

Mitigating Insecurity In Benue State Through Effective And Ingenious Leadership

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ABSTRACT: *This advocacy paper examined the persistent insecurity in Benue State, Nigeria, with a focus on the transformative potential of effective and ingenious leadership. Drawing on historical analysis, policy reviews, and leadership assessments, the study found that the region's enduring violence - primarily stemming from farmer-herder conflicts, ethnic tensions, and weak governance structures - has resulted in over 28,000 deaths and widespread socioeconomic destabilisation. The paper evaluated the leadership of Governor Hyacinth Alia, who assumed office on 29th May, 2023, as emblematic of a shift towards community-centered governance. His administration has undertaken people-focused initiatives including the payment of salary and pension arrears, promotion of inclusive governance, repositioning of the Benue State Civil Protection Guards and proposals for institutional reform such as the Ministry of Livestock. Despite these measures, insecurity remains entrenched, compounded by slow policy execution and limited trust in governmental responses. The paper advocated for a comprehensive security framework grounded in participatory governance, legislative reform, and non-violent community mechanisms such as local vigilante groups and community policing. It further emphasised that the legitimacy of leadership and timely justice delivery are vital to restoring public trust. While recognising the limitations of existing state interventions, the paper concluded that sustainable peace in Benue State demands a collaborative, grassroots-driven leadership strategy that balances innovation with pragmatic conflict resolution. The findings underscore the urgency of political will, institutional coherence, and civic inclusion in breaking cycles of violence and fostering lasting development.*

Keywords: Benue State, Insecurity, Transformative Leadership, Community Engagement, Good Governance, Conflict Resolution, Policy Reform, Non-violent Security Strategies

1.1 Background

Addressing insecurity in Benue State, Nigeria, has emerged as a critical concern marked by a complex interaction of historical grievances, economic difficulties, and social dynamics. The region has experienced ongoing violence, especially between farmers and herders, leading to the deaths of over 28,997 individuals and extensive property destruction, significantly affecting the population and intensifying poverty and food insecurity (Eluma, 2024; Gbaoron, 2025). The pressing necessity for proficient leadership and governance has surfaced as a pivotal topic in tackling these persistent crises, underscoring the importance of local engagement and inventive tactics to re-establish peace and stability.

Governor Hyacinth Alia, who took office on the 29th Mar, 2023 embodies a transition towards a more citizen-focused leadership approach designed to confront these difficulties directly (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024; Onov, 2024). His administration prioritises accountability, community involvement, and targeted developmental projects as essential elements of his governing framework. Despite these efforts, the state continues to face high levels of violence, mainly due to ongoing ethnic conflicts over land and resources, raising concerns about how well the government is handling the situation and the need for a coordinated approach among all groups involved in maintaining security (Daudu, 2024; Orsar & Orsar, 2025).

Significant controversies over the government's intended initiatives, such as the creation of the Ministry of Livestock and the sluggish execution of security protocols, have engendered scepticism among the public. Critics contend that the extended deadlines for these projects are insufficient considering the urgency of the circumstances, while demands for justice and accountability remain predominantly unanswered, continuing a cycle of violence and distrust within the communities. (Bureau For International Cooperation and Development, 2024; Gbaoron, 2025). The dynamics of political parties, especially the backing from the All Progressives Congress (APC), have shaped the leadership narrative, portraying Alia's administration as a transformative entity in the pursuit of security and stability in Benue State (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024; Labe, 2024).

Consequently, a comprehensive strategy that incorporates community involvement, legislative measures, and non-violent alternatives is crucial for effectively addressing insecurity. Proposed strategies include community policing, the formation of local vigilante groups, and enhanced infrastructure to promote collaboration between government entities and citizens, with the ultimate goal of addressing the underlying causes of conflict and establishing a sustainable peace framework in the region (European Union

Agency for Asylum, 2021; Vanguard, 2025). The future trajectory of Benue State relies on comprehensive solutions that emphasise local engagement and innovative strategies to improve safety and promote development; therefore, this advocacy paper aims to address these issues.

1.2 Historical Context

In order to comprehend the ongoing violence and its implications for the region, it is imperative to consider the profound historical, political, and economic dimensions of the conflict and insecurity in Benue State. For more than two decades, the region has been plagued by a persistent history of violence, particularly in agricultural centres. The recent attacks have resulted in a substantial loss of lives and have instilled dread within communities, further exacerbating an already dire situation that is characterised by poverty and insecurity (Gbaoron, 2025; Aver & Hellandendu, 2025).

