
BANDITRY AND ITS THREAT TO RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF FASKARI

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Abstract

The Study examined banditry and its threat to economic development of Faskari local government area of Katsina State. In the course of this study data was sourced from two major sources; Secondary and Primary Sources. The Secondary sources were from existing literature on Banditry and economic development while Interview method was adopted as the main primary source of data in this study to generate data from the selected key informants within the study area and also the State level. In addition, mixed method of analysis was adopted to present and analyze data based on the objectives of the study, within the theoretical framework of securitization theory. The Study concludes that in the study area banditry has become a serious problem that has affected the economic development of the area that render the people of the study area unemployed, jobless, and vulnerable to hunger and starvation. The activities of the bandits in the study area also led to the displacement of the residents, increase in abandoned farmland, closure of markets, loss of cattle and work bulls to the bandits, loss of lives and properties, increase in unemployment, setting houses, properties, and farms ablaze.

Keywords: Banditry, Economic Development, Insecurity, Agriculture, Faskari.

Introduction

The security challenges bedeviling Nigeria can be traced to the 1963 Civil War that nearly brought the country to its breakdown. This was a result of the importation of weapons in large quantities to contain the war. Some of these weapons find their way into the hand of criminals that began all sorts of criminality against the state and the citizens such as armed robbery, riots, and kidnapping. With the country's return to the democratic system of governance in 1999, the security challenges change its dimension to the Niger Delta militancy, the Boko-Haram insurgency, and the current banditry activities which have caused a lot of setbacks in both the rural and urban areas of the north-western region of Nigeria.

Security is the absence of threats to the peace, stability, national cohesion, and political and socio-economic objectives of a country (Igbuzor, 2011 & Oche, 2001). Security is also the ability to be secure and

free from both fear of physical, and psychological abuse, violence, persecution, or death and from wants such as food, health, and a good job (Asmau & Abdurashied, 2020). Insecurity is conceived variously as the absence of safety; the presence of danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and the lack of ability to carry out economic activities without any physical challenge or threat from groups or individual individuals. Economic development cannot be sustained without an enabling environment of peace and security. The business environment, small and medium-scale enterprises, and foreign direct investment in critical sectors are all negatively impacted by insecurity in Nigeria. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria still ranks low in socioeconomic indicators such as life expectancy, standard of living, health status, and literacy rate. Similarly, it ranks high in mortality rate, poverty rate, crime rate, and unemployment rate. Health, housing, transportation,

education, and recreation infrastructures are grossly inadequate and adversely affected by conflict and insecurity (Agri, 2020). Insecurity is the state of fear or anxiety stemming from concrete concrete or alleged lack of protection. It refers to lack of or inadequate freedom from danger (Beland, 2005).

Nigeria published its maiden National Security Strategy in 2014 and since then the security environment has continued to evolve, giving rise to emergent challenges, thus necessitating a review. While significant progress has been made on multiple fronts between 2014 and 2019, the nature of the security challenges facing Nigeria today is more complex than in the past (NSS, 2019). There has been an intensification of pastoralists-farmers conflicts in many states of the Federation. Banditry has escalated and become a major feature of the security environment. Similarly, there has been a significant upsurge in kidnapping and other crimes.

The criminal activities of bandits and kidnap gangs are the preeminent threats confronting us today. Their major activities include kidnapping and cattle rustling which are on the increase due to the high economic pay-off in terms of derivable financial benefits. They also thrive on the twin elements of fear and surprise and constitute a grave threat to personal security (NSS, 2019).

The pervasive banditry and its associated threats to security, which have enveloped the Northwest region of Nigeria, particularly, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, and Niger States, have become a worrisome national security issue of public concern (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). This has caused a lot of setbacks to the economic development of the region. Just as in the North-Eastern region, rural banditry has become one of the major problems bedeviling some Local government Areas of Katsina State. 8 out of the 34 local government areas in Katsina are now under

the bandit's control. These include; Batsari, Jibiya, Safana, Dan Musa, Dandume, Sabuwa, Kankara, and Faskari (Masari, 2020). The banditry activities in these areas have continued to affect the economic development of the state. The bandit groups, whose members were seen displaying automatic weapons, terrorizing herders' settlements, farms, villages, and highways with the mission of killing people, kidnapping, and pillaging cows (Olaniyan, 2018). The rate at which the bandit's activities are escalating is becoming as alarming as it is causing the death, and displacement of the peasants within the communities.

