

Assessing Security Threats Posed by Ruma-Kukar Jangarai Forest Reserve to Batsari Local Government Area, Katsina State Nigeria

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Abstract: There are several known cases of forests serving as camping sites for rebel or insurgents groups that launch attacks on government forces or the local people. In the continent of Africa not only forests but even forest reserves and national parks were strongholds of rebels, insurgents or other groups engage in launching attacks. This paper assesses the security threats posed by Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve to Batsari local government area Katsina State. Data for the study were generated from field visits, field observation and interview with the local people some of who are affected by the insecurity situation. The results indicated five main threats posed by the forest reserve and the people responsible for creating the threats. The results also indicate that the attacks were on weekly basis and the valuables lost include human lives, money in cash, cattle, women and girls. There are however responses from the security agents and the local people towards overcoming the threats which have not been effective towards eliminating the threats. It is therefore recommended urgent and decisive measures should be taken by the new government in Katsina State towards overcoming the threats posed by the forest reserve to Batsari local government area.

Keywords: Assessing, security, threats, posed, forest reserve

Introduction

According to the United Nations Environmental Programme (2012), around the world conflicts and wars that posed security threats to the people are directly and indirectly affecting forest and the communities that depend on forest resources for their livelihood. Dense forests in remote areas can serve as hideouts for insurgent groups. There are several known cases of forests serving as sites for rebels or insurgent groups that launch attacks on the government forces or the people. In Colombia, left wing guerillas build camps deep inside the Amazonian forest and in mountains forests areas and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Garamba Forest has been a stronghold of rebels for nearly twenty years (UNEP, 2012). Furthermore there are many other conflicts and wars such as in Cote d' Voire, Guinea, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, and the liberation struggles in southern Africa were also based in and launched from forest areas (UNEP, 2012).

In different parts of Africa, not only forest but even forest reserves and national parks were strongholds of rebels, insurgents and other armed groups (Fearn, 2012). A study on conflicts in the continent of Africa

has observed that armed groups have taken shelter or uses forests and forest reserves as their den in Central African Republic, DRC, Southern Sudan, and Nigeria (Ladan, 2014a). Another study specifically focused on northern Nigeria and examines the security threats posed by forests and forest reserves in the region. The study observed that forests and forest reserves have become bases for insurgents to launch attacks, hideouts for armed robbers who also launch attacks on travelers/traders, hideouts for thieves, criminals and cattle rustlers and camping sites for unknown gunmen who launch attacks on local people (Ladan, 2014b). One of the forests and forest reserves identified as posing security threat is the Ruma-Kukar Jangarai forest reserve lying north west of Katsina state, Batsari and Safana local government areas (LGAs) (Ladan, 2014b).

Ruma and Kukar Jangarai are two forest reserves in the then Katsina province now Katsina state that were lying to the west and east respectively which were merged into one forest reserve in 1959 to create the Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve (Jari, 2011). Thereafter, the whole reserve was divided into ten ranges and cattle grazing scheme was introduced in 1962. Edible grasses were planted and small earth

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dams were constructed to create water holes for cattle. The reserve covers an area of about 800km² located in the north western part of Katsina state, about 80km south west of Katsina city (Jari, 2011). The forest reserve is located in present day Danmusa, Safana, Batsari and Jibia local government areas of Katsina state and some parts of neighbouring Niger Republic. It has about one thousand kilometer dimensionally (Rugu Katsina, 2011).

The Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve is known to the people of Katsina state and beyond as Rugu Forest or *Dajin Rugu* in the local Hausa language. Scholars have recently focused on the forest reserve and the security situation in and around the forest. Bello *et al* (2014) in their study on crime victimizations in Katsina senatorial zone concluded that the local government areas on the Katsina-Zamfara border and especially around Rugu forest and grazing reserve in the west towards the southern part of the zone have higher prevalence of violence and property crime victimizations murder, robbery, rape, burglary and livestock theft. These LGAs include Batsari, Danmusa, Jibia, and Kurfi (Bello *et al.*, 2014). Elazeh (2014), observed that cattle rustlers have resorted to using the Rugu forest as their operating base, from where they come to attack unsuspecting villagers and cart away with their cattle in the dead of the night.

