



# Gender perspective to effects of violent communal conflicts on selected rural communities in Edo and Ondo States, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Rural dwellers cherish social relationships and are passionately engaged in such interactions even as they carry out agricultural practices on which they depend for livelihood. The situation can readily be jeopardized by conflicts. Violent communal conflict (VCC) is usually unpredictable, could retard development, perpetuate poverty and household food nutrition and health, insecurities, and widen gender inequalities. Individuals and groups, including gender categories are usually affected differently irrespective of the causes of VCC. Empirical data on causes and effects of VCC on gender categories will be valuable to inform individual, community and policy decisions.

This study assessed gender perspective to effects of violent communal conflicts on selected rural communities in Edo and Ondo States of Nigeria. Specifically it by gender; described the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents; ascertained gender roles in key household activities; identified causes and severity of VCCs experienced; and examined the effects of VCC on social and livelihood activities; ascertained the coping/survival strategies used; and identified perceptive solutions to conflict.

A two-stage sampling procedure was adopted; firstly the purposive selection of three communities that experienced VCC within 2010-2014 in each State and secondly, the random selection of sixty (60) households / respondents per community to give a total of 360 respondents. Data were collected using structured questionnaire while focus group discussion (FGD) and key informants were used to triangulate information. Data analysis was by descriptive and inferential statistics.

The study revealed that male youth constituted 20.7%, adult males (40.6%), female youth (10.4%) and adult females (28.2%) that majority of the respondents were males (61.4%), married (68.6%), and with a mean age of 45.8 years. About 24.5% had no formal education, 71.5% were indigenes and family size was 5-9 persons. About 67.7% held two leadership positions, with 63.1% engaged in agricultural enterprises in a mean farm size of 2.09 ha. It was found that VCCs were mostly caused by power/leadership tussle (65.7%). Gender roles slightly changed with increase in activities of females. Gender categories differed significantly with respect to effect of VCC on social relations ( $F=9.743$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and livelihood ( $F=13.705$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Wilcoxon signed-rank test shows that the difference before and after conflict is statistically significant for bread winning ( $z=-9.603$ ), ownership of land ( $z=-9.368$ ), use of land ( $z=-7.673$ ) and use of credit ( $z=-7.802$ ).

The VCC adversely affected gender categories differently but more severe on the females. Bread winning and agricultural indicators such as credit access, land ownership and use were negatively affected after VCC. Appropriate policy support for compensation, peace-building and conflict prevention are recommended.

**Keywords:** Communal conflicts, socio-economic variables, gender categories

## PAPER

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Communal connotes shared social interaction which entails interpersonal contact, reciprocal response and an inner adjustment of behavior 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. In conflicts, security and livelihood activities are disrupted and high level of poverty, food and nutrition insecurities and communal living and individuals could be affected.

Gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. It is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them, (USAID, 2007). 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 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, 2010).

Bolarinwa, Abdulsalam-Saghir and Oyekunle (2013) in Nigeria, found adverse impact of conflicts on farmers' livelihood (crops, domesticated and wild life animals), lost productive land. In another study, Bolarinwa, et al.,(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 since 1980, has reached endemic proportions. He suggested the need for self-appraisal, correcting the inherited primordial, religious and cultural, and colonial structures. Nwonu, et al., (2013) found that both the Boko Haram crisis and the Niger Delta crisis have adverse impact on the country's international image and tourism development, consequently on youths' unemployment rate.

