

## Gender perspectives in coping and resolution strategies in violent communal conflicts experienced in communities of Edo and Ondo States, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This study builds on the argument that violent communal conflicts result in emergency situations and individuals respond differently. The aim was to provide evidence on gender perception of coping strategies and resolution measures in violent communal conflicts in affected communities of Edo and Ondo States. Analyzed data were collected from 360 respondents using a structured questionnaire, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Findings show that violent communal conflicts were caused mainly by leadership tussles and land disputes. Coping strategies used by females included resignation to fate and praying to God, avoidance of costs and reduction of food rations. Males coped mainly with sale of assets and abrogating responsibilities. Perceptive resolution measures highly indicated by both male and female included compensation and third party reconciliatory and persuasive efforts. Females used more coping strategies thus more resilient. Government relief to victims and policy to ensure compensation are suggested.

**Keywords:** resilience, poverty, gender, sustainable development, peace building, livelihood

### Introduction

Communal conflict connotes shared social interaction which entails interpersonal contact, reciprocal response and an inner adjustment of behaviour to the actions of others (Ekong 2010). Conflict is a form of social interaction in which the actors seek to obtain scarce reward by eliminating or weakening other contenders (Ekong 2010). It degenerates into violent situations when excessive physical force and weapons are used. Yesufu (2005) observed that in rural Nigeria, conflicts may arise where there is difference of opinion, exploitation and challenge to security between groups.

The effects of conflicts on rural dwellers and gender categories are multi-faceted and may vary depending on resource access, control and usage in livelihood and social relations. Effects on livelihood are likely to be more on agriculture, which is the major occupation in the communities. Conflict could result in death, annihilation of bread winners and caregivers, relocation, displacement, limited access to resources, loss of human dignity and rural-urban migration among others. Thus, a lot of havoc has been wrecked on the development processes of societies. An example is the growing cases of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

People adopt various strategies to cope or mitigate the effects of violent communal conflicts (VCCs) because survival is a key issue. Attention therefore needs to be given to conflict resolutions to chart the way forward in economic and social relational terms. Bolarinwa, Abdulsalam-Saghir & Oyekunle (2013) found that communal conflict management styles, employed by farmers often lead to destruction of life and properties in core conflict areas. Yesufu (2005) observed that the frequency of religious and communal clashes, riots, conflicts and violence has reached endemic proportions since 1980. He suggested the need for self-appraisal, correcting the inherited primordial, religious and cultural and colonial structures. *Nwonu, Ojo & Odigbo (2013)* found that both the Boko Haram crisis and the Niger Delta crisis had adverse impacts on Nigeria's international image and tourism development, and consequently on the youth unemployment rate.

Gender roles are acquired or learned, they could change over time, and vary widely within and across cultures. It is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them, (USAID 2007). Roles and responsibilities are ascribed to gender categories in different cultures. Hence with gender comes societal expectations. These are also likely to dictate their access to and control of resources. The implication is that gender roles and relations will vary among societies and there are bound to be gender inequalities in varying degrees as well. In most societies the female gender tends to be disadvantaged hence efforts to achieve gender equality are often construed as female focused. Mainstreaming gender has become an issue to address perpetuation of gender inequality considering its implications for development. It could be seen as development issue since it limits potentials and opportunities. These also dictate their access to and control of resources. Gender inequalities arise from deep-rooted and durable social

norms. According to Kabeer (2012), barriers range from social norms that constrain women's choices and actions, to discriminatory legal and regulatory frameworks that tend to restrict opportunities to engage economic and social engagements. In cases where changes in roles have been experienced over the years, corresponding access and control of resources could not be guaranteed (Kabeer 2012).

In agriculture, the predominant occupation of rural dwellers, women contribute substantially to the food system of the developing nations (Ajayi 1997; Saito, Mekonnen, & Spurling 1991; Ani 2004; Yahere 2004). In case of role changes, there is need for commensurate change in resource control. Women make up about 70 percent of the total African workforce engaged in agricultural activities.

While conflicts last, victims employ various strategies to cope. The World Health Organization WHO/EHA/EHTP (1999) defines coping as the idea of survival whilst under threat, particularly in circumstances where individuals or groups have very little control of the situation at hand. Hence coping strategies or mechanisms are remedial actions undertaken by people whose survival and livelihood are compromised or threatened. Hodgkinson & Stewart (1991) described problem-focused coping mechanisms like planning, suppression of competing activities and emotional coping such as acceptance, social support and turning to religion. Sawada (2013) opined that against unexpected natural disasters, ex-post risk coping is indispensable, to reduce consumption fluctuations and to maintain desirable levels of livelihood. This suggests that since disasters are usually unforeseen, adjustments are inevitable to cope for survival. Hardship types usually experienced include disruption of activities, seeking out sustenance for survival, or having to find new sources of livelihood and or social connections or activities.