Throughout history, the region has been affected by a variety of factors, such as adolescent unemployment, child trafficking, political grievances, and social and cultural tensions, all of which have contributed to the increase in insecurity. The development of Benue State has been significantly impeded by the widespread destruction of property and the loss of over 28,997 lives as a consequence of this multifaceted crisis (Bureau For International Cooperation and Development, 2024; Eluma, 2024). The necessity of effective governance and leadership has become increasingly apparent, as the current responses from authorities have frequently been criticised as insufficient or sluggish. Reports from commissions of inquiry are frequently disregarded, perpetuating a cycle of mistrust and violence, despite calls for justice and accountability (Eluma, 2024; Gbaoron, 2025).

The violence not only has an immediate human cost but also poses a substantial threat to Nigeria's food security, as it affects the livelihoods of numerous families in the region and agricultural production. The country's overall stability and well-being are profoundly affected by the agricultural sector's susceptibility to violence (Gbaoron, 2025; Aver & Hellandendu, 2025). The standard of living for numerous households in Benue State is undermined by this escalating insecurity, which not only impacts economic conditions but also results in increased destitution, hunger, and health issues (Bureau For International Cooperation and Development, 2024).

The present banditry experienced especially in the Sankera (Logo, Katsina Ala and Ukum LGAs) axis started as a mere use of force to win election wherein certain politicians empowered youths that will help them to win elections. It is alleged that these politicians armed those youths for this purpose but could not retrieve the arms after the elections. Apart from the inability to retrieve these arms, the politicians soon abandoned these armed youths and leaving them to their fate until the next election period and thereby leaving them with no other option but to use the arms to survive albeit illicitly. These youths grew so powerful and became lords in their communities and gradually spread across the entire Sankera region. No politician could win election if they failed to contact them for their support and this made them so powerful and gave them more money even to acquire more weapons. The prominence of these groups led to the emergence of Terwase Agwaza (aka Ghana) who was later murdered in what was and is still considered by his lieutenants as conspiracy and a betrayal. After the death of Ghana, these armed youths split into gangs with each having their leader and controlling a particular territory. They wield so much powers in their territory and this has been a pain to the region as farming activities has been abandoned completely and now some parents voluntarily give out their children who are trafficked to towns in Nigeria and abroad. These warlord (local bandits) and some traditional rulers also involve themselves in allocating land to herders for grazing. These herders claim to pay money to either the chiefs, to the warlords and/or to both the warlords and in collaboration to the chiefs to graze in their communities. Most times, these warlords in collusion with the herder bandits will go and shoot sporadically to scare residence to vacate the land and once this is done, the herders move in to graze uninterrupted (Har, 2025).

Additionally, the government's solutions, which include the ban of open grazing, and the establishment of a Ministry of Livestock and the proposed restriction of movement to mitigate violence, have been met with scepticism. Critics see the ban of open grazing and the insistence of ranching as too hasty where there are no ranches in place and where it will be completely impossible to outrightly sell land especially to non-natives for ranching. In light of the urgency of the situation, critics contend that the timeline for implementing these measures, which spans over ten years, is excessively long (Gbaoron, 2025). In order to alleviate insecurity in the region and restore harmony, it is evident that a more comprehensive and proactive approach is required, as leaders and community members underscore the importance of local involvement in resolving disputes and preventing violence (Aver & Hellandendu, 2025).

The Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranching Law of 2017 though have been criticized in some quarters especially as it pertains to the difficulty of acquiring a piece of land for ranching wherein the owner of the land must give consent which must be ratified by the chiefs and family heads and the likelihood of any of them refusing consent makes the activity too cumbersome and frustrating (Unzik, 2017). Despite the criticisms, the ban became necessary due to the influx of cattle in the Benue valley some genuinely been brought for grazing but others in the guise for some gun runners from the Sahel region of Libya, Mali, Burkina Faso etc who bring

in arms and ammunition to sale in Nigeria and using the animals to transport it through the bushes to avoid apprehension by security agencies if they are to be transported by road. Similarly, some of these animals are brought in for mining activities wherein the animals are used to remove the products from the mining tunnel and move it out through the bushes to Cameroun or to the Airstrip at Kashimbila to evade taxes and also hide their illicit activities. The owners of these animals who are heavily armed themselves are been used as mercenaries to create terror and scare away the original inhabitants and allow the miners who are mostly foreigners to live, settle in the areas and continue their mining activities without hindrance from the locals and will occasionally shoot, kill and maim the aborigines if they make efforts to return to their homesteads (Har, 2025).