Despite trends that suggest entrenchment of democratic elections and peaceful regime change at both national and sub-national levels, the democratic institutions of parliament, the judiciary, political parties, and civil society have remained weak in tackling the situation of rural banditry in Faskari LGA. From the northern part of Faskari where it bordered Birnin Gwari, Kaduna State, and the western part where it bordered Tsafe in Zamfara State, and the south bordering Sabuwa LGA of Katsina state, all the communities are experiencing serious series of attacks from bandits, who almost operates freely. The notorious banditry attacks in the areas of Zamfara and Birnin Gwari in Kaduna State have spilled into Faskari LGA and threaten its economic development as members of the communities cannot carry out their economic activities and some have to negotiate with the bandits before they can have access to markets and other socio-economic activities.

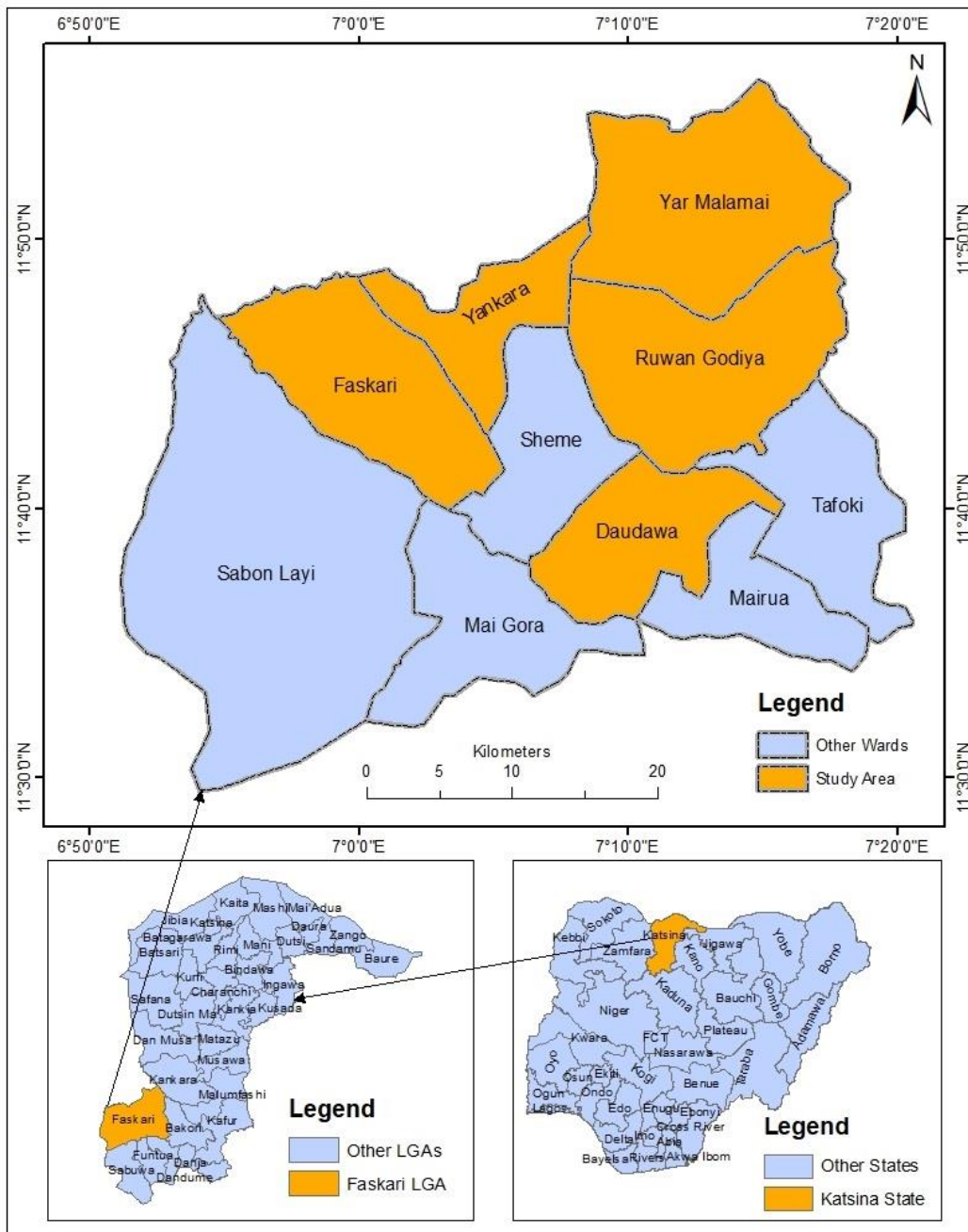
Historical Development of Faskari Local Government Area

