the use of agricultural land. They constitute a great proportion of subsistence farmers and engage in pastoral livestock production both as stewards and processors of animal products.⁶ Yet, women are expected to thrive in agricultural systems that are unfortunately neither designed by them nor for them. Governance structures, processes, policies and interventions are often developed and operationalised without gender considerations and responsiveness, revealing power imbalances and asymmetries that define the levels of interactions, the degrees of impact on livelihoods and the realisation of gender equality in these communities.⁷

In this context, agricultural land and water use involves pastoralism and crop farming. Pastoralism is an economic activity that involves a continuous movement by pastoralists and their herd, in the search for essential resources — water and pasture, for the herded livestock which the pastoralist depends on for at least 50 per cent of their economic sustenance.⁸ It could also be described as open grazing, nomadic pastoralism or herding, and these terms can be used interchangeably. Given the focus on pastoralism-related conflict, this article also includes neo-pastoralism and transhumance as variants of pastoralism. Transhumance is a form of pastoralism that involves the regular movement of herds between fixed points to exploit the seasonal availability of pastures.⁹ Neo-pastoralism is a “new form of cattle ownership characterized by large cattle holdings owned by non-pastoralists, kept by salaried herdsmen,

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- 1 Krätli and Toulmin “Farmer-herder Conflict in sub-Saharan Africa?” 2021 *IIED* 25–26 <https://www.iied.org/10208iied> (accessed 20-08-2023).
 - 2 Brottem “The Growing Complexity of Farmer- Herder Conflict in West and Central Africa” 2021 *Africa Security Brief* 39.
 - 3 Bukari “ECOWAS and the Question of How to Resolve Farmer-herder Conflict in West Africa” 25 March 2021 <https://www.africaportalx.org/features/ecowas-and-question-how-resolve-farmer-herder-conflict-west-africa/> (accessed 21-08-2023).
 - 4 Krätli and Toulmin *IIED* 37.
 - 5 *Vanguard* “Nigeria Consumes 360,000 tonnes of Beef Each Year” 26 June 2019 <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/06/hunger-for-beef-offers-rewards-and-risks-for-nigerias-pastoralists-2/> (accessed 20-08-2023).
 - 6 Jobbins and McDonnell “Pastoralism and Conflict: Tools for Prevention and Response in the Sudano- Sahel” 2021 *Search for Common Ground* 73.
 - 7 See Part 4 below.
 - 8 Gefu *et al.* “Pastoralism in Nigeria: Past, Present and Future” in Gefu J.O. et al (eds), Proceedings of National Conference on Pastoralism in Nigeria, NAPRI, Shika – Zaria, Nigeria. 26-29 June 1988.
 - 9 Blench “‘You Can’t Go Home Again’: Pastoralism in the New Millennium” 2001 12 <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6329.pdf> (accessed 08-09-2023).

often involving the use of sophisticated arms and ammunitions, arising from the need to hide stolen wealth, proceeds of trafficking or income derived from terrorism with the underlining aim of deriving profit for investors.”¹⁰ Crop farming is the “cultivation of plants for food, animal foodstuffs, or other commercial uses.”¹¹ These agricultural activities are referred to in this article as pastoralism-related activities because of the intrinsic ways they interact closely with pastoralism in the use of agricultural land or because they are variants of pastoralism. However, references and discussions on these pastoralism-related activities are only to the extent that they interact with pastoralism and not in their entirety.

There is a limited body of empirical research that interrogates women and their role in the governance of pastoralism, and in the conflict that erupts from that governance — or the lack of it. Research on farmer-pastoralist conflict tends to neglect gender dynamics or perpetuates narratives on gendered stereotypes.¹² Thus, the valuable roles that women play in sustaining the use of agricultural land to support farming and pastoralist livelihoods, the extent to which they are involved in governance structures, and the degree to which their needs are addressed by policymaking institutions and development processes are poorly understood.¹³ The roles they play in the conflict that ensues are often neglected. How much do we miss by not inviting those who belong at the decision-making table?

This article employs a socio-legal method to argue that notwithstanding the significant position of women as strategic stakeholders in pastoralism, the significant role they play in pastoralism-related conflict and the distinct impacts of the conflict on women, women are unjustifiably excluded in the governance processes and structures, constraining equity in resource governance. It combines the doctrinal approach with empirical data collected from interviews and focus group discussions with purposively selected respondents in Benue State and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. While the empirical component was conducted in this area, the article also relied on empirical studies conducted throughout Nigeria for more robust discussions.

After the introductory part, the article conceptualises gender and governance in pastoralism to establish a coherent understanding of these concepts for subsequent discussions. The third part contextualises the gendered roles in pastoralism and farming relationships to highlight gendered roles and how these influence the control of access to and ownership of land, livestock, crops and other related property. It also highlights how gender roles determine the patterns of interactions that trigger the conflicts that ensue. The fourth part interrogates the exclusion of women from the governance processes of pastoralism. The fifth part provides justifications for the inclusion of women in pastoral governance and makes recommendations on how women can act as potential leaders in the governance of pastoralism. The last part contains the concluding remarks.

2 CONCEPTUALISING GENDER AND GOVERNANCE IN PASTORALISM

Governance refers to “all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, market, or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization, or territory,

10 Ajala “New Drivers of Conflict in Nigeria: an Analysis of the Clashes between Farmers and Pastoralists” 2020 *Third World Quarterly* 6.

11 McMahon “What is Crop Farming?” 17 October 2022 <https://www.aboutmechanics.com/what-is-crop-farming.htm> (accessed 20-09-2023).

12 Nagarajan “No Tribe in Crime: Changing Pastoralism and Conflict in Nigeria’s Middle Belt” July 2019 *Mercy Corps* <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Report-Changing-Pastoralism-Conflict-Nigerias-Middle-Belt.pdf> (accessed 20-08-2023).

13 Verma and Khadka (eds) *Gender and Pastoralism in the Rangelands of the Hindu Kush Himalayas: Knowledge, Culture, and Livelihoods at the Margins of the Margins* (2016) 4.

and whether through laws, norms, power or language.”¹⁴ It is all about who has the power, who makes the decisions, whose voices are heard and how the governing authority is held accountable.¹⁵ Governance is concerned with how power is exercised and how resources are allocated among different societal groups.