It is based on this that the study focus on one of the LGAs bordering the Rugu forest or Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve and the security threat it poses to the people. The aim of this paper therefore is to assess the security threat posed by Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve to Batsari LGA. The objectives of the paper are to:

- i) Examine the nature and composition of the Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve.
- ii) Identify the security threats posed by the forest reserve and the persons involved in creating the threats.
- iii) Examine the frequency of the security threats and the valuables/properties lost.
- iv) Identify and examine the response to the security threats by security agencies and the local people.
- v) Suggest measures to be taken towards making the forest reserve safe and secure.

The study area

Batsari local government area is one of the thirty four local government areas (LGAs) in Katsina State which was created on 21st September 1991 from defunct Dutsin-ma LGA. It lies approximately between latitudes 12°42'0" to 12°58'0" north of the equator and longitude 7°0'0" to 7°20'0" east of Greenwich meridian (see Figure 1). Batsari town is the headquarters of Batsari LGA and it is located 48kms away from Katsina city, the capital of Katsina State. Batsari LGA is bordered to the north by Jibia

LGA, to the north east by Batagarawa LGA, to the east by Kurfi LGA, to the south by Safana LGA and to the west by Zamfara state (See figure 1).

Batsari LGA has a long history which evolved around Ruma village founded over 500 years ago by a group of people believed to have come from Rome-Italy around Mediterranean sea and entered Nigeria through Kaura Namoda, Zurmi, Faskari and then settle at Ruma forest (Bawa, 2012). The Ruma people were later scattered as a result of constant attack by enemies around 1805 – 1806 and the people migrated to Fatotuwa in the present day Niger Republic. The people later re-group and returned to Ruma under the leadership of Muhammadu Sani also known as Danwaire. The coming of British colonialists brought changes as wars were stopped, boundaries were demarcated and enforced. Ruma and surrounding areas then became a district under Katsina when Muhammadu Dikko was appointed the Emir of Katsina in 1906 (Bawa, 2012). The headquarters of the district was moved to Batsari from Ruma in 1948. The district head up till today retains the title of Sarkin Ruma but the name of the district changed to Batsari district. The movement of the headquarters is because Batsari town is more accessible and hence much easier for the provincial administrators (Bawa, 2012).

Batsari LGA is now made up of two districts of Batsari and Wagini each headed by a district head. There are Sarkin Ruma district head of Batsari and Gado-da-masu district head of Wagini. According to the census figures released by the National Population Commission 2006 census, the LGA has a total population 207,874 persons, made up of 104,279 males and 103,595 females (Bawa, 2012).

The physical setting of the LGA consists of low lying plains, part of the high plains of Hausaland with various rock formations in different parts of the area. The soils are recent alluvium soil of deep well drained and loamy sand found in surface drainage channels (Babsal & Co. 1998). The drainage of the area consists of river Godo and its tributaries which reduce drastically in volume during the prolonged dry season. Natural springs are found in between rock formations in Ruma and other areas. The climate is tropical continental climate that is characterized by short wet season and long dry season. The rainy season starts from June to September with mean annual rainfall of about 840mm. Temperatures are high with value of about 36°C in April and low value of about 20°C in the month of December. The vegetation is Sudan Savanna type with short scattered trees, shrubs and grasses. The natural forest is however found along the western side of the LGA bordering Zamfara State (see Figure 1).

The major occupation of the people is farming and animal rearing. The crops produced through rain-fed agriculture include guinea corn, millet, ground-nut, cassava, beans, sweet potatoes and *moringa oleifera*. Animals reared include cows, sheep, goats and donkeys. Some of the animals are used in farm work to assist in the production of the crops listed above. Some of the people are traders that engage in trading

of crops and animals in weekly markets that exist in the LGA such as Batsari market on Thursdays and Wagini market on Fridays. The status of Batsari LGA is presently upgraded due to the establishment of a tertiary institution 'Cherish Enterprise Institute' that will offer Diploma and Degree programmes to cater for the high demand for higher education within and outside Katsina state.