Faskari origin came from famous Arab migrants Gido and Wari transients from Alkalawa (Gobir) to Zaria who came and settled among the Mafaskara (meaning the firewood choppers, people who were then

pagan practices). Faskarti town possibly dates back to 1778. It was later built into a more civilized community by one of the descendants of Kaura Kuren Gumaru, during the reign of Muhammadu Bello, the emir of Katsina from 1844 to 1886. The local government comprises two District areas, Faskari and Mairuwa Districts, along with many village areas. In the early stage of settlement in the area, the rulers came across hurdles, hardships, battles, and raid for slave capture and consequently they survive all due to the existence of great warriors. A nearly age who excelled in field battlefield. Thus, it paved the way for the formation of smaller formidable kingdoms which later on developed into villages and towns, among these places were Bilbis, Yarmalamai, Tsafe, Sauri, Zagami, Ruwan Godiya, Tafoki, Daudawa, Nasarawa, Yankara, Fankama, Maigora, Mechika, Sabon Layi, Birnin Kogo, and Faskari. All these were settlements that later on developed into what they are currently (Danyabani, 2014). The predominant ethnic groups are the Hausa and Fulani. Other ethnic groups found in the area include Nupe, Igbo, Yoruba, etc. Islam has been the major religion in the area with people enjoying peace and tranquility devoid of ethnic or religious tolerance. Furthermore, a great majority of the people

are settled cultivators and traders (Danyabani, 2014).

Faskari local government area is situated within Katsina State, Northwest Nigeria, and shares borders with Funtua, Tsafe, Birnin Gwari, and Sabuwa LGAs. Faskari was carved out of the Funtua local government area on the 15th of May 1989. The LGA falls under the northern –Guinea savannah zone and covers a total area of 1,750 square kilometers. The LGA has a tropical continental climate with an average temperature of 34 degrees centigrades (Babangida, 2005). One of the rivers flowing through Faskari territories is the Gauri River. The average humidity of the LGA is put at 20 percent (Babangida, 2005). Several minerals are found in the Faskari local government area and these include; nickel, magnetite, graphite, diamond, chromites, kaoline, iron-oxide, asbestos, potash, and quartz. Faskari LGA is also known for the cultivation of several crops such as cotton, soybeans, groundnut, and guinea corn. Trade also booms in the LGA with the area hosting several markets (Sheme Modern Market, Yan Kara Modern Market, and Faskari Central Market) with Sheme is the largest cattle market in the area, where a plethora of commodities are bought and sold (Babangida, 2005).



Source: GIS, Department of Geography and Environmental Management ABU (2022)

Other important economic activities in Faskari LGA include hunting, cattle rearing, and cloth weaving (Babangida, 2005). These markets serve as a link where foreign trade is carried out between Nigeria and other neighboring countries of Niger and Mali. This is because various cash and food products are transacted within these markets. Thus, they become a very potential avenue for international trade and

economic development. Some 52 towns and villages make up Faskari LGA and these include Mairuwa, Unguwa Ganye, Yankara, Sheme, Daudawa, Dakamawa, Kanon Haki, and others. As of the 2006 census, the population of Faskari LGA is put at 196,035 inhabitants with the majority of the areas populated by members of the Hausa and Fulani ethnic division division. The Fulfulde language is extensively

spoken in the area while Islam is the most practiced religion in the LGA (Babangida, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