Governance arrangements entail agreements involving parties who participate in or are impacted by them within a given context.¹⁶ The governance structures within pastoral communities intricately link various social actors across different scales and hierarchies. The governance regime aims to facilitate access to land and resources essential for pastoral production among group members or the collective while striving to minimise the exclusion of others. Access to and utilisation of land rights are typically negotiated processes deeply ingrained within complex social dynamics and relationships, predominantly favouring men.¹⁷

To understand the scope of women's involvement in these governance frameworks, it is essential to examine their interactions with diverse actors and institutions. This exploration sheds light on how women's engagement with these entities shapes their decision-making capabilities, negotiation strategies, and interactions with fellow stakeholders.¹⁸

2 1 Components of Pastoral Community Governance

Governance within pastoral communities encompasses the structures, processes, and mechanisms through which decisions are made, resources are managed, social order is maintained and conflicts are resolved within these communities. These include customary governance structures dictating land use, informal guidelines on livestock management and resource stewardship, mechanisms for resolving conflicts, designated responsibilities for maintaining communal assets, and interactions with formal public decision-making entities and procedures. It is a complex and dynamic process that involves multiple stakeholders, diverse interests, and competing priorities. It is also influenced by external factors such as government policies, development interventions, and market forces. While the specific governance systems may vary depending on cultural, historical, and geographical factors, some common elements can be observed among pastoral communities.

In pastoral societies, patriarchal norms typically prevail, resulting in male dominance, particularly in public spheres. Decision-making authority regarding land use and resource management is often vested in men, reflecting entrenched gender inequalities. Customary practices often marginalise women, either implicitly or explicitly, limiting their participation in decision-making processes and access to resources.¹⁹ While there are variations among pastoral societies, with some exhibiting more democratic or egalitarian characteristics than others, social stratification, along with ethnic and gender distinctions, typically remain prominent features of societal hierarchies. For instance, the two largest pastoralist groups in sub-Saharan Africa, the Peul/Fulani and the Tuareg/Kel Tamasheq, are marked by significant stratification, with notable

14 Bevir, *Governance: A Very Short Introduction* (2012) 1.

15 “What is Governance?” <https://iog.ca/what-is-governance/> (accessed 11-09-2023).

16 Sutherland *et al.* *Report on Governance Frameworks and Gender: Analysis of the Governance of Small Farms and Food Chains* (2019) 11.

17 Flintan *Pastoral Women, Tenure and Governance* (2021) ILRI Research Report 92. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI 11. <https://www.ilri.org/knowledge/publications/pastoral-women-tenure-and-governance>, (accessed 04-05-2024).

18 Oteros-Rozas *et al.* “Gender and Women in the Governance of Silvopastoral Systems” in Pinto-Correia *et al.* (eds) *Governance for Mediterranean Silvopastoral Systems: Lessons from the Iberian Dehesas and Montados* (1 edn, 2021) https://doi-org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/10.4324/9781003028437_87 (accessed 04-05-2024).

19 Flintan *Pastoral Women, Tenure and Governance* 11.

disparities between elites and lower castes. Even among the purportedly egalitarian Maasai, gerontocracy is evident, with younger men subservient to elders, and women subordinate to both.²⁰

In pastoral communities, female pastoralists often face unequal rights and limited access to resources and privileges compared to their male counterparts. They typically occupy a lower economic status, lack opportunities to access positions of power or leadership, and experience restrictions based on gender and age that prevent them from fully participating in community decision-making processes. These inequalities manifest in various forms, including restricted access to resources, limited economic opportunities, and barriers to social and political engagement, perpetuating a cycle of marginalisation and disadvantage for women in pastoral settings.²¹

Evidence of this exists in Nigeria. For instance, women in Kaduna typically have limited to no access to and control over primary livestock assets, especially large ruminants. Despite their active involvement in all livestock management activities, men predominantly control these assets.²² These exclusions extend to public decision-making processes and structures as well. For instance, the enactment of laws prohibiting pastoralism in Nigeria saw a glaring absence of women's voices in the Houses of Assemblies. During public hearings in Benue state, the main stakeholders observed were predominantly pro-men groups and institutions, with no representation from women groups acknowledged. Furthermore, the composition of the Local Government Advisory Committee under these laws heavily favoured men, as traditionally nominated positions were exclusively held by men, leaving no provision for female representation.²³ As a result, women were systematically excluded from participating in decision-making roles within these legislative processes, despite the importance of diverse perspectives in governance processes.

2.2 Applying Feminist Perspectives on Governance

Governance and gender equality are both embedded in power relations within a society. Therefore, governance is inclusive when it effectively serves the interests of and engages all people, accounting for issues of gender and minority groups.²⁴ It has become apparent that gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping the relative status and power of women and men within pastoral communities. These gender distinctions influence the opportunities and limitations faced by women in securing their livelihoods, encompassing aspects such as access to land, livestock management, involvement in decision-making processes, and engagement

20 Davies *et al.* *Improving Governance of Pastoral Lands: Implementing the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* (2016) 22 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e3da5b48-920a-4b07-bfa7-0c62e9761511/content>

21 Onyima, "Women in Pastoral Societies in Africa" in Yacob-Haliso and Falola (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies* (2021) 2431 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28099-4_36, (accessed 05-05-2024).

22 Giovarelli *et al.* *Gender Analysis of Pastoral Systems in Three Sub-Saharan African Countries: Evidence and Programmatic Recommendations* 26 February 2024 <https://www.gatesgenderequalitytoolbox.org/wp-content/uploads/GenderPastoralism.pdf>. (accessed 04-05-2024).

23 Ezirigwe "Making the Law Work for Men and Women: Advancing Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination in Nigeria's Anti-Open Laws" 2020 *The Journal of Sustainable Development, Law and Policy* 362–381, 372–374.

24 Government of Canada "Action Area Policy: Inclusive Governance" https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/fiap_inclusive_governance-paif_gouvernance_inclusive.aspx?lang=eng (accessed 14-09-2023).

with institutions responsible for administering land and other productive resources.²⁵

Given the prevalent gender inequalities and entrenched patriarchal systems that marginalise women from household and broader public decision-making fora, it is imperative to confront these systemic barriers and disparities guided by a feminist approach. Feminism is an ideology that advocates for the equal rights of men and women across various domains, including politics, decision-making processes, career opportunities, and reproductive rights.²⁶ There are many variants of feminism such as African feminism,²⁷ liberal feminism,²⁸ Marxist feminism,²⁹ and ecofeminism,³⁰ each offering unique perspectives and strategies for achieving gender equality and challenging systemic discrimination.

Feminism has been used in governance studies. Feminist governance, as conceptualised by feminist governance scholars is characterised by a value-driven approach that examines how women govern and are governed. It scrutinises how women attain a voice, make decisions, and exercise authority within governance structures.³¹ Feminist governance scholars concentrate on the gender dimensions of participation in governance, exploring who participates, how and why they participate, and the resulting outcomes.³² By examining these aspects through a gender lens, they aim to uncover patterns of inclusion and exclusion, power dynamics, and the impacts of gender disparities on governance processes and outcomes.