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing Batsari, the headquarter of Batsari LGA

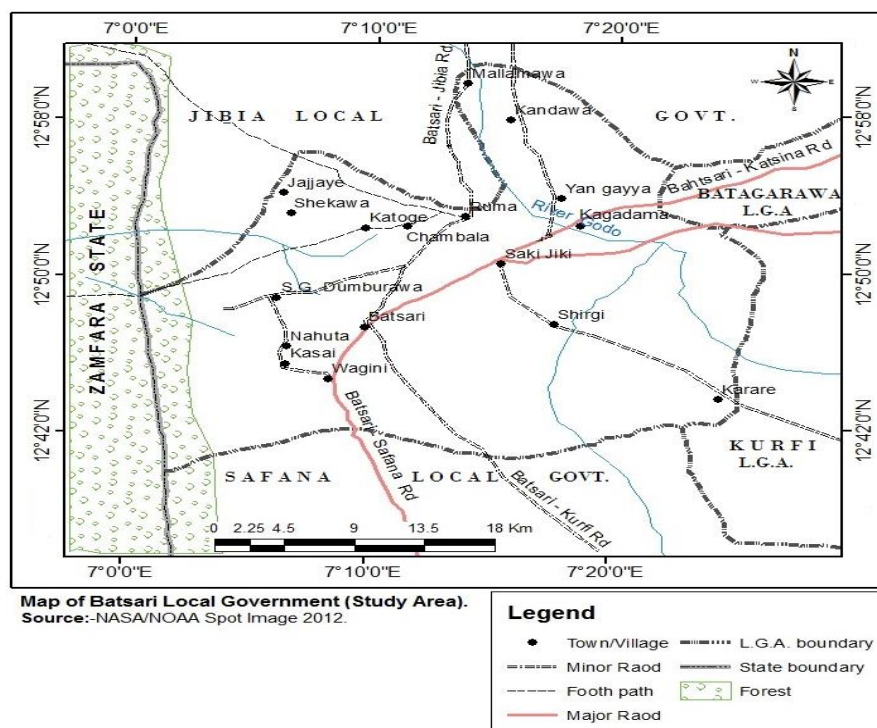


Figure 2: Map of the study area, Batsari LGA

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used to generate data for the study is survey research that involves collecting data from a group of people considered to be representative of the entire group or community under investigation.

In line with this field visit to Batsari local government was carried out on 14th December 2014 accompanied by two research assistants who are indigenes of the area. Observations were made on the movement of people and cattle out of the LGA as travelled along the 48km Katsina-Batsari Road. Settlements visited include Batsari, Ruma, Wagini and Marina at the edge of the forest reserve. The persons interviewed are locals of the settlement who are knowledgeable of the security threats posed by the forest reserve. Some of those interviewed are even victims of the cattle rustlers who either lost cattle or lost relatives in an attempt to recover stolen cattle. The interview questions are on what are the security threats posed by the forest reserve, the persons responsible, frequency of the threats and items lost, response from security personnel/local people and what suggestions will they offer towards making the forest reserve safe and secure.

Focus group discussion was formed in Ruma and used to gather data on the research questions and other relevant information not only on Ruma but on other areas. Beside this, a relative of the author who is an indigene of Chambala village near Ruma in February and March 2015 used to visit the author to update him on the security situation in the villages around the area.

Secondary sources of data were collected through desk research to complement the primary sources of data collected. The sources include internet sourced materials, journal articles, textbook, environmental reports and conference papers. The data collected were edited and descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data collected.

Shortcomings encountered during field visits include the sensitive nature of the topic as some respondents thought the author is a governmental official compiling list of items/valuables lost for compensation. Also the author had to stop at the edge of the forest reserve due to the risk of coming in

contact with the cattle rustlers or thieves who could attack anybody that comes their way.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Nature and Composition of Ruma/Kukar Jangarai Forest Reserve

The Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest is one of the largest forests in Nigeria which stretch from Niger Republic through Jibia, Batsari, Safana and Danmusa LGAs. This forest continues to stretch to other LGAs (under different names) such as Kankara, Faskari, Sabuwa and the through Birnin Gwari (Kaduna state) and Kontagora (Niger State). The forest also stretches along the Katsina state Zamfara state border. This long stretch makes the forest to have a thousand kilometers dimensionally.