### 1.2 Statement of Problem

Conflicts are antagonistic social interactions and have been of frequent occurrence globally and particularly Nigeria in recent times. It is necessary to provide evidence and understanding of indicators involved in communal conflicts at micro level (Bruck and Justino, 2013) to improve academic research on the issues to better inform policy and interventions. Edo and Ondo States recorded various VCCs which disrupted communal life particularly because of the rural sector's dependence on agriculture and other primary occupations. Conflict could affect the gender groups differently due to varying roles, opportunities, resources, empowerment/capabilities and barriers the society ascribes to the positions occupied by individuals.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study assessed gender perspective to effects of violent communal conflicts on selected rural communities in Edo and Ondo States, Nigeria. Specifically it by gender;

1. described the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents;
2. identified causes and severity of VCCs experienced;
3. ascertained gender roles in key household activities before and after VCC;
4. examined the effects of VCC social and livelihood activities;

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Study Area

This study was conducted in Edo and Ondo States located at the south western agro-ecological zone of Nigeria. Edo State has an area of 6,873 square miles, 6° 30'N 6°E as its coordinates and an estimated population of over 3,497,502. Ondo State is made up of 18 local government areas. The state lies between longitude 4° 30' N and 6° East of the Greenwich meridian, 50° 45' and 80° 15' North of the Equator. It has a land area of 14,788.723 square kilometers (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, 2006).

Edo and Ondo States are made up of 18 Local Government Areas each. They have tropical climate characterized by two distinct conditions of wet and dry seasons. The people are mostly subsistence farmers, public servants, traders and artisans. Major crops produced are rubber, oil palm, cocoa, yam, cassava, maize, rice and plantain. There is also significant animal husbandry, fisheries and forestry activities.

### 2.2 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 are;

Edo-Egbaen, Okhoromi, Eghirhe communities, Western Post news July 18, 2014; December 31, 2014(<http://westernpostnigeria.com/boundarydisputeclaims-livesinedo>)

Second stage was the random selection of 60 households per community to give a total of 360 respondents. FGD was used in Edo State but key informants were involved in Ondo communities due to lingering court action in Arigidi communities. Vanguard News August 21, 2011 ([www.vanguardngr.com/2011/02/ondo-sets-up-commission-of-in...](http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/02/ondo-sets-up-commission-of-in...))

The pre-test was carried out in Okhoromi community which is not included in the study. Test-retest method showed reliability with  $r=0.893$ .

Fine tuned instrument content.

### 2.3 Data collection

Data were collected using structured questionnaire. Focus group discussion (FGD) involving four (4) focal groups (adult male, adult female, male and female youths) was used in Edo communities while key informants were used to complement the questionnaire in Ondo communities due to lingering hostilities. However, questionnaire from 13 respondents were incorrectly filled and so were excluded in the final data analyses.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as using SPSS.

### 2.6 Measurement of Variables

Gender roles/division of labour in households: level of involvement was measured using a 3point 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 (N)/household.

Severity of VCC indicator items-Actual occurrence/quantity of relevant items were obtained and categorized into 3pt scale while others were measured on a 3-point likert type scale of very serious=3, serious=2 and not serious=1 for 23items minimum=23, maximum=69

Perceived Effect on social and livelihood indicators- was measure on a 3-point scale for 15 items of social indicators to give scores; minimum=15 and maximum=45. Livelihood indicator items were 20 to give scores; minimum=20 and maximum=60.

Extent of usage of coping/survival strategies was measured on a 3point scale: regularly/highly used=3, occasionally/moderately used=2, not used=1;

Perceptive measures for VCC resolution- was measured on a 3point scale: regularly/highly used=3, occasionally/moderately used=2, not used=1

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

Table 1 shows the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Male youths constituted 20.7%, Adult males (40.6%), female youth (10.4%) and adult females (28.2%) that majority of the respondents were males (61.4%), married (68.6%), mean age was 45.8years with more over 50 years (51.6%), 24.5% had no formal education and reasonable proportion had tertiary education (35.5%), majority were indigenes (71.5%), family size of 5-9 persons (67.7%) held two leadership positions, engaged in agricultural enterprises (63.1%) and mean farm size of 2.99ha.

Findings show that males were more in rural communities. High proportion of educated respondents could imply that unemployed youths were resident. The findings also show that more of older male and female an indication that adults populate the communities. Female represented households had less education, farm size but engaged more in agriculture related enterprises.