Feminist methodology encompasses a commitment to using diverse methods thoughtfully and critically to produce data aligned with feminist social justice goals. While it does not mandate specific methods, it encourages scholars to engage with literature, concepts, and data to incorporate and mainstream gender considerations, facilitating a critical evaluation of the differential impact of policies, practices, and institutions on women and men.³³ Revealing the hidden aspects of gender compels institutions to fundamentally transform their approach to understanding and addressing gender-related issues. While gender incorporation effectively dismantles barriers for women, scholars can achieve these goals by ensuring that the research process embodies feminist principles, perspectives, and priorities.³⁴

This article advocates for a feminist approach to governance, aiming for gender equality where women have the same rights as men.³⁵ It highlights how gender functions as a structural system, favouring men with power and privilege while disadvantaging women. Patriarchy, the formal social arrangement reinforcing male dominance, is pervasive, particularly in institutions, which often limit women's opportunities and reinforce stereotypes. Despite evidence of women's

25 Daley *et al.* *Governing Land for Women and Men: A Technical Guide to Support the Achievement of Responsible Gender-equitable Governance of Land Tenure* (2013) 4.

26 Mohajan "An Overview on the Feminism and its Categories" 2022 *Research and Advances in Education* 11–26, 12.

27 Amaefula "African Feminisms: Paradigms, Problems and Prospects" 2021 *Feminismo/s* 37, 289–305.

28 Enyew and Mihrete "Liberal Feminism: Assessing Its Compatibility and Applicability in Ethiopia Context" 2018 *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 59–64.

29 Bhardwaj "Marxist Feminism and its Importance in Today's World of Intersectional Approaches" 2021 *Contemporary Literary Review India* 43–51.

30 Agarwal "The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India" in Mahesh (ed) *Environmental Issues in India: A Reader* (2007) .

31 Lambert *et al.* "Weaving a Feminist Power Tapestry: Feminist Governance in Practice" in Sawyer *et al.* (eds) *Handbook of Feminist Governance* (2023) 114.

32 Shan-Jan, "Studying Feminist Governance: Methods and Approaches to the Field" in Sawyer *et al.* (eds) *Handbook of Feminist Governance* (2023) 101.

33 *Ibid* 100.

34 *Ibid*.

35 Onyima, "Women in Pastoral Societies in Africa" in Yacob-Haliso and Falola (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies* (2021) 2431 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28099-4_36 .

competence in leadership roles and various tasks, stereotypes persist, portraying them as unfit for such positions. This perpetuates the misconception that men are inherently better suited for leadership and specific tasks, disregarding instances where women excel in similar capacities.³⁶

This article will employ the feminist approach to focus on how governance can be made more inclusive through increased opportunities for women's participation and the implementation of gender-responsive strategies. It will interrogate the reasons behind the absence of certain social groups, particularly women, in both formal and informal governance structures within pastoralism. Furthermore, it will explore methods to design more equitable governance structures within both formal and informal contexts of pastoralism. This approach aims to amplify the voices and agency of women, promote their meaningful participation and representation, facilitate their empowerment, and address power dynamics within the complex socioeconomic frameworks.

3 CONTEXTUALISING GENDERED DYNAMICS IN PASTORALISM AND FARMING RELATIONSHIPS

The nuanced gender relations in pastoralism-related activities must be understood to determine how they should affect participation in its governance. Gender differences exist for both pastoral farming and crop farming. A cursory look at the roles in each context reveals that while the men play important roles regarding access to, ownership of, and control of these natural and productive resources, women play important but subtly neglected secondary roles in all related activities. Women usually play a major role in taking care of the animals, crops, and agricultural land, notwithstanding the fact that in most cases, they are not the owners and do not have the final say in important decisions concerning them.³⁷

This section discusses the roles that women play in pastoralism-related activities as well as the role that women play in the security structures within the farming and pastoral communities for each group's communal protection. It also examines the often-overlooked role women play in influencing the conflicts that erupt.

3.1 The Role of Women in Pastoralism-Related Activities

A predominant number of rural women are engaged in crop farming in Nigeria. However, a study in South-West Nigeria found that the size of land farmed, the types of crops grown and the amount of labour committed to the farm are gendered, with men having much larger farms, growing cash crops and having their wives and other members of their households work on their farms for free.³⁸ Women, on the other hand, farmed less lucrative crops like vegetables on much smaller farms either working on their own or hiring labourers to help them.³⁹ Although women work as farmers both on their husband's farms and on their individual farms, this significant engagement does not extend to decision-making as well as ownership and control over resources and assets.

Women farmers in Benue State in Nigeria engage in dry season vegetable farming, farming of yam, groundnut, cassava and maize, processing these farm products, and rearing of goat and sheep.⁴⁰ This finding is in line with the findings in a study in the North Central zone of Nigeria which found the major agricultural activities women engage in to include dry season farming

36 *Ibid.*

37 Verma and Khadka (eds) *Gender and Pastoralism* 27.

38 Pierotti *et al.* "Women Farm what they can Manage: How Time Constraints Affect the Quantity and Quality of Labor for Married Women's Agricultural Production in Southwestern Nigeria" 2022 *World Dev.*

39 *Ibid.*

40 Interviews with women in Benue State.

(pepper, tomatoes, and vegetables), cassava processing (garri, cassava chips, and akpu), farming (yam, sweet potatoes, groundnut, sugar cane, soya beans, maize, guinea corn, cassava, and rice) keeping domestic animals (hens, ducks, goat, sheep, pigs), fishing activities and selling of dairy products (milk, butter, cheese), and fura by women pastoralists.⁴¹

Women pastoralists also play important roles. They engage in milking livestock, processing dairy products, selling dairy products,⁴² feeding sick and young animals, collecting water, fodder and dung for livestock kept close to the homestead, and cleaning animal sheds.⁴³ They also take care of pregnant stock and their calves, kids or lambs, and take care of sick animals.⁴⁴ These are amidst their unpaid household tasks like caring for children and the elderly, cooking, washing, collecting and transporting fuelwood.

It is important to note that decisions on who owns the animals, who takes care of them, who sells the products and who controls the income are diverse, depending on cultural and religious factors. In some communities, although women pastoralists contribute significantly to managing the livestock, decisions related to selection of species, rearing methods, rearing size, and marketing of animals of high economic value are often made by men, with women having more decision-making powers over small livestock which have lower economic and social value.⁴⁵ For instance, in Bokkos, Plateau State, Fulani women pastoralists were not allowed to keep animals or trade in them, as this was seen as competing with the men.⁴⁶ However, Ron women in the same community were allowed to keep and even own cattle.⁴⁷ In some other communities, the decision-making and influence of the pastoralist women were limited to the household but not to the management or sale of their own cattle.⁴⁸ Generally though, in most pastoralist communities, women sold milk and other dairy products while the men sold cattle.⁴⁹

3 2 The Role of Women in the Maintenance of Security Structures

It is important to provide some context to how informal groups provide security services in Nigeria. As interviews with participants show, the farmers-pastoralists crisis has revealed several ungoverned places in Nigeria, in general, and in Benue State in particular. “Ungoverned spaces” is a phrase used to describe the manifestation of the inability or incompetence of the state “to effectively perform its minimal statutory functions, vis a vis its exercise of control of the use of force and provision of basic social services”.⁵⁰ This results in insecurity and a “limited provision of basic social services”, which exposes such places to the risk of control by

41 Gbamwuan and Atim “Farmer- Herder Conflicts and the Socio-Economic Predicaments of Women in North Central Nigeria” 2022 *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 90–105 99.