The forest is mangrove savanna forest that is evergreen through the seasons in some parts while other sections remained semi-dry. The density and areal extent of the forest has over the years reduced in many sections due to various human activities such as fuel wood exploitation, agricultural expansion, clearing for settlement etc. These are many wild animals that were once found in the forest. This includes elephants, lions, hyenas, oxen, antelopes, bears, different species of reptiles etc. Most of these animals have disappeared due to deforestation, hunting and dryness of water lodges and reservoirs. Presently only few numbers of monkeys and seasonally elephants can be found in the forest (Rugu Katsina, 2011).

The tree species that are found in the forest reserve include *acacia nilotica*, *adansonia leicarpus*, *azadirachta indica*, *adansonia digitata*, *cambretun glutinosum*, *feridherbia albida*, *solerocarya birrea* (Jari, 2011). From the map of study area (Figure 2) it could be observed that the forest runs parallel along the Zamfara State boundary. However, there are large areas that consist of low bushes that comprise scattered trees, shrubs and grasses stretching up to villages such as Kasai, Mahuta, Sabon Garin Dumburawa, Shekewa and Jajjaye. The low bushes are also found all over the LGA and it is used as hideouts to launch attacks along the roads during day time or at night. A small section of the forest reserve has been conserved at Ruma consisting mainly of *azadirachta indica* which can be seen on Figure 3 below.



Figure 3: Aerial view of Ruma forest at Ruma, the conserved part of Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve in Batsari LGA.

The Security Threats Posed by the Forest Reserve and the Persons Involved in Creating the Threats

According to respondents interviewed the forest reserve have for many years been used by ordinary thieves/robbers as their base and hideouts. However, from the year 2010 well armed bandits occupy parts of the forest reserve living in camps from where they launch attacks and return to their bases in the forest. They hide stolen cattle in the forest which serve as their den that people fear going into as they can be killed or injured. Some of the bandits have hideouts in the forest reserve from where they receive stolen cattle and arrange for their transportation to other parts of the country (Danjuma, 2014).

Respondents have identified five (5) main security threats posed by the bandits who camped in the forest reserve.

- i) They organize and attack villages from their forest base to steal cattle, rape women and young girls or abduct them to be used as sex slaves.
- ii) They organize and come to people's houses to rob money that they were informed is in the possession of the victims.
- iii) They create road blocks along roads to rob travelers of their possessions especially during particular days of the week or time of the day.

- iv) They come from their forest base to rob banks of huge sums of money particularly when workers' salaries are paid at the end of the month.
- v) The fact that thieves and bandits have camped in the forest reserve have created fear in the minds of local people and hence farmlands located near the forest are no longer cultivated due to the risk of being attacked.

Respondents have identified persons involved in creating a large percentage of the security threats from the forest reserves. These persons are disgruntled Fulani who have in the last two decades lost their cattle through conflicts between themselves and other people over land, grazing routes and even women. The Fulani are a tribal group of the West African grasslands that are scattered over the sub-region who are mainly nomadic cattle herders (Ijah, 2014). Cattle ownership is a source of livelihood and status symbol to them and without cattle they believe that life is devoid of meaning. This has bred criminal elements among the otherwise peaceful people and they have turned to highway robbery, raiding the herds of their kinsmen whom they blame for not coming to their aid in their predicament (IRIN, 2013).

Respondents from Shirgi village observed that the Fulani are not well educated to easily distinguish

between what is right and wrong. They are also not organized in a group form with distinct leadership and command structure. This makes it difficult for them to receive orders on the need to stop any wrong doing that tarnish the image of the tribe.

The disgruntled Fulanis are assisted by informants and collaborators among local people who often relay information to them in the forest reserve who in turn carry out raids to steal cattle or money belonging to farmers and herdsmen (Danjuma, 2014). They also send informants into the town to buy food, recharge cards and other necessities that then collect information from various sources which are then relayed to the cattle rustlers.

