

Benue people are today faced with great ecological and climatic problems. The most recent are the flood disaster resulting from the over flow of river Benue and incessant conflicts with Fulani herdsmen. Benue State is an agrarian society with rapid population growth. One of the adverse effects of climate change in northern Nigeria is desert encroachment. This has led to migration of Fulani herdsmen southwards in search of pasture for their cattle causing undue pressure on lands for farming and grazing activities for farmers and the herdsmen. The result has been constant and frequent violent conflicts between the two groups. In this theatre of violence, food security cannot be guaranteed as agricultural activities which are the live-wire of the State are being hampered. This paper intends to investigate the relationship between climate change, communal and ethnic conflicts on food security in Benue State of Nigeria.

Human beings are at the risk of survival today more than ever before. This is as a result of global warming or climate change that manifests in rising temperature, caused by greenhouse effect. Secondly is the rise in sea / ocean or water level resulting in severe catastrophes such as cyclone, hurricanes and flooding, shrinking of water bodies leading to scarcity etc. As a matter of fact, flooding is one environmental hazard inflicting much hardship and suffering, and much loss of lives and properties in Nigeria. Thirdly the land surface has experience drought over a prolonged period of time, desertification, soil erosion and landslides with concomitant effect on vegetation / crop famine and malnutrition in Nigeria.

The concern over population growth, environment and climatic change borders on human livelihood and vulnerability and adaptability. Nigeria has a very large population directly depending on climate sensitive economy such as farming and fishing that utilizes natural resources such as water, biodiversity and grassland. Human beings that are increasing on daily basis are competing for the resources of the biosphere. According to Marcoux (1999) “as the resources of any ecosystem are finite, so is the latter’s carrying capacity, hence beyond a point each additional inhabitant has a negative impact on the productivity of the resources”.

. Benue state was created in 1976 and it is situated in the north central region of the country. By the figures of the 2006 population census it has a population of 4,203,189 comprising, 2,183,246 males and 2099943 females. It derived its name from River Benue, the second largest river in

Nigeria after River Niger. There are two major ethnic groups – Tiv and Idoma while minority groups like Igede, Etulo, Agatu and Akwaya existed. These groups are spread over 23 local government areas of the state. Farming is mainly at subsistence level and the technology employed is traditional. Land is communally owned but with growing social changes and modernization, private / individual ownership is increasing. Human security is today at great risk in Benue state as a result of population growth and climate change. This human security implies the totality of those things that make for complete well – beings of the people. This human security includes economic, food, health, environmental, personal community and political security. Risk to human security in Benue state does not involve natural disaster as much as violent communal and political conflicts. Due to rapid population growth and limited land for agricultural activities, Benue state is the most volatile in Nigeria and many people lost their lives in conflict between Fulani herds men and Tiv, Jukun and Tiv, Igede and Tiv, Tiv and Idoma conflicts. The reason for all these conflicts is struggle over land. Benue state is an agrarian state. Agriculture is driven by climate variation of rain and hot climate. The persistent reduction in rainfall and variability is affecting agricultural production and food security in the state. For example rains come very late and end very early. This is a great risk to food security (Umar, 2010). The methods employed in data collection include questionnaire, focused group discussion and key informant interview. A sample size of four hundred respondents is drawn from six out of the twenty three local government of the state. Two local government areas are selected from each of the three Senatorial district for study. Five communities were studied in each local government area. The criteria for selection is that the community had experienced communal conflict in the past ten years. Two sessions of FGD are held in each of the six local government areas.