Securitization theory emerges as a reaction to the traditional approaches to security in International Relations. The theory is a product of the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute which was coined by Ole Waever in 1993 (Waever, 1995). The end of the Cold War indicated that security was an essentially contested concept- a concept that generates debates that cannot be resolved by reference to empirical evidence because the concept contains a clear ideological or moral element and defies precise, generally accepted definition (Fierke, 2015: 35). However, the theory was propounded by Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde in 1998, in their book “*Security: A Framework of Analysis*”. Securitization Theory shows us that national security policy is not a natural given, but carefully designated by politicians and decision-makers. According to the theory, political issues are constituted as extreme security issues to be dealt with urgently when they have been labeled as ‘dangerous’, ‘menacing’, or ‘threatening’. ‘Alarming’, by a securitizing actor who has the social and institutional power to move the issue beyond politics. The theory asserts that issues are not essentially threatening in themselves, rather, it is by referring to them as ‘security’ issues that they become a security problem. Securitization theorists determined five sectors; the economic, the societal, the military, the political, and the environmental sector.

The main argument of securitization theory is that security is an (illocutionary) speech act that solely by uttering ‘security’ something is being done. ‘It is by labeling something a security issue that it becomes one (Wæver 2004: 13). By stating that a particular referent object is threatened in its existence, a securitizing actor claims a right

to extraordinary measures to ensure the referent object’s survival. Central to securitization theory is showing the rhetorical structure of decision-makers when framing an issue and attempting to convince the audience to lift the issue above politics. This is what we call a speech act- by saying the word, something is done, like betting, giving a promise, naming a ship’ (Buzan et al, 1998:26).

Within the context of this theory, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the situation of Rural Banditry can be synthesized into securitization theory which is expressed in violence. Based on the assumption, the peasant’s societies have been deliberately neglected, wrongly kept from their goal, and deprived of the necessities of life. Such as access to markets, farms, quality education, health services, infrastructure, and a host of other needed services that were not provided, about this study, the people of Faskari (Audience) have agreed and accepted banditry to be a serious security issue that serves as a threat to their lives, property, and their well-being which requires the securitizing actor (State) to intervene and handle the incidence as a serious security matter. Also, going by the assertion of the theory, the rural dwellers of Faskari here are the ones that are expected to tell better the situation on the ground. Information given by the people of the affected communities is what determined the level of the incidence of banditry in the area. As captured from the statement of Waever (2015) “securitization theory was built to protect politics against the disproportionate power of the State by placing the success and failure of securitization in the hands of the audience, rather than in the securitizing actor” (Waever, 2015).

The magnitude of Banditry in Faskari Local Government Area

The northwestern region of Nigeria encompasses seven states namely Kano,

Jigawa, Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kebbi. Five of these states, which are Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, and Sokoto have been mostly affected by the activities of bandits, with Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara recording the highest toll (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021). It is, however, pertinent to note that the incidences of banditry are not limited to northwestern Nigeria. It is also prevalent in some parts of the north-central region, in states like Niger, Nasarawa, Benue, and Plateau which are equally regarded as hotbeds (Kuna & Jibrin 2016). Since 2015, rural banditry in Nigeria has been on the rise (Abbass, 2014).

There is no gainsaying the fact that banditry poses a serious challenge not only to the security of Northwest states but to the country at large given its ever-increasing impacts and implications (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021). The level at which armed bandits operate within the northwest region calls for attention by both the State and Federal governments, more especially, since the latter controls the state security apparatuses. This complex situation of social violence and insecurity in the affected states had been on for almost a decade now (Okoli & Ogayi, 2018). The increasing attacks of bandit groups have led to the destruction of lives and properties, displacement of people from their communities; and a growing number of widows and orphans, who now reside in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps following the continued attacks of armed bandits on both farming and pastoral communities across different areas of the states (Okoli & Ochim, 2016; Mustapha, 2019).

Banditry is a violent situation unleashed on rural communities which are organized armed violence through plunder, extortions, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, raping of women and children, village raids and setting them ablaze, terrorism, illegal mining, the rustling of cattle, and murder as a means of fluid occupation by criminals.