### 3.2 Causes of Violent Communal Conflict

Table 2 shows that major cause of conflict was power/leadership tussle (89.6%) followed by land dispute (53.6%). The finding on power is in line with global trend whereby countries have been plunged into crises due to struggle for leadership. Land/boundary disputes affect major source of livelihood for most rural dwellers. Herdsmen versus crop farmers conflicts are not widespread.

### 3.3 Severity of conflicts

Table 3 shows minimum and maximum responses to the severity items. On the average, five persons died, 120 injured, 123 were displaced, and 28 lost their means of livelihood among other indicators. These are indications of adverse effect on the people.

Table 2: Causes of violent communal conflict

*Causes of VCC	Frequency	Percentage
Land	186	53.6
Political	64	18.4
Community power/Leadership	311	89.6
Herdsmen versus crop farmers	23	6.6
I can't say	4	1.2

\*Multiple responses

Table 3: Severity of conflicts

Indicators	No.	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean
Dead persons	28	2	12	151	5.39
Injured persons	27	5	100	559	120.70
People displaced	21	6	100	497	123.67
People rendered unemployed or lost means of livelihood	21	6	40	604	28.76
Students who dropped out of school	6	6	50	186	31.00
People rendered incapacitated	5	4	14	42	8.40
Houses burnt	26	6	50	319	12.27
Vehicles damaged burnt	23	6	33	277	12.04
Farms destroyed	9	1	20	54	6.00
Looting	17	1	40	161	9.47
Abduction	3	10	10	30	10.00
Other properties damaged	16	8	30	194	12.13
Agricultural produce lost	3	20	20	60	20.00
Land forfeited	17	10	25	257	15.12
Sexual abuse	4	10	15	45	11.25
Relocation	21	10	136	726	34.57
Temporary flee	22	1	132	1273	57.84
Gun shots injury	21	21	120	1671	79.57
Machetes and other weapon injury	23	1	50	488	21.22
Use of indigenous knowledge for warfare	22	1	40	612	27.82
Intervention of law enforcement agencies	18	1	25	402	22.33
Committee/tribunal	2	1	1	2	1.00
NEMA's intervention with relief materials	0				
Visit of government functionaries	3	1	5	7	2.33
Valid N (listwise)	0				

### 3.4 Gender Roles before and after

#### Roles of males before and after

Fig 1 shows male gender roles in key household activities before and after VCC. The results show that some activities which were considered exclusively women's were undertaken by men before and after VCC experience though at lower extent than female. These include fetching water, sweeping, cooking, and washing clothes. This is an indication of modern values infiltrating the communities. The performance of some of the roles changed/increased after VCC experience.

#### Roles of females before and after VCC

Fig 2 shows female gender roles in key household activities before and after VCC. The results show that some activities which were considered exclusively men's were undertaken by women before and after