2.1 Leadership in Benue State

2.2 Overview of Leadership Dynamics

Leadership in Benue State has been characterised by substantial obstacles, particularly in the presence of persistent insecurity and violence. The socio-political landscape has been influenced by the state's evolving governance, which has been shaped by a variety of leadership approaches. The emergence of leaders who prioritise sound governance has been perceived as a source of hope for the state's citizens in recent years (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024; Iorpev & Iorpev, 2025). Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Alia, the sixth civilian leader of Benue State and the current governor, has been acknowledged for his dedication to the well-being of the populace and his purposeful governance. A strong commitment to advancing the state's development has been demonstrated by his administration's emphasis on capacity development and the alignment of training initiatives with the government's agendas (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024; Onov, 2024). Efforts have been made to resolve historical issues, including the clearing of salary arrears that trace back to 2017, which has significantly restored the dignity of thousands of workers and their families under his leadership (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024).

The leadership approach of Alia could be characterised as people-centered, with a focus on the demands and aspirations of the citizens of Benue State. He has prioritised the input of communities and addressed local concerns by actively engaging with them (DailyTimesNGR, 2025). This approach is in stark contrast to previous governance models that may have prioritised political gain over community welfare. The governor's administration has been described as a model of effective governance, with a focus on transparency, accountability, and service to the public (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024; Labe, 2024).

Despite the advancements under Governor Alia's leadership, the state continues to grapple with high levels of violence stemming from conflicts between herders and farmers, as well as clashes among various ethnic groups over land ownership (Daudu, 2024). The need for honest, visionary leadership that can foster a climate of security and cooperation is critical for sustainable development. This has been highlighted as essential for reducing violence and enabling effective governance that prioritizes the welfare of the populace (Orsar & Orsar, 2025).

The narrative surrounding leadership in Benue State has been significantly influenced by political entities, particularly the All Progressives Congress (APC). The APC has characterised Governor Alia as a transformative leader who is establishing a new standard for governance in the region, a critical factor in nurturing trust in the political system and mitigating insecurity (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024). The significance of collaboration between political leadership and community requirements to improve the stability and development of the state is emphasised by the party's support.

Despite the overwhelming acceptance of Rev Fr Alia by the masses, his administration has come under harsh criticism by those who are better termed as the bigwigs who will rather see the money accrued to Benue are used for what he refer to as a “handout” (Alia, 2025) and this forms the latest cause of insecurity in Benue because these ‘bigwigs’ view this as a betrayal and disappointment to their trade. The consciousness of this threat call for deliberate efforts to mitigate insecurity occasioned partially by sponsorship.

2.3 Strategies for Mitigating Insecurity

2.3.1 Crime Prevention Strategies/Engagements: Engagement with local people is crucial for formulating effective security plans. Legislators and leaders must engage with community organisations to foster security and peace. This entails endorsing community-driven initiatives and cultivating collaborations with security services. The founding of support groups enables dissemination of information easier than before wherein people are easily contacted for any activity that will benefit them. (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2021; Vanguard, 2025).

Beside the engagement of the people through the support groups, communities can be better policed if the Traditional Institution is empowered to oversee the affairs of the communities. This is done by the deliberate efforts to carry the Traditional Institution along in all the security programs of their communities through awareness workshops, literature works and authoritative backings (Har,

2025). Rev Fr Alia has sponsored the publication of a security manual written in English **“Traditional Rulers and Crime Prevention”** (translated in Tiv, Idoma and Igede) wherein the knowledge of the techniques to police the communities are well documented.

Security and safety are fundamental prerequisites for sustainable economic development and social stability, particularly in Nigeria, where insecurity has emerged as a significant impediment to growth and prosperity. Benue State, often referred to as the "Food Basket of the Nation," is no exception, as its agricultural potential and socio-economic progress have been severely undermined by pervasive insecurity. The state has grappled with a myriad of security challenges, including armed banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, and politically motivated violence, which have disrupted livelihoods, displaced communities, and stifled investment (Har, 2018; Onoja, 2021). These challenges are exacerbated by systemic issues such as poor governance, corruption, and weak law enforcement, which have collectively eroded public trust and institutional efficacy. The resultant climate of fear and instability has not only hindered economic activities but also perpetuated a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment, underscoring the urgent need for innovative and multi-faceted solutions to restore security and foster resilience in the state.