Bandits today can: (i) strain government capacity by overwhelming police and legal systems through sheer audacity, violence, and numbers; (ii) challenge the legitimacy of the state; (iii) act as surrogate or alternative governments; (iv) dominate the informal economic sector, establishing a small business and using violence and coercion to compete with legitimate business while avoiding taxes and co-opting government regulators; and (v) infiltrate police and nongovernmental organizations to further their goals and in so doing, demonstrate latent political aims (Sullivan, 2012). Bandit operations have negatively affected the economic development of Nigeria, most especially in agricultural productivity as farms and grazing land have been destroyed or access to them denied as a result of the presence of bandits in those areas.

The bandits are as sophisticated as they no longer use knives, cutlass, and sticks as normal weapons used by farmers-herders conflict. As new techniques, the bandit now uses; (a) more powerful and sophisticated weapons to carry out their attacks, (b) use of roadblocks, (c) move into towns and homes of kidnap victims, (d) use to forcefully acquire goods and commodities (e) use to hold human beings for ransom, (f) cattle rustling, (g) operate in groups under one or more leaders, (h) ambush, (i) attacking soft target of unarmed villagers, (j) guerrilla warfare, (k) using motorbikes, (l) using women in carrying out attacks, etc.

Banditry impacts negatively on occupational groups differently, with farmers, herders, and traders suffering the most in communities affected. Farmers in Faskari Local Government also fall under their threat. In most affected communities of Faskari, farming as the major economic activity is disrupted for several farming cycles. Farmers suffer the most, as their wealth is tied to their farms; they depend upon farms for survival. In many cases, the rural farmers in Faskari are terrorized and

prevented from going to their farms by bandits who hide in the forest and behind the rocks. They render the rural communities and their primary occupation vulnerable through banditry activities.

Going by the statement of respondents, the incidence of rural banditry that is bedeviling the rural communities is taking another dimension. “Previously the bandits employ a strategic approach in attacking their targets such as guerrilla warfare, but now they attack at will, in broad daylight, without fear of security since they already know that the presence of security is limited in the rural communities” (Interview, 5th November 2021). This also corresponds to the assertion of another informant (Na Inna Ruwan Godiya, 2021) who asserts that: “we have abandoned our farms; even the ones that we were able to cultivate the bandits warn us not to even attempt to near them for harvesting. As it is now, they send a message to our ward head that if we want to harvest our farm produce, we must gather some money and send it to them. And they now knew that we don’t have any money to give them. They demanded two million naira from us before we can harvest beans. After that, they will tell us how much to pay for the next harvest such as millet and others” (Interview, 5th November 2021). This is to say the incidence of banditry in Faskari has become a horrific and intensified situation that has almost brought the economic development of the local government area to a standstill.

Dominant Economic Activity in Faskari Local Government Area

Economic development cannot be sustained without an enabling environment of peace and security. The business environment, small and medium-scale and enterprises, and foreign direct investment in critical sectors are all negatively impacted by insecurity in Nigeria. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria still ranks low in socioeconomic indicators such as life

expectancy, standard of living, health status, and literacy rate. Similarly, it ranks high in mortality rate, poverty rate, crime rate, and unemployment rate. Health, housing, transportation, education, and recreation infrastructures are grossly inadequate and adversely affected by conflict and insecurity.

Even though the people of Faskari local government area engage in other economic activities such as hunting, transportation, and trading, agricultural activities remain the dominant occupation of the people of this area. The dominance of agriculture in the Nigerian economy could be seen from its contributions. Not only was agriculture able to cater to 95 percent of the food needs of Nigerians, but it also contributed 64.1 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employed over 70 percent of the Nigerian population (Paul, 2015). Additionally, at that point, the export of agricultural products accounted for 80 percent of the country’s foreign exchange earnings and 50 percent of government revenue (Okotie, 2018, cited in Agaptus et al, 2019).

Agriculture as the root of rural development and the most dependable source of livelihood in Faskari LGA, and Katsina state at large has been the major provider of employment to the peasants. Without developing the rural areas, agricultural development is almost impossible to achieve. Agriculture serves as the most important factor that drives rural development. This sector has also been the major source of revenue to the local government, State, and Nigeria at large before the exploration of oil and its marketization in the global oil market. Agriculture is a central theme of rural development. World Bank (1987) defined rural development as, “a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of the specific group of people – the rural Poor (World Bank, 1987).