42 Waters-Bayer, *Dairying by Settled Fulani Women in Central Nigeria and some Implications for Dairy Development* (1985) 2 <https://odi.cdn.ngo/media/documents/5273.pdf> (accessed 05-05-2024).

43 Yurco “Beyond the Boma: A Gendered Approach to Conceptualizing Resource Access in Pastoral Households” 2018 *Geoforum* 97 343–351 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.08.001>.

44 Giovarelli *et al.* *Gender Analysis of Pastoral Systems in Three Sub-Saharan African Countries: Evidence and programmatic Recommendations* 18 February 2024 <https://www.gatesgenderequalitytoolbox.org/wp-content/uploads/GenderPastoralism.pdf>. (accessed 05-05-2024).

45 Interviews with women pastoralists in Benue State.

46 Badejo *et al.* “The Impact of Self-help Groups on Pastoral Women’s Empowerment and Agency: A Study in Nigeria. Pastoralism” 2017 *Epub* 6.

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*

49 Nagarajan “No Tribe in Crime” *Mercy Corps* 22.

50 Otobo and Obaze “Is Nigeria Bedeviled by the ‘Ungoverned Space’ Syndrome?” *Business Day*, 11 June 2019 <https://businessday.ng/opinion/article/is-nigeria-bedeviled-by-the-ungoverned-space-syndrome/> (accessed 04-09-2023).

criminal networks.⁵¹ Every respondent interviewed lamented the absence of adequate security personnel in the rural communities. Worse still, the bad road networks prevent some of the security officers from accessing some of the crisis zones. This has necessitated the need for informal security structures.

Informal security structures and networks have existed in Nigeria for some decades, bridging the security gaps occasioned by a lack of adequate formal security personnel. These informal groups exist under different names, for example, vigilante groups, and have different *modus operandi* across different communities. However, their major functions are mainly to ensure order and surveillance in the communities where they exist. These informal groups usually have more persons than the official law enforcement agencies to carry out their services. For instance, in Kano State, there were 100,754 vigilantes in 2011 compared to just 6,000 policemen.⁵² The relationship between vigilante groups and other law enforcement agents like the police, military and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps ranges from being cordial and collaborative to being suspicious and hostile. Unfortunately, most vigilante groups have limited funds to carry out their activities. Most of them rely on donations or levies from philanthropists or ordinary residents.⁵³

Most vigilante groups are made up of men, but increasingly women are getting actively involved in combatant tasks or intelligence gathering. For instance, the Kogi Vigilante Service has three of every ten personnel as female.⁵⁴ The *yan sakai* vigilante groups in the North West have few women; but, in some cases, women have reportedly aided the men in fending off bandits,⁵⁵ and intelligence gathering.⁵⁶ Vigilante groups in Kano State⁵⁷ and Anambra State are also composed of men and women.⁵⁸

Farming and herding groups also constitute their informal security outfits, to offer protection to their lives and property. Some of the groups comprise both farmers and pastoralists.⁵⁹ Most times, these groups allegedly carry arms, and their main aim is to deter prospective criminals from attacking their larger group, or from engaging in cattle rusting and farm trespassing.⁶⁰ Notwithstanding that cultural expectations have placed the responsibility of security provision on men,⁶¹ both pastoralist women and women farmers also play key roles in sustaining the informal security structures established by the different groups to safeguard their farms and

51 *Ibid.*

52 Ogbozor “Understanding the Informal Security Sector in Nigeria” 2016 9 <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR391-Understanding-the-Informal-Security-Sector-in-Nigeria.pdf> (accessed 10-09-2023).

53 International Crisis Group “Managing Vigilantism in Nigeria: A Near-term Necessity” 21 April 2022, Report No 308 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/managing-vigilantism-nigeria-near-term-necessity> (accessed 10-09-2023).

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*

56 Sardauna “In Katsina, Female Vigilantes Wage War against Bandits” <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/10/06/in-katsina-female-vigilantes-wage-war-against-bandits/> (accessed 20-08-2023).

57 *BBC* “Kano State Women Vigilante Unit Wey Ready to Face any Man Wey Commit Crime” 16 February 2022 <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-60366055> (accessed 07-09-2023).

58 *Premium Times* “Anambra Community Trains 100 Men, Women for Vigilante Services” 21 January 2021 <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-east/437889-anambra-community-trains-100-men-women-for-vigilante-services.html> (accessed 14-09-2023).

59 Bearak “The Ordinary People Keeping the Peace in Nigeria’s Deadly Land Feuds: Civilians are Stepping in to Stop the Violence between Farmers and Herders” *The Washington Post*, 10 December 2018 www.washingtonpost.com/news/world/wp/2018/12/10/feature/the-ordinary-people-keeping-the-peace-in-nigerias-deadly-land-feuds/ (accessed 09-09-2023).

60 *Ibid.*

61 Akinlabi and Ihemeje “Role of Vigilante Groups in Crime Prevention and Control in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria” 2021 *Ife Social Sciences Review* 89–105, 97.

livestock, as well as the formal security structures deployed to maintain peace in the communities. In all the communities in Benue State, the farming communities establish vigilante groups, while the pastoralist communities establish committees as their informal security groups to secure protection for the group, given the conflicts. These groups mount surveillance and patrol services to deter attacks. Women contribute by cooking and feeding the men on duty. They also help them to fetch water and firewood for warmth. They carry out this same service for officials of the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Military and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corp who are officially deployed to maintain peace in communities where conflict has either ensued or threatened to erupt.⁶²

3.3 The Role of Women in Pastoralism-related Conflicts

The stereotype that women are merely victims of the crisis has been disproved by studies showing the role women play in exacerbating the crisis. This is evident from interactions between women farmers and male pastoralists, as well as between pastoralists women and farming communities. For a very long time, the relationship between pastoralists and farmers, including women farmers, was built on cooperation, with the farmer allowing the pastoralists access to graze the farmland after harvest for farm residue, while the cattle provided “fertilizer” for the farmland with their manure.⁶³ In addition, the farmer exchanged his grains or staple foods for milk or meat from the pastoralist.⁶⁴

The National Fadama Development Projects on dry farming⁶⁵ were introduced in the 1990s. Most of the Fadama farms were vegetables grown by women. This destabilised an aspect of the cooperative structure on which the cooperation had been built.⁶⁶ The all-year farming did not allow for post-harvest grazing and the availability of fertilisers reduced the need for manure.⁶⁷ The pastoralists were thus left without farm residues after harvest and during the dry season when they needed more pasture for their herds.⁶⁸ This set the stage for intense interactions between the women farmers and male pastoralists and has had consequences on women's rights and livelihoods, as well as the potential for future conflict. Therefore, while violence is popularly understood as taking place between the men, crisis points often occur between young male pastoralists and women farmers on farmland and at water points, and then spread to the broader community.