Existing studies on security in Nigeria have predominantly focused on militarized approaches, often neglecting the synergistic potential of non-kinetic strategies such as awareness campaigns, good governance, and law enforcement collaboration. For instance, research by Onoja (2021) highlights the limitations of top-down security measures in addressing root causes like unemployment and social exclusion, while Har (2018) emphasizes the role of community engagement and preventive strategies, such as Crime Prevention through Social Development (CPSD), Crime Prevention through the Traditional Institution (CPTTI) and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), in reducing crime rates. However, these studies often treat these strategies in isolation, leaving a critical gap in understanding how their integration could yield more sustainable outcomes. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the interplay of awareness campaigns, good governance, and law enforcement collaboration as a holistic framework for enhancing security in Benue State.

Awareness campaigns, good governance, and effective law enforcement collaboration are critical components of a sustainable security framework. Awareness campaigns educate citizens on crime prevention strategies, foster a security-conscious society, and encourage community participation in security efforts. Furthermore, awareness campaigns have become necessary as insecurity increases by the day and the need to teach people how to live, work and do business in insecure circumstances. (Har, 2025). Good governance ensures that security policies are implemented transparently, equitably, and in alignment with the needs of local communities (UCLG, 2021). Furthermore, strong collaboration between law enforcement agencies and civilians enhances intelligence gathering, strengthens community policing, and improves public trust in security institutions.

In Benue State, the integration of these strategies is essential for addressing the root causes of insecurity and ensuring long-term stability. This study, therefore, aims to examine how these three dimensions can collectively contribute to a more secure and prosperous Benue State.

2.3.2 Legislative Actions: A key factor in reducing insecurity in Benue State is effective leadership. Enacting and changing legislation to meet particular security challenges, such as terrorism and kidnapping, is the responsibility of legislators (Vanguard, 2025). The Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranching Law 2017 has been strengthened by the merging of the Benue state Livestock Guards and the Benue state Community Volunteer Guards to what is now referred to as the Benue state Civil Protection Guards (BSCPG). This merger also witnessed the introduction and involvement of the Veterans of the Military, Police and paramilitary as commanders at Local Government, Sector, Zone, Department and State levels. The BSCPG is saddled with the responsibility as first responder, early warning sounders, supervisory of other quasi non-conventional security outfit but does not replace the conventional security agencies. The BSCPG complement the activities of the conventional security agencies in other unprotected spaces of the state but do not in any way replace the conventional agencies (Har, 2025).

Early detection and prevention of security concerns can be facilitated by initiatives like community policing, which can improve confidence between the police and the community (Ordu & Nnam, 2017). Additionally, in order to prevent any attacks and kidnappings, intelligence collection should be given top priority (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2021). The detection function of the physical security triangle (Detect, Delay and Respond) is key where deterrent fail to frustrate the determined aggressor (s). Such aggressor (s) if detected early enough and delayed can allow the respond force to neutralize and/or defeat the aggressor (Har, 2025).

2.3.3 Multi-faceted Approaches: A multifaceted strategy involving cooperation amongst many stakeholders, such as governmental organisations, traditional leaders, and civil society organisations, became necessary to address the difficulties of insecurity (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2021). Bureau for International Cooperation and Development, Bureau for International Investment and that of Promotion and Investment are among the multifaceted approaches done by Rev Fr Alia administration to attract foreign investment to Benue state. The Commission for Peace and Reconciliation has being on the frontline in ensuring peaceful co-existence in Benue state and preparing the stage for investors to make the food basket to be filled once again.

2.3.4 Combative/Non-combative Solutions: The governor of Benue State has acknowledged that non-combative means of addressing insecurity are necessary. Stakeholder cooperation and readiness have been encouraged by recent conferences, such as the one hosted by the Benue Public Service Institute, which examined creative, non-kinetic solutions to the region's security issues (Ajah, 2025; Fiase & Gbaden, 2024). Several other programs such as the Digital Security Summit, The Benue State Attitudes Rebirth Workshop, the North-Central Regional workshop on Harmonisation of the National Disarmament Framework, the Television/Radio/social media security awareness campaigns organized by the Fr Alia administration are all aimed at ensuring a non-combative approach to mitigating insecurity in Benue state (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2021). The goal of programs like Operation Zenda, Operation Anyam Nyor and the creation of the Benue State Civil Protection Guards is to reduce violence using combative means otherwise referred to as the kinetic/stick approach (Har, 2025).