Conflict resolution measures are crucial to assist in proffering lasting solutions that deliver peaceful coexistence for productive and sustainable communities. In conflicts, security and livelihoods are severely disrupted and could result in poverty, food and nutrition insecurities and forced communal living situations. These affect people differently, but specifically affect the vulnerable groups. Policy and intervention decisions around communities in conflict should be informed by improved understanding of indicators at the micro level (Bruck & Justino 2013). The Nigerian States of Edo and Ondo recorded various violent communal conflicts in recent times, which have disrupted communal life, particularly the rural communities because of the rural sector's dependence on agriculture and other primary occupations. It is against this background that this study investigated VCCs experienced in selected communities in Edo and Ondo States.

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective was to investigate gender perspective to coping and resolution measures in VCCs in the study area. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in Edo and Ondo States, Nigeria.
2. Examine the gender roles of the respondents before and after VCC.
3. Ascertain the causes of VCCs.
4. Identify the coping/survival strategies in violence situations by gender.
5. Identify the respondents' perceptive conflict resolution measures by gender.

### **Justification**

There are consequences for individual and collective violent actions which might be irreversible hence VCCs could impact on developmental activities. This research explored ways communities and individuals cope with, and resolve conflicts situations. Therefore, if awareness and understanding of coping strategies that may mitigate or resolve VCCs will potentially pay dividends for ongoing rural development efforts.

Previous studies on VCC have mainly been at the macro level (Bruck & Justino 2013), and were more focussed on income and productivity. Adekunle, Adurogbanga & Akinbile (2015) addressed socio-economic effects of VCCs for farmer-pastoralists on extension services delivery. Bolarinwa, Abdulsalam-Saghir & Oyekunle (2013) assessed the impact of communal conflicts on farmers' livelihood. This micro-level research is focused on providing evidence on coping in conflict situations and identifying community-based solutions for innovative interventions to addressing or preventing VCC. Furthermore, it provides deeper understanding of communal conflicts and the dynamics involved. It is expected to contribute to academic research on VCC issues which may help to better inform policy and interventions.

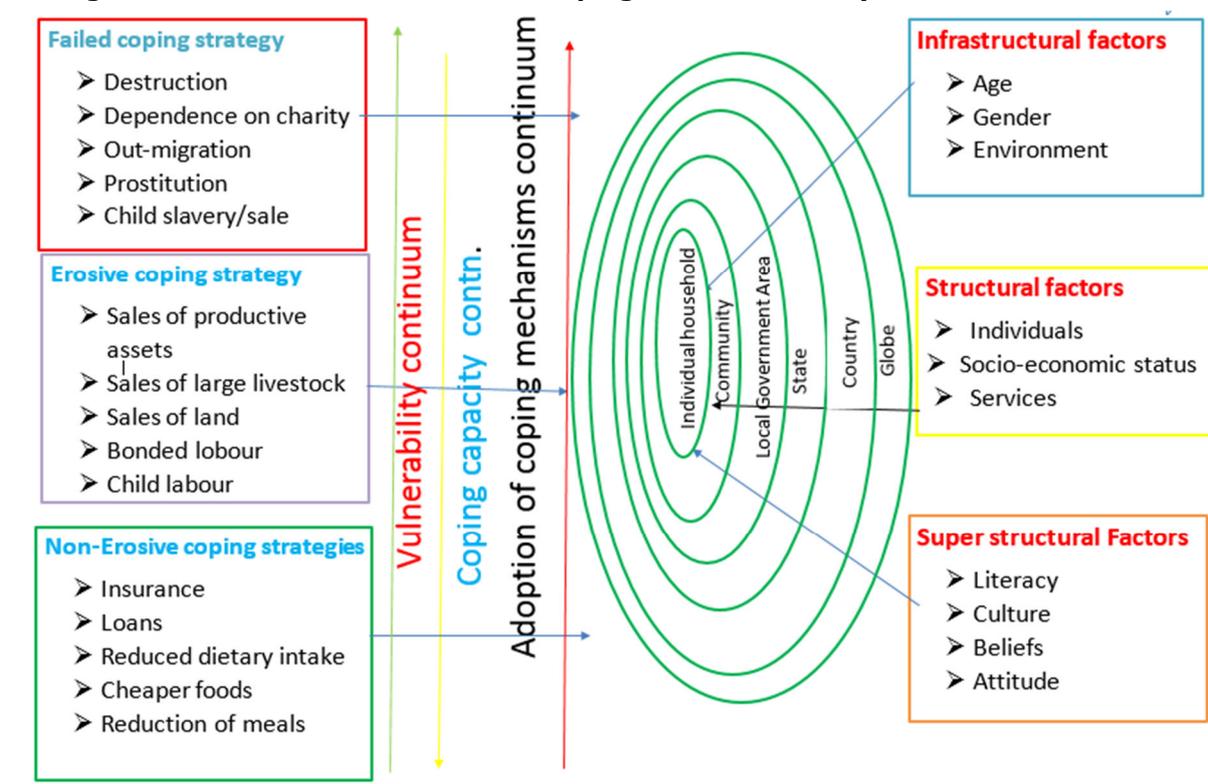
Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between male and female respondents with respect to coping strategies' usage.