Women get harassed, disrespected, and threatened with rape, or are sexually assaulted⁶⁹ when they protest the destruction of their crops or the pollution of water points by the pastoralists.⁷⁰ Women farmers recount how the pastoralist men treat and respond to farmers on the farm depending on their gender and religion, with men being more respected and women not wearing

62 Interviews conducted with farmers in Benue State.

63 Higazi “Rural Insecurity on the Jos Plateau, Nigeria: Livelihoods, Land, and Religious Reform among the Berom, Fulani and Hausa” in *Interfaith Relations in Northern Nigeria* (2013) 5–7 7.

64 Obeya “Idoma Farmers-Fulani Herdsmen Relations Since 1960: An Interrogation of the Agatu Conflict and Management” in Nwaneri and Vande *History and Management of Farmer–Herder Conflicts in Nigeria* (2019) 59.

65 Fadama projects are irrigable low-lying plains introduced to support all year-round farming by small-scale farmers.

66 Essien “Leveraging Space Technology for the Prevention of Farmer–Herder Conflict” in Nwaneri and Vande *History and Management of Farmer–Herder Conflicts in Nigeria* (2019) 271.

67 Ochogwu and Adebayo “Dynamics of Farmers-herders Conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt Region: Beyond the Normative Narratives” in Nwaneri and Vande *History and Management of Farmer–Herder Conflicts in Nigeria* (2019) 4.

68 *Ibid.*

69 Krätli and Toulmin, “Farmer-herder Conflict in sub-Saharan Africa?” 38.

70 Nagarajan “No Tribe in Crime” *Mercy Corps* 5.

hijabs (Christians) being treated with more hostility.⁷¹ Some braver women have also physically driven away pastoralist men from their farms. In a bid to prove their masculinity after being chased away by women, or to protect their threatened or raped women, these men retaliate.⁷²

But women are more than victims in these conflict situations. Some women act as influencers, instigators, and escalators of conflict.⁷³ They can incite violence. Available statistics reveal that women were involved in 26 per cent of Boko Haram suicide bombing incidents in Northern Nigeria, 17 per cent of oil bunkering in the Niger Delta region, 12 per cent of the kidnapping in Southern Nigeria, and 38 per cent of armed robbery in Southern Nigeria.⁷⁴ This shows women's potential as active perpetrators of violence, which must not be ignored. Women have been found as accomplices in the smuggling of arms and weapons, concealed in their products for sale, used in the farmer–pastoralist conflict.⁷⁵ There are also allegations that Fulani women act as spies for their male counterparts by gathering information from the local communities in the guise of selling *nunu* (dairy products) for possible attacks.⁷⁶ Women farmers have also been accused of instigating their husbands, peddling rumours and hate speech, and sometimes chanting war songs to spur their husbands to start violence.⁷⁷ They accuse their husbands of being weak and brand them as “good for nothing” who can only beat their wives and not their fellow men.⁷⁸ These kinds of humiliation affect the men, spite their ego and spur them to act or retaliate attacks.⁷⁹

4 GENDER NEGLECT IN THE GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

Governance has important implications for how men and women participate in, and benefit from pastoralism-related activities. Governance decisions also determine whether or not laws and policies consider both women's and men's needs and interests.

4.1 The Current Governance Regime on Pastoralism in Nigeria

The governance of pastoralism in Nigeria comprises state actors, institutions, and agencies as well as non-state actors, including informal networks, traditional mechanisms and cultural institutions. These include statutory laws, government policies, international obligations, cultural practices, informal networks, and traditional mechanisms for access and dispute resolution, as well as the implementing actors. Nigeria operates a pluralistic legal system. Pastoralism cuts across the environmental, agricultural and land administration sectors, with the federal and state governments having concurrent mandates on regulating the environment and promoting agriculture, while the powers on land administration are exclusively reserved for the state governments.⁸⁰ States are therefore at liberty to make laws on pastoralism and a few

71 *Ibid* 36.

72 *Ibid* 5.

73 Ezirigwe “Making the Law Work for Men and Women: Advancing Gender Equality and Non-discrimination in Nigeria's Anti-open Grazing Laws” 2020 *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy* 362–381, 378.

74 Afolabi “Women and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Way Forward” July 2022 *Front Sociol.*

75 Achakpa, Ademola-Adelehin, Suleiman *et al.* *The Impact of Farmers Herders Conflict on Women in Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau States of Nigeria* (2018) 20.

76 Ezirigwe 2020 *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy* 362–381, 378.

77 Achakpa *et al.* *The Impact of Farmers Herders Conflict* (2018) 20.

78 Ukandu and Chiaghanam “Socio-religious and Gender Implications of Farmer–herder Hostilities in Contemporary Nigeria” in Nwaneri and Vande eds *History and Management of Farmer–Herder Conflicts in Nigeria* (2019) 148.

79 *Ibid.*

80 Land Use Act of 2004, ss 1 and 2(1)(a).

states have already done so.⁸¹

Additionally, while both the federal and state governments are constitutionally empowered to make laws for security and good governance,⁸² the federal government by implication has exclusive control of the federal security forces including the army and the police. This is because the enforcement of laws and regulations is largely carried out by the Nigerian Police Force,⁸³ and the Nigerian Civil Defence Corp⁸⁴ both of which are under the exclusive control of the federal government.⁸⁵ The Nigerian Army, also within the exclusive control of the federal government, is usually drafted in times of crisis to curb insecurity.⁸⁶ Empirical data showed that the law enforcement agents who are in the employment and control of the federal government were reluctant to enforce laws and regulations that were not aligned to the policies of the federal government, even where these laws had been validly enacted by the relevant State House of Assembly.⁸⁷ Given the fact that the federal government controls law enforcement agencies, some state governments have established security units under their laws and policies to enforce state laws on pastoralism. These security units come in the form of civilian task forces empowered to implement the laws,⁸⁸ local vigilante groups used as neighbourhood guards,⁸⁹ forest guards,⁹⁰ and security enterprises established through cooperation amongst the states.⁹¹

At the local level, customary law still guides the actions of most rural dwellers, even on land use.⁹² Under a cooperative arrangement, indigenous Nigerians customarily allowed transient pastoralists access to and use of land for their occasional grazing of cattle. Under the customary cooperative arrangements on pastoralism, traditional rulers have played fundamental roles. First, they serve as the first point of call for the customary negotiation of access for most pastoralists who come into communities for grazing.⁹³ Second, they are involved in the settlement of any arising disputes, as most complaints were customarily laid before them. Many victims perceive the formal courts as a waste of their time and rely on traditional mechanisms.⁹⁴ Unfortunately, the 1999 Constitution did not refer to the role or need for traditional rulers.⁹⁵ Yet, the long-held confidence of the rural community in the settlement of disputes by traditional rulers remained relevant and strong until recently. In recognition of the invaluable roles played by traditional rulers in grassroots administration, state governments have continued to appoint and involve

81 For example, Benue, Taraba, Ekiti and Oyo are some states that have made laws expressly prohibiting open grazing.

82 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, s 4.