Based on the above revelation and as rightly indicated by the respondents the motives of the attacks are to enrich themselves and satisfy their wants and desires. This is in line with the study of Okoli and Okpaleke (2014), who observed that the cattle rustling that occur in some LGAs of Katsina State is motivated by quest for capital acquisition.

The Frequency of the Attacks and Valuables Lost

The bandits carry out attack by walking on foot to the villages or along the road. They also carryout attack on motorcycles to run fast into their forest hideouts. They sometimes station a lorry or truck that can be

used for the transportation of stolen cattle to destinations in the forest or outside the LGA or Katsina State.

The bandits usually come to the villages or farm houses well armed around Batsari at night around 1.00 a.m. they wake up their victims and then ask them to handover their cattle to them. The bandits do not only steal from their victims, they sometimes beat them up and in case where there are women in the household they rape or kidnap them. Any victim that refuses to surrender their cattle or resist the rape or kidnap of women or girls is mercilessly beaten or killed. This accounts for the injuries and deaths that occur anytime there are attacks by the bandits.

Respondents indicated that the frequency of the attacks on the average is once a week or on weekly basis. At homes they normally target a particular time such as at night time when people are asleep or a time when people have gone to Friday mosque or village market on market days. The valuable items lost to the bandits include victim's lives, cattles (cows, sheep, goats), women or girls and sums of money.

The table below shows some incidence of attacks carried out in Batsari LGA that were sourced from secondary sources of data (Newspapers published online).

Table 1: Incidence of attacks carried out by bandits in Batsari LGA that were reported in the media

S/N	Date	Location of attacks	Valuable lost	Response from security agents or owner
1	25 th September 2013	Batsari community bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 05 persons died including one of the robbers - Large sums of money meant for payment of workers salaries 	Hot case by policemen from the State command led to the recovery of the money in the forest.
2	17 th October 2013	3 villages around Jajjaye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 100 cows were stolen - Gang raping of girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State police arrest 15 bandits - Free 70 cows
3	12 th March 2014	Wagini village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 50 cows rustled by armed bandits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Owners went in search of stolen cattle but could not recover
4	7 th April 2014	Nahuta and Kasai villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 02 herds of cattle estimated at 60 cows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report to Batsari divisional police office
5	17 th September 2014	07 villages around S.G Dumburawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 05 persons killed - 317 carted away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State police operation led to the recovery of the cows, sheep and motorcycles and trucks used by the bandits

Source: Online media (2014)

From the table above it could be observed that attacks are in villages not far away from the forest reserve and only one attack occurring at Batsari which occur at the Community Bank during day time. A total of

10 persons were killed during the attacks and 180 cattle were rustled. The table also shows that there is some level of success in recovering the stole cattle and money by the State Police Command.

The table below shows other incidences of attacks carried out in Batsari LGA that were sourced from

the interview with respondents during field visit to collect data

.Table 2: Incidence of attacks carried out by bandits in Batsari LGA that were sourced from fieldwork

S/N	Date	Location of attack	Valuables lost	Response from security agents or victims
1	10 th January 2014	Ruma village	- 11 sheep were gathered and collected by the rustlers	Owner went in search of stolen sheep but could not recover
2	4 th February 2014	Farm house at the outskirts of Ruma	- 23 cattle comprising cows and sheep were rustled at gun point. - Brother of cattle owner killed in the process of searching for the lost cows	- Went in search of cattle at Gidan Runjji village but could not recover lost cattle. Police men present at time of search did not assess fully to recover lost cattle
3	10 th – 17 th March 2014	Four farm houses along Batsari – Ruma road	- 45 cows and sheep gathered and rustled.	- No response from security agents - Farm house owners have abandoned the houses due to fear
4	28 th March – 6 th April 2014	Katoge and Shekewa villages	- 03 herds of cows sheep, goats and donkeys stolen by the rustlers in series of attacks carried out in three different periods	- Formation of vigilante group called ‘Group <i>da Gora</i> ’
5	4 th February 2015	S.G Dumburawa	- 04 persons killed - Large sums of money stolen	- No any response from security agents
6	10 th March 2015	A village around Katoge	- The sum of N50,000 paid as dowry to a family	- No any response from security agents