## Theoretical framework

This study adapted the World Health Organization WHO/EHA/EHTP (1999) stages of coping strategies (CSs) to identify the level at which respondents used coping strategies. The categories included: (1) non-erosive CSs, i.e. those techniques leave behind little or no permanent damage, e.g. insurance, loss management, loans, reduction in dietary intake, cheaper foods, reduction in meals, sale of non-productive assets; (2) Erosive CSs, i.e. where permanent harm is done, e.g. sale of productive assets, sale of large livestock, land, bonded labour arrangement, child labour, and; (3) Failed coping- which results in destitution, e.g. dependence on charity, outward-migration, prostitution and sale of children.

In determining capacity to cope, vulnerability becomes relevant WHO/EHA/EHTP (1999). The more one is vulnerable, the less one has the capacity to cope, and therefore the more one tends to adopt more erosive coping mechanisms. Three sets of factors are identified in the WHO/EHA/EHTP framework: (a) Infra-structural, i.e. age, sex, environment; (b) Structural which is a function of individual socio-economic status, services available, and; (c) Super-structure, i.e. literacy, culture, beliefs, and prevailing attitudes. Coping strategies in disaster situations may vary by region, community, social group, household, gender, season and experience (WHO/EHA/EHTP 1999; Bruck & Justino 2013). The theoretical framework is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Theoretical framework for coping and vulnerability in conflict situation**



## Method

### Study area

The study was conducted in Edo and Ondo States located at the south western agro-ecological zone of Nigeria. Edo State has an area of 17,802km<sup>2</sup>, 6° 30'N 6°E as its coordinates and an estimated population of over 3,497,502. Ondo State state lies between longitude 4° 30' N and 6° East of the Greenwich meridian, 5° 45' and 8° 15' North of the Equator. It has a land area of 15,500 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 3,441,024 comprising of 1,761,263 males and 1,679,761 females (National Population Commission Report, 2006).

Edo and Ondo States are made up of 18 Local Government Areas each. They have a tropical climate characterized by two distinct conditions of wet and dry seasons. The wet season from April-October and dry season November-March. Annual temperature ranges between 21°C to 29°C. The annual rainfall varies from 2,000 mm in the southern areas to 1150 mm in the northern. The inhabitants are mostly subsistent farmers, public servants, traders and artisans. Major crops produced include rubber, oil palm, cocoa, yam, cassava, maize, rice and plantain. There is also a

significant animal husbandry of cows, goats, pigs, rabbits and sheep as well as fisheries and forestry activities.

### **Sampling technique**

A two-stage sampling process was adopted involving firstly purposive selection of three communities in Edo and Ondo States which experienced VCC in the last five years. They were:

- Edo-Egbaen, Okhoromi, Eghirhe communities (Western Post 2014).
- Ondo-Arigidi-Oja, Agbaluku and Imo (Vanguard 2011).

The second stage was the random selection of 60 households per community to give a total of 360 respondents.

### **Data collection**

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. To complement the questionnaire, focus group discussions involving male and female was used in Edo communities, while key informants were used in Ondo communities due to lingering hostilities. However, questionnaire copies from 13 respondents were incorrectly filled and were excluded from the final data analyses. The pre-test was carried out in Okhoromi community which is not included in the study. A split-half method showed reliability with  $r=0.89$ .

### **Measurement of variables**

Gender roles in households Level of involvement was measured using a 3-point Likert-type scale of: highly involved (3), little involved (2), and not involved (1). A mean score  $\geq 2$  = involved.

Income from livelihood activities Average annual income /household in Naira (N).