83 Police Act of 2020 s 4.

84 NSCDC Act of 2007 ss 2 and 5(8).

85 Constitution 1999, item 45 part I of schedule. There is still an ongoing debate whether the combined readings of sections make laws on security matters. See Ezirigwe, "Constitutional Dimensions on the Rise of Security Outfits in response to the 'Farmers Herders Conflict' in Nigeria" (2020/2021) *University of Benin LJ* 1–28.

86 Falana "Legal Framework for Policing" *This Day* 7 February 2020 <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/02/07/legal-framework-for-policing/> (accessed 10-09-2023).

87 Conclusions drawn from interviews with the stakeholders.

88 For instance, in Benue State.

89 *Ibid.*

90 For instance, in Enugu State.

91 For instance, Amotekun in the South-Western states of Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ogun, Ekiti and Lagos.

92 Ekhaton "Traditional Oath-taking as an Anti-corruption Strategy in Nigeria" in Akogwu (ed) *Combating the Menace of Corruption in Nigeria: A Multidisciplinary Conversation* (2019) 309–226 318.

93 Interview with traditional rulers from communities in Benue State.

94 Kwaja and Ademola, *Responses to Conflicts between Farmers and Herders in the Middle Belt of Nigeria: Mapping Past Efforts and Opportunities for Violence Prevention* (2018).

95 Iyeh "Reconsidering Place of Traditional Institutions under the Nigerian Constitution: A Comparative Analysis" 2014 *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization* 136.

traditional rulers⁹⁶ for effective dispensation of their regimes, albeit with limited scope.

In both the formal and informal spaces, the participation and inclusion of women in governance structures and processes are limited and constrained by socio-political factors and patriarchal socio-cultural settings. For instance, all the policy stakeholders interviewed in this study were, unfortunately, men, even when attempts were made to seek out and interview women policymakers. This is because the people occupying the management and relevant positions at the formal and informal structures were all men. The National Executive Council that considered the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP), the latest government's intervention to regulate pastoralism at a federal level, was without a woman governor. Similarly, women also have a limited space in the security structures in Nigeria to influence decisions and policy from a perspective of gender. For instance, no woman has been appointed as the Minister of Defense. Also, women in top positions in the military have never been appointed as the Chief of Army Staff; Chief of Defense Staff; Chief of Naval Staff, and Air Marshal. There has never been a woman Inspector General of Police, Commandant General of Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, or Director General of the State Security Service (SSS).⁹⁷ These are key positions that determine how laws are enforced, how interests are protected, who gets punished, and for what. While there may be arguments that having more women in decision-making does not always translate to better representation of women or meaningful political influence,⁹⁸ evidence shows that women decision-makers have influenced women's priorities in policymaking.⁹⁹

Within the informal and traditional structures, women are also marginalised in decision-making and their complaints and needs are often ignored. Most leadership and eldership positions are traditionally reserved for men, constraining the space for women's participation in decision-making. Women are required to table their cases before the head of the family, who is in almost all cases a man.¹⁰⁰ Women victims thus lack an adequate voice to verbalise their complaints and needs. Sometimes, when they voice complaints, the cases are not taken seriously or are merely dismissed.¹⁰¹

4 2 Women's Engagements in the Law-making Processes

Apart from the fact that women have limited participation in law or policymakers due to the skewed political opportunities and positions occupied predominantly by men, women are also usually left out of law and policymaking processes on the topic. According to one woman leader,

96 *Ibid* 144.

97 Afolabi 2022 *Front Sociol.* 8.

98 Brechenmacher *et al.* "Representation Isn't Enough: The Number of Women in Elected Office is on the Rise, but that hasn't Necessarily Translated into more Power" 2 March 2021 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/02/women-elected-office-representation-not-enough/> (accessed 11-09-2023).

99 See Duflo "Women Empowerment and Economic Development" (2012) *Journal of Economic Literature* 1051–1079 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23644911>; Rose "Does Female Board Representation Influence Firm Performance? The Danish Evidence" 2007 *Corporate Governance. An International Review* 404–413.

100 Nagarajan "No Tribe in Crime" *Mercy Corps* 14.

101 Centre for Democracy and Development "Conflict in Northern Nigeria: Trends, Dynamics and Gender Perspectives" (13 April 2021) 25 <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/farmer-herder-conflict-northern-nigeria-trends-dynamics-and-gender-perspectives/> (accessed 12-09-2023).

I am a woman in my 50s now, I discovered that there is no women inclusion in some of the decisions taken by the government and women sometimes are not called to the platform to discuss issues that particularly affect them adversely.¹⁰²

These affect the content of the laws and policies. It is trite that the content of any law is determined to a large extent by the persons who made the law and has implications on how individuals or groups can be positively or negatively affected by it.¹⁰³ Regrettably, most of the laws prohibiting open grazing in Nigeria were made primarily by men in a male-oriented world, with a negligible number of women voices in the legislative houses to champion the fate of women.¹⁰⁴ The consequence of this is that it becomes difficult to contemplate the gender-sensitive experiences of injustice that require protection. For instance, in Taraba State, there were no women in the legislative house when the law prohibiting open grazing was passed into law, and this was reflected in the content of the law, with men's views and needs dominating the discourse.¹⁰⁵

Given this limited input by women, certain distinct gender-specific circumstances which reinforce sexual and gender-based violence against women, including rape were ignored and were not prohibited, whereas other patriarchal crimes like land grabbing and cattle rustling were explicitly prohibited, notwithstanding their proscription in other laws.¹⁰⁶ Sexual and gender-based violence have been perpetrated on women, on scales far more grievous than domestic violence, requiring prohibition. Rape was used as a weapon of war, fought through the bodies of women.¹⁰⁷ Studies and media reports narrate disturbing ordeals of local female farmers and Fulani women *nunu*¹⁰⁸ sellers, who were raped while in pursuit of their agricultural activities.¹⁰⁹

Some socio-economic activities of women were halted as fear gripped women.¹¹⁰ Women could no longer go to their farmlands¹¹¹ and resorted to limited farming in lands around their homesteads.¹¹² This is still subsisting. As recounted by an interviewee,

Even recently, after we came to the camp, one of my wives went into the bush to gather firewood. The herdsmen ambushed her and raped her to an unconscious state. She was only found later and rushed to the hospital where she was being treated until she later passed on at General Hospital Gbajimba.¹¹³

A woman farmer recounts that “when we and our daughters go to the market to sell the produce harvested, the herdsmen will attack us on our way back home, demand money from us with

102 Interviews with farmers in Benue State.

103 Ezirigwe 2020 *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy* 362–381, 372.

104 *Ibid* 373.