Faskari as an agrarian society has been one of the most agricultural productive local governments in Katsina State. Almost all the major food crops are produced in commercial quantities in Faskari. Maize sorghum, rice, beans, soybeans and vegetables are largely cultivated and produced in Faskari local government. The local government has also benefited from a lot of policies and programs on agricultural development from the State to the Federal level. Katsina state tries by implementing some policies and strategies for improving the quality of farming (agriculture) generally within the state. Among the effort includes the policies designed by the federal government such as Operation Feed the Nation Program (OFNP); the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA); the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP); the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI); and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (Blench, 2004). The intention is to make rural people's participation in agriculture more lucrative and resource-sustainable for today and future generation (Akpan, 2012). In Faskari LGA, agriculture is the single economic activity that provides 80% of the population with employment. Garba Daudawa (interview, 2021) from Daudawa Ward, who stated that:

Agriculture is the mainstay of the people around this area. If there is no agriculture all the people in this area could have moved away, because that is what they learn, what they know as far back as 1900 (Interview, 5th November 2021).

This is in line with the opinion of USAID (2009), Tersoo (2013:21), Dim & Ezenekwe, (2013:61) making a comparison of the oil and agricultural sector, which both use Nigeria as an example:

A 5% growth coming primarily from the oil sector would have a much lesser impact on

the poverty level compared to the same 5% which comes primarily from the agricultural sector. This is because the agricultural sector is a major employer of a larger proportion of the Nigerian population (USAID, (2009:3), Tersoo, (2013:29), Dim & Ezenekwe, 2013:77)

Similarly, Dan Inna Ruwan Godiya (interview, 12th November 2021) asserted: "both the youths and elders of this community have farming as the only occupation. Even if you see someone doing any petty business, it is from farming that he relies on. In areas of farming, we produce a lot, of millet, sorghum, maize, bean, and soybean. We have no occupation better than farming. We depend on agriculture. There is no business better than farming in this community. We entirely depend on our farms for survival. If you know anybody here, he is known as a farmer. All our worth is from agriculture. Even if you have a shop, the moment there are no agricultural activities, the business collapse".

This is in line with the views of Anyanwu, (1997:5) who asserts that agriculture is considered as the only fulcrum of civilization; hence, it is regarded as the only natural wealth. It is the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the material of our homes, the garden around and to a large extent, the determinant of our traditions and values" (Anyanwu, 1997:7). Commenting further on the role of agriculture on economic development Masari (2019) comment that "We share the conviction that our long-term security and prosperity as a people depend solely on how much we invest to develop our agricultural sector. We are of the belief that agriculture has the potential and the capacity not just to lift our people from poverty, but to also help strengthen our IGR" (Masari, 2019:47). This is in agreement with the opinion of Abayomi, (1997) who opined that: 'economic growth is determined to some very significant extent, by agricultural

development, and as a result, stagnation in agriculture is the accounts for poor economic performance, while rising agricultural productivity has been the most important concomitant of successful industrialization” (Abayomi, 1997).

With the contemporary security challenges confronting Faskari Local Government, economic activities have been brought to a stagnant state, as a lot of farmers and traders can no longer have access to their farmland and market to carry out their farming activities. As opined by Jibrin (2017) “Insecurity in Nigeria has created a massive nutrition crisis in the country, as more farmers are unable to safely access their farms. The result is hunger and malnutrition. Very many of our children are wasting and suffering from stunted growth. The right of all Nigerians to nutritious food must remain a national priority” (Jibrin, 2017:43).

Conclusion

In conclusion, banditry which started with cattle rustling and attacks on marketers has transformed into an economically base form of criminality incorporating into it kidnapping, arson, rape, armed robbery, killing innocent citizens and other forms of criminality. The incidence has succeeded in becoming an obstacle to economic development and has caused the destruction of many communities in the rural area of Faskari and other flashpoint local government areas in Katsina State such as; Batsari, Jibiya, Safana, Dan Musa, Kankara, Sabuwa, and Dandume, with Faskari recording the highest toll. This situation has led to decrease in economic productivity in terms of agriculture and other commercial activities; it also caused the displacement of thousands of residents of Faskari including women, children, and able men to engage in street begging for survival. The situation has increased the high rate of poverty and unemployment as the majority of the people

of the area have agriculture as their major occupation.

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