Usage of coping/survival strategies was measured on a 3-point scale for 16 items: highly used = 3, moderately used = 2, not used = 1; minimum = 16 and maximum = 48.

Perceptive measures for VCC resolution was measured on a 4-point scale: highly preferred = 4, moderately preferred = 3, little preferred = 2, not preferred = 1. A mean score  $\geq 2.5$  = preferred.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics involving percentages, frequencies and means. Inferential statistics involved t-test statistics to test for significance at 5% level. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the analysis.

## **Results**

### **Socio-economic characteristics of respondents by gender**

Table 1 shows the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. A majority of the respondents were males (61%), married (69%), with a mean age of 45.8 years and 52% were over 50 years old. Furthermore, a majority had formal education (74%), 72% were indigenous, 57% had a family size of 5-9 persons, 67% belonged to 1-3 associations, while 65% engaged in agricultural enterprises with a mean farm size of 2.1 ha. About 60% had more than 21years experience in their occupations, while 56% earned less than N200,000/annum (\$546US/annum).

The finding that high proportion of the respondents was educated is an indication of the premium placed on education in the States. It could imply that many unemployed youths were resident which could make the communities vulnerable to violent conflicts. However, the 26% without formal education are likely to be mostly the respondents who were above 50years old. The high percentage of older males and females is an indication that adults populated the communities. Female represented households had less education and smaller farm sizes. The high proportions of older, indigenous people and those engaged in agriculture which characterize rural communities is consistent with Agbarevo & Obinne (2015). The high level of association membership by both genders is an indication that the people cherish social relationship which could be of advantage in development efforts.

**Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of respondents by gender**

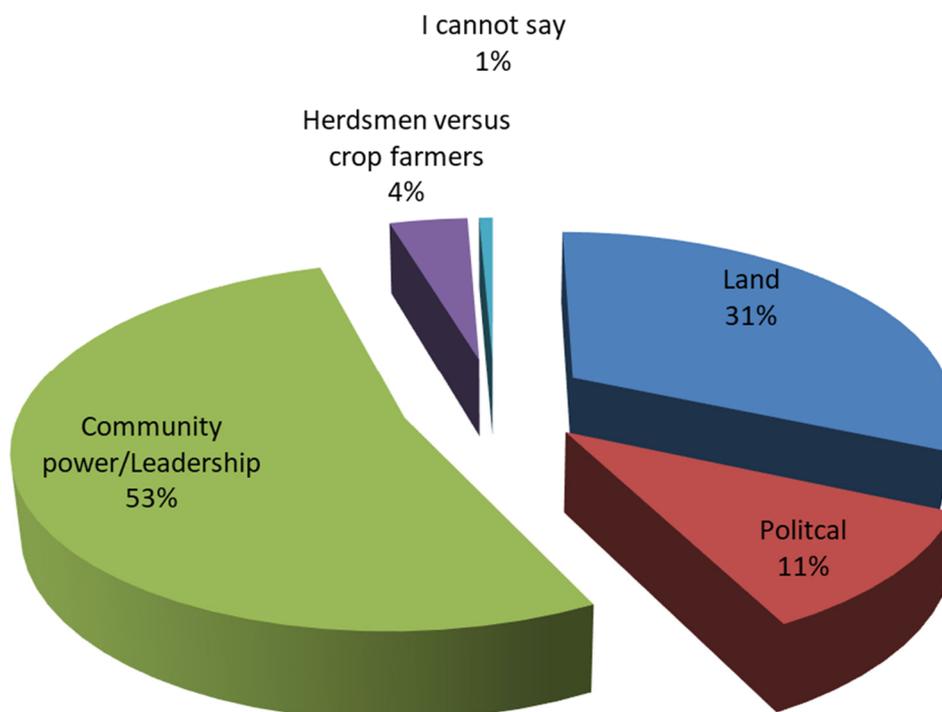
Variables	Male		Female		Pooled		Mean	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Marital Status	Single	46	13.3	26	7.5	72	20.7	
	Married	155	44.7	83	23.9	238	68.6	
	Divorced	12	3.5	25	7.2	37	10.7	
Age (years)	≤ 20	1	.3	3	.9	4	1.2	45.8
	21 – 30	37	10.7	29	8.4	66	19.0	
	31 – 40	41	11.8	8	2.3	49	14.1	
	41 – 50	32	9.2	17	4.9	49	14.1	
	51 – 60	48	13.8	46	13.3	94	27.1	
	≥61	54	15.6	31	8.9	85	24.5	
Family size (No. persons)	≤4	34	9.8	24	7.0	58	16.7	7
	5 - 9	128	36.9	71	20.5	199	57.4	
	10 - 14	42	12.1	11	3.2	53	15.3	
	≥15	36	10.4	1	.3	40	11.5	
Level of Education	No formal education	56	16.1	28	8.1	84	24.2	
	Primary	81	23.3	55	15.9	136	39.2	
	Secondary	39	11.2	32	9.2	71	20.5	
	Tertiary	40	11.5	16	4.6	56	16.1	
Association membership	None	59	17.0	31	8.9	90	25.9	3
	1 - 3	138	39.8	94	27.1	232	66.9	
	≥4	16	4.6	9	2.6	25	7.2	
Indigenous	Indigenous	147	42.4	101	29.1	248	71.5	
	Settler	66	19.0	33	9.5	99	28.5	
Farm size (ha)	≤1	45	23.3	22	11.4	67	34.7	2.09
	2 - 3	57	29.5	37	19.2	94	48.7	
	4 - 5	20	10.4	8	4.1	28	14.5	
	≥6	2	1.0	2	1.0	4	2.1	
Agricultural related occupation	Yes	146	42.1	80	23.1	226	65.1	
	No	67	19.3	53	15.3	121	34.9	
How long in primary occupation (years)	≤ 5	6	1.7	14	4.0	20	5.7	18.4
	6 - 10	36	10.4	13	3.7	49	14.1	
	11 - 15	21	6.1	7	2.0	28	8.1	
	16 - 20	27	7.8	15	4.3	42	12.1	
	21 - 25	53	15.3	36	10.4	89	25.6	
	>25	70	20.2	49	14.1	119	34.3	
Total Income per annum (N)	≤200,000	111	32.0	83	23.9	194	55.9	N299,700
	200,001-400,000	42	12.1	32	9.2	74	21.3	
	400,000-600,000	33	9.5	11	3.2	44	12.7	
	>600,000	27	7.8	8	2.3	35	10.1	