105 *Ibid* 372.

106 *Ibid* 374–376.

107 *Ibid* 370.

108 *Nunu* is the local name for traditionally fermented milk that has the consistency of yoghurt.

109 Achakpa *et al.* *The Impact of Farmers Herders Conflict* (2018) 15.

110 Mai-Lafia “Implications of Farmers-herders Conflict on Social relationship in North-Central Nigeria” in Nwaneri and Vande (eds) *History and Management of Farmer–Herder Conflicts in Nigeria* (2019) 111.

111 Jumare “Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Kaduna State, Northern Nigeria” in Kuna and Ibrahim (eds) *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria* (2015) 369.

112 Oluyemi-Kusa and Salihu “The Effect of Armed Banditry on Rural Women's Livelihood and Security: Case study of Kaduna and Plateau States, Nigeria” in Kuna and Ibrahim (eds) *Rural Banditry and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria* (2015) 134.

113 Interviews with farmers in Benue State.

threats and violently have sex with us.”¹¹⁴

A media outlet reported that pastoralists raped two women farmers to death on their way to their farm in Plateau State.¹¹⁵ A report by the International Crisis Group also acknowledged that several women farmers in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Benue, Plateau, Adamawa,¹¹⁶ Nasarawa and Taraba states are victims of rape.¹¹⁷ In the same vein, women and girls from the pastoral communities were also reported to have been targeted and raped by males suspected to be farmers while walking to the village market to sell their dairy products.¹¹⁸ Notwithstanding these grievous harms, rape was not included as an offence in the new laws prohibiting open grazing and related offences. When asked how the interest of women was incorporated in the law-making process and whether women recounted some of their rape ordeals so that the lawmakers could consider that when the law was being passed, a former legislator acknowledged that although women bore the brunt of this crisis, “there is no specific provision in the law relating to women”.¹¹⁹

5 MAKING A CASE FOR WOMEN’S ROLES IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PASTORALISM

Considering, first, the valuable roles that women play in pastoralism-related activities, notwithstanding their discriminatory access and ownership constraints; second, acknowledging the subtle roles women play in triggering, instigating, or escalating the conflict; and lastly, noting the distinct negative impacts of the conflict on women that are not considered during law and policy making, it is trite to advocate for women to be involved in governance processes on pastoralism both within formal and informal institutions.

5.1 Advocating for the Inclusion of Women in Pastoral Governance

This section justifies the inclusion of women in pastoral governance and provides recommendations on how women can act as potential leaders in the governance of pastoralism. Global commitments to gender equality require corresponding obligations. Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals demands that we achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Paragraph 5.5 of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, demands that “States should develop relevant policies, laws and procedures through participatory processes involving all affected parties, ensuring that both men and women are included from the outset [...]”¹²⁰ Principles 20, 21 and 22 of the Rio Declaration,¹²¹ provide for the vital role and need for the participation of women, the youth and Indigenous people, respectively in environmental management and development, to realise sustainable development. Intra-generational equity requires that the needs of everyone in the present generation including women and the

114 Interviews with farmers in Benue State.

115 Ganagana “Raped to Death: Two Married Women Suffer Sad Fate at Same Spot in Plateau” *Sun Newspaper* 16 July 2017 <http://sunnewsonline.com/raped-to-death-two-married-women-suffer-sad-fate-at-same-spot-in-plateau/> (accessed 20-08-2023).

116 Gwade and Inuwa “Causes and Effects of Farmers-Herders Conflict in Hong and Gombi Local Government Areas of Adamawa State, Nigeria” 2022 *Journal of Research in Environmental and Earth Sciences* 91–95.

117 International Crisis Group, “Stopping Nigeria’s Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence” (26 July 2018) Africa Report No 262 12.

118 Achakpa *et al.* *The Impact of Farmers Herders Conflict* (2018) 15.

119 Interview with the former legislator, Benue State House of Assembly.

120 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4e08d38d-b1f5-4c74-8478-7cbd61a1e90a/content> (accessed 06-05-2024).

121 https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.151_26_Vol.I_Declaration.pdf (accessed 06-05-2024).

marginalised are taken into consideration. These are important global commitments that require operationalisation in the governance of pastoralism. The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) recently revealed that Nigeria loses about \$26 billion to gender inequality, annually.¹²² This provides an added incentive in the quest to close the gender gap in the governance of pastoralism.

The FAO has also recommended that it is imperative that governance arrangements in pastoral activities are consistent with human rights and lived experiences of the pastoral communities.¹²³ This entails women's participation in decision-making processes, women's participation in rangeland management and women's access to rangeland resources. Evidence suggests that when women are more actively engaged in governance processes, they are willing to invest substantial time in rangeland management.¹²⁴ Conversely, when women perceive a lack of involvement in governance, they are less inclined to invest in land improvement or resource management initiatives.¹²⁵

Furthermore, having more inclusive governance by intentionally allowing women to take up more decision-making positions and actively taking part in participatory processes on pastoralism is in line with international best practices. Diversity and equity are increasingly promoted globally and in all spheres of life. Evidence exists to show that diversity in governance breeds better performance and development.¹²⁶ Evidence also shows that having both men and women in decision-making reduces conflict.¹²⁷ There is therefore a need to mainstream gender equality in all appointments into decision-making positions, including in the army and other security agencies saddled with tackling insecurity issues in Nigeria. Increasing women's representation in decision-making within security structures can enhance accountability for perpetrators, as women security officers are often more likely to insist on the prosecution of rape offenders compared to their male counterparts. This is because women and men have different preferences and women will prefer policies that better reflect their priorities.¹²⁸ Evidence from India showed that districts where women were at the helm of decision-making, had more investments in development priorities of women than in districts where men were at the helm of decision-making.¹²⁹

Moreover, women have a lot of influence over their sons and husbands in their families. This influence can also be used to de-escalate or drive conflict.¹³⁰ Where women are effectively engaged and sensitised, they can act as the best channel to reach out to young and older men, to avoid or de-escalate the conflict. Women's participation in governance will provide them with the necessary information to dissuade women from using their influence to trigger or escalate

122 Busari "Nigeria Loses \$26bn Annually to Gender Inequality" *Vanguard*, 30 September 2022 <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/09/nigeria-loses-26bn-annually-to-gender-inequality/> (accessed 13-09-2023).

