

SOUTH
EAST

VOICE

ENUGU

BY CHINENYEH OZOR

NSUKKA—ANXIETY and confusion now pervades Agu-Ukehe farm settlement area in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State following incessant cases of married women and young girls being robbed and raped by suspected Fulani herdsmen in the area.

South East Voice gathered that in the recent past, the Fulani herdsmen rape the women while working in their farmlands with impunity as reports to security agencies were not usually investigated.

Agu-Ukehe, is a farm settlement, where Ukehe farmers live in settlement predominantly with their families during the farming season for easy access to their farmlands.

South East Voice investigations revealed that over 30 farm settlers in the area have fallen victims of the atrocious act of the Fulani herdsmen. One of the victims who was allegedly gang-raped reportedly died after the incident.

Apart from rape and robbery, it was further learnt that the suspected cattle rearers destroy farmlands as well as burn farm houses among other criminal acts.

Irked by the reported ugly development at the Agu-Ukehe farm settlement, hundreds of members of the Catholic Women Organization, CWO, from the area took to the streets recently to protest what they described as threat to lives and property of the farmers.

The women who carried placards also, chanted sorrowful songs, denouncing the alleged criminal acts.

The CWO members led by their President, Prof. Lizzy Ngwu and the Parish Priest of St. Peter's Catholic Church, Ukehe also carried placards with various inscriptions condemning their "dehumanizing and traumatic experience in the hands of the Fulani herdsmen who rape, rob and destroy crops without hindrance."

The protesters said that they had written two letters to the traditional ruler of Agu-Ukehe, Igwe Emmanuel Aruah asking him to find a lasting solution to the problems adding however, that no action has been taken, hence they were compelled to take to the streets.

One of the women, Dr. Betty Agujiobi asked repeatedly why the Fulani herdsmen should be allowed to wander about bearing dangerous weapons, like AK47 rifles,



One of the victims of the Fulani herdsmen's brutality on hospital bed

Fulani herdsmen unleash mayhem in Enugu community

...Catholic women, others protest

with which they reportedly attack communities at will.

"Government should disarm these herdsmen because they use their weapons to rape our women and harass the men to submission," she said.

South East Voice gathered that the most agonising aspect of the atrocities in the area was that the herdsmen allegedly rape their victims in the presence of their husbands, hence both men and

women no longer go to their farm lands for the fear of possible attack.

The farm settlers do not go to farm on Eke and Afor days, while the cattle rearers cash on the days to invade and destroy

their farms.

Police authorities declined comments on the matter at Nsukka, saying that they were not allowed to talk to the press.

Nnewi-Amich-Umulolo-Okigwe Highway now death traps

BY NWABUEZE OKONKWO

ONITSHA—WITH the deplorable condition of the 34-kilometre federal road stretching from Nnewi/Amichi/Ekwulumili/Unubi/Uga in Anambra State to Akokwa/Arondizuogu and Umulolo/Okigwe in Imo States, observers would be compelled to conclude there are no elected representatives or political appointees in the affected communities.

Even some parastatals owned by both the federal and state governments along the abandoned federal road are not fairing better. As they were also

alleged to have been abandoned within the same period.

The road which is a short cut for commuters travelling from Anambra State to Imo or Abia and Ebonyi States by about 50 kilometres, if travelling to Port Harcourt in Rivers State.

However, as a result of the development, road users now go through Onitsha/Owerri/Aba/Port-Harcourt high way, a distance of over a 100 kilometres to get to their respective homes.

It was learnt that those travelling from other parts of Anambra State to Afikpo, Amasiri, Akaeze and Ishiagu in Ebonyi State or to Isuikwuato, Abiriba, Ohafia, Uzuakoli in Abia State who

should have gone through the same short road now go through other longer roads to get to their destination.

South East Voice gathered that the road had been in deplorable situation in the last 20 years. It was alleged that the road had also become so bad that armed robbers now operate freely and unchallenged as gullies occasioned by several years of neglect had made it impossible for motorists to go faster than between 15 and 20 kilometres per hour.

During a visit to the stretch of the road, some reliable sources told *South East Voice* that "money was budgeted for the

road yearly by the Federal Government but each year will come and pass without any thing to show for it."

About two years ago road users were jubilating when they saw an indigenous construction firm, Bulletin Nigeria Limited, grading the road, particularly the stretch from Arondizuogu to Obinetiti Junction and concluded that contract had at last been awarded for the Nnewi/Amichi/Ekwulumili/Unubi/Uga which is the Anambra section of the road to Akokwa/Arondizuogu/Obinetiti/Mbato/Umulolo Junction, in Imo State, but this was not to be.