### **Causes of violent communal conflict**

Figure 2 shows that major causes of conflict were community power/leadership tussle (53%), followed by land disputes (31%), political reasons (11%) and herdsmen versus crop farmers (4%), while 1% was undecided. The findings agree with Ekong (2005) that conflicts may arise where there are differences in opinion between group leaders or group quarrels. Community leadership or power tussles could arise from the need to preserve leadership positions where they are attained through family inheritance. This could explain the situation at Arigidi communities as reported in Vanguard (2011). Where leadership position is acquired and not inherited, the qualities possessed by such leaders come into play. Both ways, people tend to hold on to power because leaders are usually honoured and celebrated in Africa and Nigeria. Leadership positions also attract economic benefits as some traditional rulers are on government payroll and community support. They also have more access to community resources such as land and labour. Perpetuation of leaders in positions is likely to occur. This could arise from greed, corruption and selfishness which is supported by Kett & Rowson (2007). Land dispute as a major cause of violent conflict could have been indicated more in the Edo communities as confirmed by Western Post (2014). Land requirements, agriculture related livelihoods and shelter will mount pressure on demand for land. The sale of land by individuals and families for financial benefits is a common occurrence, thus resulting in land and boundary disputes in the study area. Political violence, usually caused by inter and intra-party tensions and factions, was indicated by 11% of the

respondents. This manifests in political thuggery, involving mostly youth, and is attributable to high levels of unemployment and poverty. Herdsmen versus crop farmers conflicts are not widespread in the study area. The drivers of VCCs are linked to greed, poverty, competition for natural resources and inequalities as identified by Kett & Rowson (2007).

**Figure 2. Causes of violent communal conflicts**



#### ***Roles of females and males in household activities before and after VCC***

The graphs depicted in Figure 3 show the roles of male and female in key household activities before and after VCC. These roles down the graphs are provision of housing/shelter, care giving, fetching firewood, food preparation, fetching water, sweeping, watching clothes, clearing surrounding, health care, security, children upbringing, carrying out repairs and bread winning. The results show that some activities which were considered exclusively women's such as cooking, washing clothes, sweeping and care giving were also undertaken by men before and after a VCC experience. This is an indication that modern values are infiltrating the communities. Furthermore, females performed more of care giving, fetching water, sweeping, cooking, and washing clothes after VCC while men performed more in provision of security, carrying out repairs and bread winning/providing for the family after VCC. The findings suggest that female's contribution to household activities was enormous, an indication of being busier than men. Performance of some tasks by both genders such as provision of shelter, clearing the house/surrounding, health care, children upbringing, repair work and providing for the household went up after VCC. This suggests that damages might have been experienced which had to be fixed. The assertion of Kabeer (2010) that where changes in roles have been experienced, corresponding access and control of resources could not ascertained, could be validated or the communities.