Figure 1 - Roles of male before and after

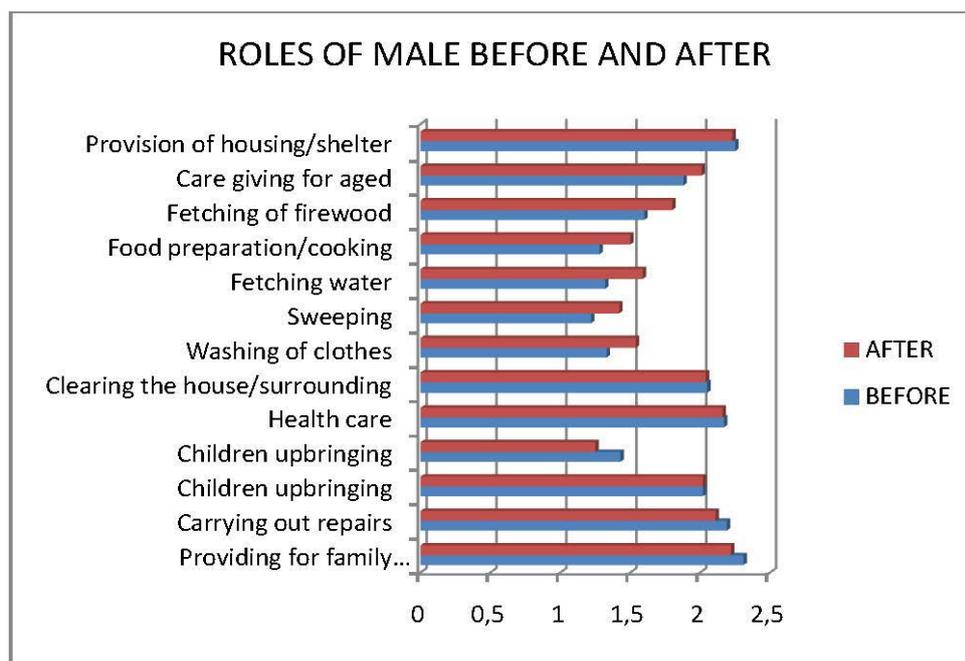
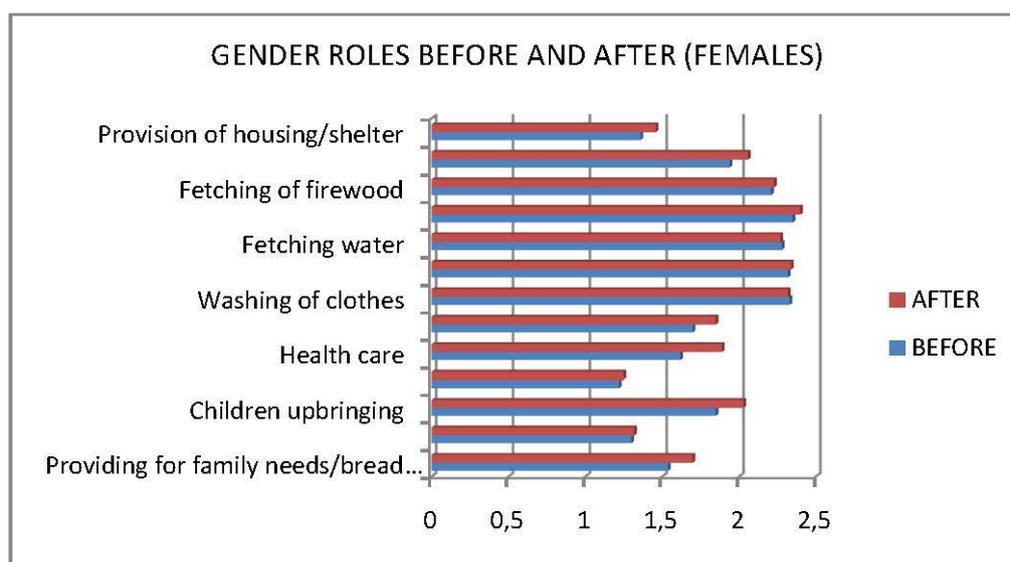


Figure 2 - Roles of female before and after



VCC experience. These include provision of shelter and bread winning. Women's performance of roles was high for all the roles before and after VCC experience. Higher performance after VCC was revealed for almost all and no decline in performance of any. This is an indication that females carried additional burdens after VCC. It could be that their spouses died or were maimed or relocated. The performance of some of the roles changed/increased after VCC experience.

### 3.5 Effects of Violent Conflicts

#### 3.5.1 Perceived effects of VCC on social activities by gender

Table 5a shows that respondents' social lives were affected in several ways as the result of VCC. The effects of items 1-3 were common to the gender categories: poor participation in community activities (  $X = 2.21-2.51$ ) highest for female youth, disruption of peace (2.56), social insecurity (  $X = 2.50$ ). In addition to these female youth perceived effect on disruption of worship (  $X = 2.22$ ), loss of human dignity/confidence (  $X = 2.89$ ), suspicion (  $X = 2.03$ ) especially for female youth.