Source: Field work, 2015

From the table it could be observed that the attacks were carried out even in villages that are not close to the forest reserve like Ruma and Katoge as the bandits come at night. The total number of persons who were killed during and even after the attack is five and 148 cattle were rustled by the bandits. In terms of response from the security agents, they have failed to recover or even assist in the recovery of the stolen cattle. This is quite difference from Table 1 that indicates successes in the recovery of stolen cattle.

According to the respondents the frequency of attacks along roads leading to Batsari is on weekly basis. The bandits usually target certain days of the week that are market days such as Thursdays for Batsari market, Fridays for Wagini market, Saturdays for ‘Yargamji market in the neighbouring Kurfi LGA to carry out their attacks. The valuables lost to the bandits are money in cash or any other item that a passenger purchases from the markets such as goats, chicken and food items. The table below shows the security threats along roads leading to Batsari, the local government headquarter.

Table 3: Security threat along roads leading to Batsari town

S/N	Road Link	Distance	Day and time of security threat	Particular spot or location of the threat
1	Batsari to Katsina city	48km	Thursday after 8pm	At a rock formation that serve as hideout.
2	Batsari – Kurfi	34km	Saturday even during day time	Isolated part of the road far from any settlement
3	Batsari to Wagini and Marina to Runka	42km	Thursdays and Fridays even during day time	Section of the road that passes through the forest reserve.
4	Batsari to Ruma and Mallamawa to Jibia	42km	Thursdays and Sundays even during day time	Section of the road that is forested.

Source: Field work, 2014

From the table it could be observed that there are security threats along all the roads leading to Batsari from the four LGAs that shares boundaries with Batsari LGA. Days of the week that are market days not only in the LGA but in neighbouring LGAs have become security threats due to attacks by the bandits. The bandits take advantage of rocks where they can hide, isolated part of the road and forested parts after coming through their forest bases through the bushes in different parts of the LGA.

Response to the security threats by security agents and the local people

There have been series of responses that were aimed at tackling the security threats posed by the thieves and bandits that have camped in the forest reserve. These responses usually began when the victims, concerned group or the local communities report about the attacks to the law enforcement agents particularly the police. These responses by the security agents and the local people are highlighted below:

In the year 2014 as a result of incessant attacks that threatens the security of different parts of the country, the Inspector General of Police set up a Task Force to combat cattle rustling across Nigeria particularly in the severely affected geo-political zones such as the North West where Katsina State belongs. But this did not yield any positive outcome as cattle rustling continues.

Katsina State government in July 2013 set up a Special Intervention Team comprising the police, military and State Security Service (SSS) personnel to address cases of banditry in the State following reported cases of cattle theft and killing of herdsmen by bandits in local government areas sharing border with Zamfara State such as Batsari.

The members of *Miyetti* Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MCAN) also inform the security agencies and the state government each time incidence of cattle rustling occurs. In response to this, that the State government provided seven Hilux vehicles for security personnel to patrol the seven LGAs (Balal, 2014). This is quite inadequate considering the rustlers move into the forest where these vehicles cannot move into and one vehicle per local government is not enough to patrol the vast terrain that exist in the LGAs.

The Katsina State Police command used to station policemen with guns and a vehicle along sections of the road leading to Batsari where there is a frequent attack by the bandits. For example along the Batsari Katsina road, the police are usually seen ready for action in case there is any attempt by the rustlers to

create road block to rob people returning from Batsari weekly market after 8pm.

The local people in some of the affected villages such as Ruma, Shekewa and Wagini have formed vigilante groups that takes charge of the security of the villages particularly at night and certain times of the day or week the rustlers use to target to launch attacks. The vigilante group at Ruma is called '*Fada da Chikawa*' and at Shekewa it is called "Group *da Gora*'. At Wagini, the vigilante group train its members how to hold a gun, aim a target and shoot.. According to respondents from Chambala, the activities of the vigilante group at Shekewa has reduced the attacks and prompted some of the village heads that connive with the bandits to relocate to Batsari and Jibia towns.