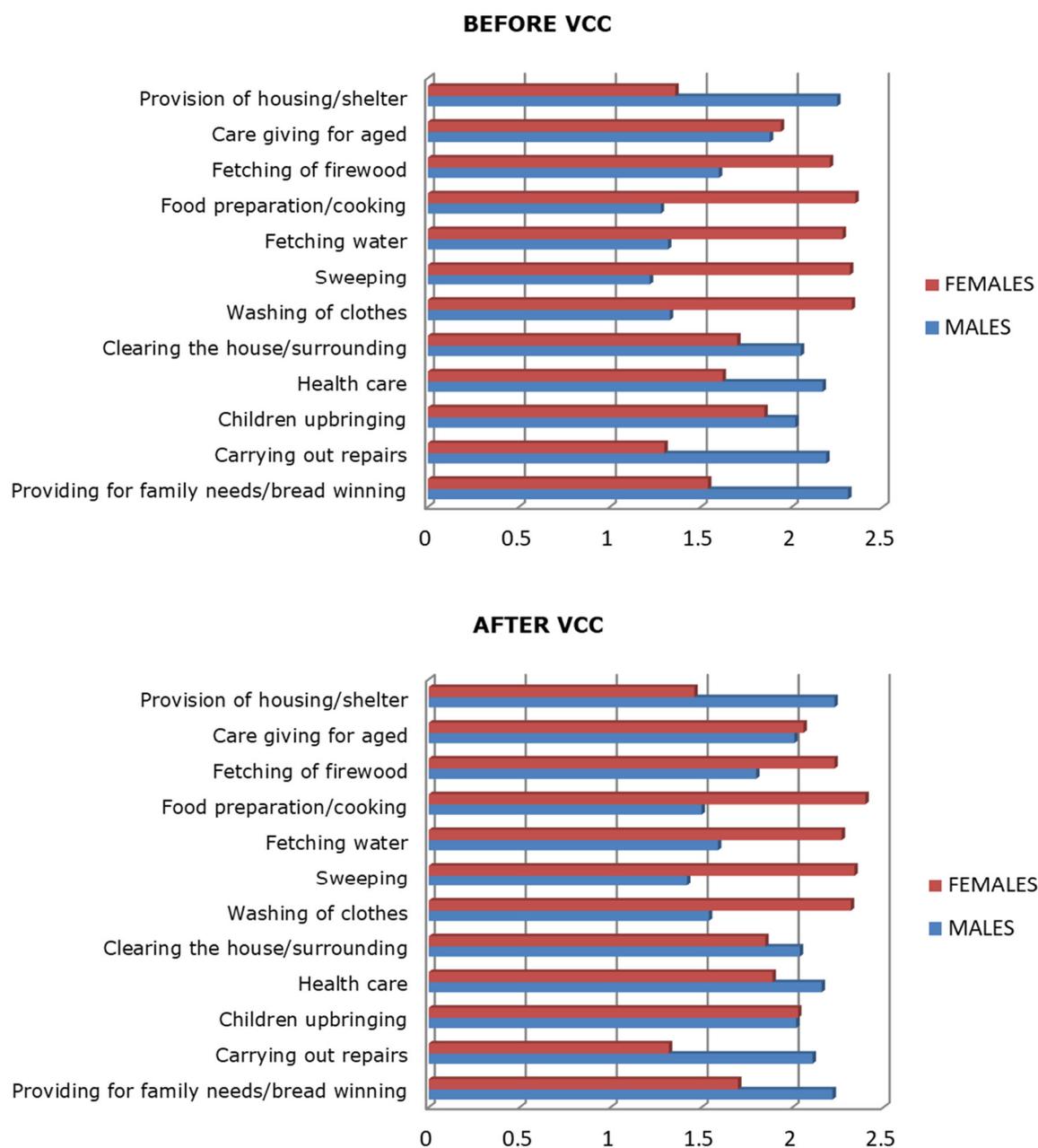
**Figure 3. Roles of female and male in household activities before and after VCC****Coping strategies mean scores**

Table 2 shows the coping strategies (CSs) adopted by the respondents. The CSs with the highest ratings of use for male and female respondents (mean  $\geq 2.00$ ) included: resignation to fate and praying to God (2.48 and 2.63), mobilize children out of community (2.01 and 2.17), sale of remaining farm produce and wares (2.04 and 2.17), resort to borrowing (2.21 and 2.05) and avoidance of costs like for health care (2.05 and 2.42). Coping strategies used by males only were sale of assets (2.34), while females coped with reduction of food ration (2.92), reduction in food quality (2.96), dependence on better off relatives/community members (2.08), diversification into gathering from the wild (2.48), and fled to relatives and friends in other communities (2.72). This is an indication that other communities suffered from disruption of activities in their domain because of VCC in the study area. Resignation to fate and praying to God agrees with the assertion of Ekong (2010) that in Nigerian communities, people are known to blame conflict on evil forces, which might require a spiritual solution. Hodgkinson & Stewart (1991) identified problem-focused

coping mechanisms like planning, suppression of competing activities and emotional coping such as acceptance, social support and turning to religion.