Some positive social effects were perceived by the females; clearer definition of issues in contention (  $X = 2.42$ ), group cohesion and solidarity (  $X = 2.31$ ), alertness to members interests (  $X =$ ). The findings confirm the vulnerability of females which agrees with Kanono (2015) which found that women were

**Table 5a: Perceived effects of VCC on social activities by gender**

Social activity items	Male Youth		Male Adult		Female Youth		Female Adult	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Poor participation in community activities	2.21*	.768	2.29*	.798	2.53*	.810	2.46*	.676
Disruption of peace	2.08*	.666	2.33*	.751	2.56*	.735	2.47*	.661
Social insecurity/fear	2.01*	.682	2.03*	.643	2.50*	.737	2.30*	.661
Disruption of worship	1.46	.670	1.57	.647	2.22*	.898	1.74	.631
Marriage barrier	1.28	.587	1.28	.525	2.25*	.967	1.45	.628
Accommodation barrier	1.42	.622	1.52	.628	2.31*	.889	1.66	.657
Hostility outside the communities	1.32	.577	1.49	.628	2.17*	.878	1.84	.699
Loss of human dignity/confidence	1.51	.605	1.51	.543	2.89*	.785	1.92	.821
Mental problem	1.22	.562	1.28	.539	1.47	.810	1.29	.537
Inferiority complex	1.50	.712	1.55	.626	1.97	.696	1.87	.698
Suspicion	1.65	.632	1.71	.671	2.03*	.654	2.17*	.825
Clearer definition of issues in contention	1.75	.868	1.85	.801	2.42*	.770	2.02*	.760
Amicable resolution of issues	1.57	.668	1.70	.734	2.19*	.822	1.85	.737
Group cohesion and solidarity	1.58	.622	1.73	.736	2.31*	.624	1.93	.722
Alertness to members' interest to prevent future conflicts	1.68	.601	1.88	.824	2.14*	.723	2.26*	.803

\* $\geq 2.00$ =serious effect/seriously affected

vulnerable. The low indication of effects of social items by males could be that males might not want to exhibit weakness.

### 3.5.2 Perceived effects of VCC on livelihood activities by gender

Table 5b shows that respondents' livelihood were affected in several ways as the result of VCC.

**Table 5b: Perceived effects of VCC on livelihood activities by gender**

Livelihood indicator items	Male Youth		Male Adult		Female Youth		Female Adult	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Malnutrition	1.39	.545	1.40	.654	1.67	.478	1.78	.740
Reduction in life expectancy	1.38	.516	1.38	.516	2.69*	.467	2.68*	.667
Low productivity in livelihood activities	1.44	.528	2.71*	.702	1.81	.525	2.18*	.791
Poverty	2.40*	.573	2.31*	.729	2.64*	.467	2.72*	.753
Increased dependency	1.44	.625	1.67	.704	1.92	.500	1.87	.636
Reduction in feeding regime	1.56	.625	1.62	.604	2.07*	.478	1.85	.664
Wasting	1.65	.675	1.70	.715	2.65*	.478	1.95	.791
Irregular school system	2.69*	.642	2.65*	1.001	1.81	.624	1.48	.596
Relocation	1.64	.657	1.72	.730	2.00*	.586	2.24*	.774
Displacement from land	1.76	.796	1.65	.738	2.11*	.575	2.08*	.728
Rural urban migration	2.94	.748	1.82	.740	2.31*	.525	2.28*	.835
Dysfunctional social amenities	1.72	.655	1.62	.702	2.14*	.593	2.13*	.782
Poor nutrition	1.47	.649	1.58	.645	2.03*	.446	1.92	.769
Unemployment and restiveness	2.67*	.732	2.83*	.686	1.89	.465	2.11*	.675
Environmental hazards	1.61	.662	1.62	.651	1.72	.513	1.84	.725
Food insecurity	1.50	.531	2.67*	.724	2.75*	.500	2.87*	.631
Inability to educate children	1.51	.628	1.65	.643	1.72	.454	1.54	.654
Poor living standard	2.67*	.605	2.79*	.754	2.81*	.467	2.16*	.512
ill health	2.61	.662	1.57	.589	1.86	.543	1.71	.515
Low production	1.75*	.622	2.73*	.696	1.97	.560	2.14*	.618

\* $\geq 2.00$ =serious effect/seriously affected.