123 Davies *et al.* *Improving Governance of Pastoral Lands* (2016) 6.

124 Flintan, *Pastoral Women, Tenure and Governance* (2021) ILRI Research Report 92, 36.

125 Agarwal *et al.* *Land Tenure Security and Governance Dynamics in Gujarat, India: Pastoral Women's Perspectives* (2021) Rangelands Research Report 5, 42.

126 International Monetary Fund "Annual Report 2014: From Stabilization to Sustainable Growth" 2014 International Monetary Fund.

127 Rose 2007 *Corporate Governance. An International Review* 404–413.

128 Duflo and Downs *et al.* "Increasing Women in Leadership in Global Health" 2014 *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges* 1103–1107; Sawadogo-Lewis *et al.* "Reaching Substantive Female Representation among Decision-makers: A Qualitative Research Study of Gender-related Experiences from the Health Sector in Mozambique" 2018 *PLoS One*.

129 Duflo *et al.* *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges* 1071.

130 Nagarajan "No Tribe in Crime" *Mercy Corps* 13–14.

conflict.

A woman leader in one of the communities had this to say,

So as far as I am concerned, women should be more included in the issues of farmers and herders crisis and when I say women I mean even the Fulani women, if Fulani women are involved in the talking or at the table, they will be able to advise their husbands, please don't do this because women are more sensitive to some level than men so I think women have a role to play and they can actually broker peace.¹³¹

A Fulani woman leader believes that women must encourage their husbands at home to do the right thing and avoid trouble in pursuit of their agricultural activities. In her words: “any time our husband and children come back from rearing cattle, I do sit down with them and talk with and also caution them to be careful with farmers crop and live in peace with them.”¹³²

Women can also act as bridge-builders between pastoralist and agricultural communities and as community stabilisers by building social and economic bonds between pastoralists and host communities. For instance, they can provide an avenue for early warning of possible attacks through conversations with fellow women at the water points or marketplaces. This kind of information has been beneficial to security operatives in averting violent attacks between pastoralists and farmers.

Additionally, women can engage in peaceful protests and declarations to demand inclusive participation. Indeed, women have done this in the past. For instance, at the international level, a group of pastoralist women from 32 countries gathered in Mera, India in 2010, to increase the recognition of women's voices in the development of pastoralism policies and issued a global call for action called the Mera Declaration.¹³³ The Mera Declaration has 23 clauses, including ensuring the equal rights of pastoral women, creating specific policies to assist pastoral lifestyles, and giving equal representation to pastoralist women. Local women have also carried out peaceful protests to demand justice. For instance, hundreds of Kona women of Taraba State held rallies on the streets of Jalingo, to protest the killing of the farming communities by alleged pastoralists, and called for the arrest of the attackers by the security actors to deliver justice for the victims.¹³⁴ Women in the Niger Delta have become more involved in resource agitation due to the failures in the current resource governance structure and the appropriation of incidental benefits by elites (youth, men, and traditional/community leaders) which disadvantages women.¹³⁵

5 2 Strategies for Inclusion

Studies have highlighted the challenge of transforming male-dominated governance structures into more inclusive and open systems.¹³⁶ This endeavour demands significant time, commitment, and strategic approaches. Rather than focusing solely on granting individual privileges or advocating for women's individual access and rights to land and resources, a more effective approach for effecting change involves working collaboratively with and through pastoral communities as a cohesive unit. By engaging with the entire pastoral system, this approach

131 Interviews with farmers in Benue State.

132 Interviews with pastoralists in Benue State.

133 “Mera Declaration of the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists” <https://landportal.org/node/8047> (accessed 22-09-2023).

134 Tyopuusu “Taraba Women Protest Herdsmen Killing, Harassment of Youths” *Punch* 18 June 2019. <https://punchng.com/taraba-women-protest-herdsmen-killings-harassment-of-youths/> (accessed 22-08-2023).

135 Ekhatior and Obani “Women and Environmental Justice Issues in Nigeria: An Evaluation” in Dawuni (ed) *Intersectionality and Women's Access to Justice in Africa* (2022) 6.

136 Flintan *Pastoral Women, Tenure and Governance* 4.

not only strengthens the community as a whole but also enhances women's position and status within the community.¹³⁷

Genuine and empowering inclusion goes beyond mere participation. It entails ensuring that women's voices are not only present but also heard, valued, and respected as equal contributors to the conversation. It ensures that women's perspectives are given equitable consideration and that their input is integrated into decision-making processes. Genuine inclusion recognises the importance of equity in perceptions and actively works to address power imbalances and systemic barriers that may hinder women's full participation and influence.¹³⁸

Lastly, governments and NGOs aiming to implement gender-responsive interventions should prioritise women's training in essential areas, such as animal health, business management, digital skills, and resource governance. It is crucial to train women para-vets and extension workers to engage directly with women pastoralists, particularly in regions where cultural norms limit interactions between women and men. Additionally, allocating a portion of investments to focus on species and products commonly managed and sold by women, such as dairy and small ruminants, can help support their economic empowerment. Supporting food and drink processing and services within occupations predominantly held by women, such as dairy processing (e.g., butter, yogurt, sour milk), is also recommended.¹³⁹

6 CONCLUSION

Gender differences have implications for agricultural practices and livelihood choices. This article examined how women's experiences differ from men in the problems arising from the use of agricultural land by farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria. It highlighted the important role that women play in pastoralism-related activities, the peculiar interactions of women and men that trigger conflict from the use of agricultural land, the often-neglected roles that women play in the conflict, the distinct negative consequences of the conflict on women as well as women's participation constraints in governance processes both with the formal and informal institutions. It argued that despite the direct involvement of women in the conflict, their views and participation are often excluded in decision-making, governance processes and reconciliatory interventions.

This article concludes that although governance structures, processes, policies and interventions are often developed and operationalised without gender considerations and responsiveness, having inclusive governance structures, processes, policies, and interventions has several advantages in curtailing the farmers-pastoralists conflict; closing the gender gap, with its attendant economic savings; as well as empowering women in political and policy spaces. In essence, empowering women within pastoral governance in Nigeria is not only a matter of social justice but a strategic imperative for achieving lasting peace and sustainable development in the face of pastoralism-related conflicts. This research contributes to the broader discourse on gender-inclusive governance and underscores the pivotal role women can play in mitigating the multifaceted challenges posed by such conflicts.

137 *Ibid.*

138 Rogers, "Between Tradition and Transformation: A Feminist Investigation of the Role of Pastoral Women within Tanzania's Integrated Environment and Development Landscape" (2023) Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers 12098, 105, <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/12098>.

139 Giovarelli *et al.* *Gender Analysis of Pastoral Systems in Three Sub-Saharan African Countries: Evidence and Programmatic Recommendations*, 27 February 2024 <https://www.gatesgenderequalitytoolbox.org/wp-content/uploads/GenderPastoralism.pdf>. (accessed 05-05-2024).