**Table 2. Coping strategies mean scores of the respondents**

Coping strategies	Male		Female	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Resign to fate and pray to God	2.48*	.768	2.63*	.597
Mobilize resources to send children out of the community/urban migration	2.01*	.711	2.17*	.710
Reduction of food ration	1.68	.748	2.92*	.677
Reduce quality of food	1.59	.686	2.92*	.576
Dependence on better off community members/relatives	1.71	.727	2.08*	.729
Sale of remaining farm produce/wares	2.04*	.839	2.17*	.845
Diversification of livelihood e.g. to gathering	1.47	.756	2.48*	.711
Resort to borrowing and buy essentials on credit	2.21*	.755	2.05*	.645
Avoid costs like health care, withdraw children from school	2.05*	.602	2.42*	.702
Adoption of technologies	1.40	.634	1.67	.754
Sale of assets	2.34*	.566	1.74	.671
Fled to friends and relatives in other communities	1.66	.714	2.72*	.636
Scavenge for food	1.44	.647	1.82	.793
Child labour	1.39	.414	1.02	.617
Theft	1.23	.604	1.28	.439
Prostitution	1.01	.414	1.27	.561
Aids: NGO, Government e.g NEMA, LG	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00

\*Mean  $\geq$  2.00=used

The findings suggest that the most common coping strategies adopted were non-erosive (left little or no permanent damage) and not production-oriented as they involved mainly the consumption of existing produce or asset disposal with little or no effort to increase production like technology adoption and value addition to improve the prevailing condition. Males mainly coped by using sale of assets like land, unlike females, probably because they have control over the assets. Females were found to use more coping strategies. This is an indication that they face several challenges due to VCC, hence they used several possible means to cope for survival which connotes resilience. Although females used several CSs, the coping strategies were non-erosive, that is they left little or no permanent damage, unlike erosive coping mechanisms like child labour and prostitution.

Coping by avoidance of costs like health care and withdrawal of children from schools, amount to mortgaging the future and increasing morbidity and mortality rates. Women as the care givers strongly indicated that they coped with reduction of food ration and food quality by making do with what was available, this suggests vulnerability and that there might be health and nutrition insecurity in VCC situations. This agrees with Kett & Rowson (2007) that there are health implications in violent conflicts. No aid or relief was obtained from government through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and NGOs which shows that the victims coped by themselves.

#### **Perceptive measures to VCC resolution**

Table 3 shows the perceptive resolution measures preferred by the respondents. All the resolution measures listed were perceived to be adequate for conflict resolution by both male and female respondents ( $\geq$ 2.50). This is an expression of a strong desire for peace by both male and female respondents and prospects of using a multi-prong approach to conflict resolution. The finding is consistent with Ekong (2010) that there is no specific formula for resolving conflict but some general procedures or approaches might be used singly or in combination. The higher scorings around VCC resolution for both male and female respectively included compensation of losses by government or non-governmental agencies (3.86, 3.92); prayer to God/spiritual solution (3.52, 3.68); enforcement of laws and personal rights (3.50, 3.64); discouragement of corruption, greed and selfishness (3.35, 3.60); third party reconciliation (2.98, 3.29); and awareness creation, information on the ills of violence (3.26, 3.61). The mean scores for females were relatively higher

than for males. This could infer that females were more interested in conflict resolution probably because they bear more burdens or are affected more by VCC. It could also mean that males either abrogated their responsibilities in times of crisis, do not have the necessary skills, or take on other roles during VCC e.g. fighting.