The females indicated more effects on livelihood activities than males. This is also an indication vulnerability of females than males. Males were affected mostly in areas.

### 3.6 Difference between gender categories with respect to the effects of VCC (ANOVA)

From Table 6a, there were significant differences between gender categories with respect to effect of social and livelihood activities with  $F=9.743$ ;  $p=0.000$  and  $F=13.705$ ;  $p=0.000$  respectively. The Post Hoc test shows that the perceived effects for male youth and male adult were similar, but different from the effect on female youth and female adult which were also similar.

### 3.7 Difference between selected socio-economic variables of respondents before and after VCC

Table 7 shows that on the first variable, providing for family needs, the result shows the effect after the event. It shows that 119 people had their situation turned negative as a result of the clash hence could perform less of this duty of providing for their family needs. Only one respondent had situation turned positive while 227

**Table 6a: Difference between gender categories with respect to the effects of VCC**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Social activities</b>	Between Groups	577.421	3	192.474	9.743	.000
	Within Groups	6775.841	343	19.755		
	Total	7353.262	346			
<b>Livelihood activities</b>	Between Groups	2490.073	3	830.024	13.705	.000
	Within Groups	20772.993	343	60.563		
	Total	23263.066	346			

**Table 6b: Post Hoc Tests**

Gender	Perceived effects on social activities	Perceived effects on livelihood activities
Male youth	23.69 <sup>a</sup>	28.20 <sup>a</sup>
Male adult	24.22 <sup>a</sup>	31.33 <sup>a</sup>
Female youth	29.49 <sup>b</sup>	38.36 <sup>b</sup>
Female adult	30.06 <sup>b</sup>	38.39 <sup>b</sup>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

respondents' situation was not changed after the incident. However, Wilcoxon signed-rank test shows that the difference after the conflict is statistically significant,  $z = -9.603b$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ . The same goes for all other

**Table 7: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test**

	Providing for family/bread winning	Ownership of land - Ownership of land	Use of land - Use of land	Use of credit/money - Use of credit/money
Z	-9.603 <sup>b</sup>	-9.368 <sup>b</sup>	-7.673 <sup>b</sup>	-7.802 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Providing for family needs/bread winning - Providing for family needs/bread winning	Negative Ranks	119 <sup>a</sup>	60.29	7174.00
	Positive Ranks	1 <sup>b</sup>	86.00	86.00
	Ties	227 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	347		
Ownership of land - Ownership of land	Negative Ranks	117 <sup>m</sup>	66.04	7726.50
	Positive Ranks	9 <sup>n</sup>	30.50	274.50
	Ties	221 <sup>o</sup>		
	Total	347		
Use of land - Use of land	Negative Ranks	90 <sup>p</sup>	56.75	5107.50
	Positive Ranks	15 <sup>q</sup>	30.50	457.50
	Ties	242 <sup>r</sup>		
	Total	347		
Use of labour - Use of labour	Negative Ranks	85 <sup>s</sup>	55.20	4692.00
	Positive Ranks	17 <sup>t</sup>	33.00	561.00
	Ties	245 <sup>u</sup>		
	Total	347		
Use of credit/money - Use of credit/money	Negative Ranks	100 <sup>v</sup>	66.04	6603.50
	Positive Ranks	21 <sup>w</sup>	37.02	777.50
	Ties	226 <sup>ax</sup>		
	Total	347		

variables: ownership of land, use of land, use of labour and use of credit. The findings are indications that those engaged in agriculture related enterprises were adversely affected by VCC.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Violent communal conflicts affected social relations and livelihood activities of the respondents. The effects were different from one gender category to another. Agriculture related variables were adversely affected by VCC. The female youth and adult felt the brunt more.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Community outreaches should be mounted and available communication channels used to appeal to members and enlighten on ills of violent conflicts.
2. Appropriate policy support for compensation, peace-building and participatory conflict prevention and resolution are recommended.

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