Some herders that still possess large herds of cattle have migrated out of Batsari LGA to other LGAs in Katsina State where there is no security threats to their lives and their herds. On 14th December 2014, while travelling to Batsari from Katsina the author and his research assistants saw four groups of Fulani herdsmen with their cattle moving towards Katsina long the two sides of the road.

Some herders and farmers after been attacked in their farm houses have abandoned the house and moved to unknown destinations. This movement is to prevent any further attack that the rustlers may launch on them. It also shows that the herders and farmers have no faith in the security agents in tackling the security threat in the LGA. So to these people the best response to the security threat is to leave their houses and farmlands to areas where it is secure for their livelihoods.

Respondents described the response to the security threats by the security agents as unsatisfactory as it has failed to reduce the incidence of cattle rustling and associated criminal activities in Batsari LGA. Some respondents observed that the security agents particularly the police are trying but their number is inadequate and they are not well armed to face the rustlers. Other respondents suspect that there is connivance with the police as they mostly fail to act on time and when required to stop the attack or arrest the rustlers for prosecution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made towards overcoming the security threats posed by Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve on Batsari LGA.

There is the urgent need to once again set up the special intervention team that will this time address decisively cases of banditry in Katsina state. The new administration of the State sworn in on 29th May

2015 should set up this team towards overcoming the security threats in the affected LGAs.

The State government should provide special assistance to the Katsina State police command by providing adequate logistic support in terms of vehicles, equipments for communication and weapons for fighting the bandits. Adequate security personnel should be deployed to Batsari and other LGAs in the state to combat banditry and associated criminal activities.

The State government should assist the local vigilante groups that were formed in some of the affected villages. This assistance should be in form of the materials and items that they need to carry out their activities in their areas. This is important based on the realization that the activities of the vigilante group has led to the reduction in the cases of attacks by the bandits.

The federal government of Nigeria should establish a military barrack near the forest reserve either in Batsari or Safana LGA. The military will then carryout combat operations to comb the forest in order to flush out the camps set up by the bandits. This will ensure that the bandits are once and for all dislodged and with the military barrack in the area no any disgruntled group will dare used the forest as their base. This is the suggestion put forward by most of the respondents on how best to make the forest secure.

The herders and farmers that have abandoned their farm houses should be encouraged to return to their homes when the bandits were dislodged and security of lives and properties are guaranteed by the government. This can be done through the media that will send messages urging them to return to their abandoned houses and farmlands.

Federal, State and local governments should contribute money to form common funds that will be used to assist the victims of attacks by the bandits. This fund should be used to purchase cows, sheep and goats that can be distributed to the victims. Amount of money in cash can also be given to victims that lose money or those that need money to re-build their houses and farmlands destroyed in the attacks by the bandits. This assistance is very important towards returning the affected communities back to normalcy as one of the victims even asked the author for assistance to buy cows when he security situation has improved in future.

CONCLUSION

The Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve is primarily a reserve meant to conserve the local flora and fauna of the north western parts of Katsina State including Batsari LGA. Also parts of the reserve are meant to

provide pasture for cattle particularly during the rainy season thereby stopping the movement of cattle into farmlands thus reducing farmers-Fulani clashes. However, in the last five years the reserve has been taken over by bandits who have terrorized the local communities of the four LGAs that borders the reserve. The people of Batsari LGA have for a long time suffered from incessant attacks that leads to theft of cattle, robbery and accompanying rape and abduction of girls and women. Based on the data collected and analyzed for this study it can be concluded that the Ruma/Kukar Jangarai forest reserve posed a serious threat to Batsari LGA. It's time for the government at all levels to take urgent and decisive steps towards stopping these criminal activities by improving the security situation in the LGA. There is presently hope that the security of lives and properties will be guaranteed with the wind of change that has blown across Katsina State and Nigeria in general which, resulted in the election of a new ruling party that will take over governance and ensure peace and security in Batsari LGA and Katsina State.

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