**Table 3. Perceptive measures for VCC resolution**

Measures	Male		Female	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
Enforcement of laws and personal rights	3.50*	.695	3.64*	.545
Courts action	3.18*	.864	3.36*	.752
Committee/Panel of Enquiry by government	3.07*	.704	3.32*	.673
Reconciliatory efforts by community members	3.33*	.709	3.33*	.720
Prayer to God/Spiritual solution	3.52*	.651	3.68*	.511
Mediation by traditional rulers	3.03*	.801	3.32*	.737
Compensation of losses by government or non-governmental agencies	3.86*	.414	3.92*	.473
Accommodation through compromise	2.68*	.759	3.04*	.746
Third party reconciliation efforts	2.83*	.666	3.06*	.620
Persuasion against segregation	2.98*	.766	3.29*	.726
Persuasion for toleration and Assimilation through negotiation	2.93*	.722	3.33*	.715
Discourage corruption/greed/selfishness	3.35*	.828	3.60*	.640
Mobilization for community action/development	3.11*	.725	3.15*	.946
Awareness creation, information on the ills of violence using variety of methods	3.26*	.722	3.61*	.626
Persuasion/campaign by change agents	2.87*	.765	3.35*	.791

\*Mean  $\geq$  2.50 = preferred

Enforcement of laws and personal rights/rule of law for justice which could be expected to be the most preferred conflict resolution measure, ranked third. This could mean that the people probably have no confidence in the police/law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. A vital issue could be that for communal setting, formal law enforcement is usually avoided as the saying goes that "people do not go to the police or court for redress and remain friends afterwards". This could have contributed to respondents' preferences for persuasive and reconciliatory measures to ensure lasting peace in the spirit of communal living. Although conflicting groups resorted to law enforcement and the judicial system eventually.

Both genders' preferences for compensation of losses and praying to God or spiritual solution will likely facilitate relief and possibly help to overlook damage and pain inflicted. Strong preferences for resolution through discouragement of corruption, greed and selfishness by male and females is an indication that members perceived them to be key drivers of conflicts. This agrees with Kett & Rowson (2007) that greed is a driver of violent conflicts. Persuasive measures against segregation, for toleration and assimilation by change agents and other third-party resolution measures were rated highly by both genders. Higher values were obtained for females which could mean that they were more favourably disposed to peace, probably because they feel the brunt more in conflict situations.

#### ***Difference between male and female respondents with respect to coping strategy usage in VCC***

Table 4 shows the result of t-test for mean difference between male and female respondents for usage of coping strategies. They differed significantly with respect to the extent of usage (derived from the sum of scores obtained) of coping strategies ( $t = 7.061$ ;  $p = .000$ ). Higher mean values for females is an indication that they adopted more coping strategies than the males. This could be related to maternal instinct, roles they play and additional burdens they bear in conflict situations. It could also be an indication of vulnerability on the part of the females, which is in line with WHO/EHA/EHTP (1999) that the more one is vulnerable, the less one has the capacity to cope, and the more one tends to adopt coping mechanisms in a disaster situation.

**Table 4. Test of difference between male and female respondents with respect to coping strategy usage in VCC**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Mean Diff.	t-value	p
Male	213	21.56	5.782	.396	6.19	7.061	.000
Female	134	27.75	5.211	.450			

## Conclusion

Violent communal conflicts (VCCs) resulted in slight changes in tasks performed by males and females in VCC periods, with females taking additional roles such as bread winning, while males performed some roles culturally tagged 'women's roles' like cleaning and care giving. Major drivers of conflict were community leadership tussles and land or boundary disputes. These were associated with corruption, greed, selfishness and poverty. The coping strategies highly used by both genders were generally not increasing their production or value adding to their livelihood but related to consuming existing products. Females used more coping strategies and were more likely to cope through resignation to fate and praying to God, avoidance of cost and reduction of food ration. Males on the other hand mainly coped with sale of assets and abrogating responsibilities. Both genders were interested in conflict resolution and highly preferred resolution measures included compensation and various persuasive or reconciliatory efforts. Females were implicated as vulnerable as they adopted more coping strategies than males and indicated stronger preferences for various resolution measures. There was a lull in livelihood activities as respondents coped with little or no effort to increase production. Based on the evidence of this study there is a strong case to consider adoption of individual, group efforts and a range of policy directions to militate against VCC and mitigate its effects. These could include:

1. Ensure that National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and NGOs should respond to man-made disasters like communal conflicts as much as it responds to natural disasters by providing relief and compensation to victims of VCC.
2. Put in place policy support for compensation of losses incurred, community peace-building and participatory conflict prevention and resolution.
3. Attempts should be made to engage victims in productive, income generating and livelihood enhancing activities through advancing loans in cash or kind to boost livelihood sustainability;
4. Community outreaches should be mounted and available communication channels used to appeal to members and enlighten them on the ills of violent conflicts.
5. Reconciliatory moves by government and community efforts by traditional and opinion leaders should be explored to resolve conflicts.

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