

Farmers/Ijaw clashes: Activist sues for peace

From **Ighomuaye Lucky**, Benin

HUMAN Rights activist and National Coordinator of Look Green Care Foundation (LGCF), Nigeria, Chief Sunny Ajele, has called for a lasting solution to the incessant clashes in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State, warning that the recent clash between the cocoa farmers and the Ijaw communities in the LGA could cripple economic activities in the state.

Ajele who made the call while speaking with journalists in Benin, emphasised that the continued violence could lead to devastating consequences in the affected communities and the state at large, recalling that the local farmers might not be able to access their farm

produce if the crisis is allowed to fester.

Recall that the cocoa farmers and inhabitants of the Gbolemotin community in recent weeks have been engrossed in communal crises that have reportedly left about 20 people dead and several people injured.

Speaking on what triggered the recent crisis, Ajele said that the crisis is an age-long one which started when the cocoa farmers grew in numbers and refused to pay royalties as they were accused of encroachment.

Ajele said that it was learnt that because of the poor access to most farm settlements, inhabitants would have to go through any of the farm lands to get to their destinations.

He said that most of the Ijaw inhabitants in the Gbolemotin community using the farm roads were accused of steal-

ing their farm produce.

The activist who frowned that people had been subjected to abject hardship and slavery, urged the state government to prioritise finding a lasting resolution to the conflict, ensuring the safety and well-being of all citizens.

According to him, most of these violent attacks are avoidable if some government agencies saddled with such responsibilities were proactive.

Similarly, speaking on the issue of the National Park in the Udo community, now managed by private investors, he lamented how the government had allegedly ceded Okomu Ijaw farmlands to foreign investors without the consent or involvement of the original owners of the land, that is, Okomu Ijaw people, playing any role.