2.3.5 Infrastructure and Economic Development: Reducing insecurity also requires promoting economic expansion and infrastructure improvement. The state can boost economic activity that supports general stability by improving connection through the building of roads and other infrastructure (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024). Programs that empower women, small enterprises, and adolescents enhance community cohesion and lessen susceptibility to insecurity. (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024). The resuscitation of the Benue Printing Corporation, the establishment of the Benue Fashion Hub, BIPC bread, water, nail etc Benue bags manufacturing has created more than a thousand job and thereby taking the criminals off the streets.

2.3.6 Good governance: Good governance is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the principles of transparency, accountability, rule of law, and effective policy implementation, all of which are essential for fostering sustainable development and ensuring the well-being of citizens. According to Adedeji (2022), good governance is characterized by the ability of a government to effectively manage resources, deliver public services, and promote the general welfare of its people. It is seen as a catalyst for true federalism in Nigeria, where the effective functioning of governmental agencies is crucial for peace, security, and improved living standards. Similarly, Momoh et al. (2025) argue that good governance is a driver of national development, as it ensures that public institutions conduct affairs in a manner that is transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the people. They highlight that good governance is not just about the absence of corruption but also about the presence of strong institutions, effective policies, and inclusive decision-making processes. In the context of Anambra State, Akam and Onu (2024) emphasize that good governance is vital for ensuring security and promoting development. They contend that through good governance, the state can address issues such as corruption, poor policies, and politics, which are major challenges to security and development. Good governance, therefore, is not just a theoretical concept but a practical necessity for achieving sustainable development and improving the quality of life for citizens.

Good governance also involves the active participation of citizens in the governance process, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed. As noted by Adedeji (2022), citizen participation is a key component of good governance, as it fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among the populace. This participation can take various forms, including involvement in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of policies. Additionally, good governance requires a commitment to the rule of law, where government activities are governed by established laws and regulations, rather than arbitrary power. This ensures that there is equity and inclusiveness in the distribution of resources and opportunities, reducing disparities and promoting social cohesion. In Nigeria, the implementation of good governance practices has been challenging due to issues such as corruption, weak institutions, and political instability. However, efforts to strengthen governance structures and promote transparency and accountability are crucial for achieving long-term national development and ensuring the security and well-being of the population.

In the end, addressing inequality in Benue State requires a team effort from all parties involved. Addressing the underlying causes of violence and instability requires cooperation between elected officials, community leaders, calls for a shared commitment to promoting peace and security (Eluma, 2024; Ternenge, 2025).

2.3.7 Promoting Inter-Agency Cooperation and Intelligence Sharing: Inter-agency cooperation is essential for an effective and coordinated security response, as fragmented efforts often lead to operational inefficiencies and jurisdictional conflicts. In Benue State, poor collaboration among the police, military, and other security actors used to hinder intelligence sharing and crisis response effectiveness until deliberate efforts were made to close the gap that now have inter agency collaboration in the state. To improve

coordination, a unified security command structure was made by appointing 2 Special Advisers on Security matters and Internal Affairs and that on Security matters and Strategic Liaison. This was established to enhance coordination of the conventional and the non-conventional personnel to streamline decision-making and resource allocation among security agencies. Joint training programs and inter-agency task forces is also in the pipeline with “Operation Anyam Nyor” been developed to foster collaboration, enhance intelligence sharing, and promote a collective approach to security management. By strengthening inter-agency cooperation, Benue State has built a more responsive and resilient security framework that effectively addresses emerging security threats.

3.1 Case Studies

3.1.1 Transformational Leadership and Development Initiatives

The government of Governor Hyacinth Alia, whose innovative thinking and people-first orientation have been hallmarks of Benue State, is one noteworthy case study. The administration's N550 billion 2025 budget highlights Alia's strategic initiatives, which centre on the digital economy, food security, and human capital development. Establishing innovation hubs, increasing internet connectivity, providing farmers with subsidised inputs, and advancing climate-smart agriculture through initiatives like Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) are some of the major initiatives. Furthermore, initiatives to provide financial aid, education, and job training to vulnerable residents as safety nets are part of a larger plan to improve all facets of society (Hir, 2025) (Iorpev & Iorpev, 2025).

3.1.2 Community Engagement and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Stressing multi-stakeholder involvement is another important component of tackling insecurity in Benue State. Members of the military and paramilitary forces, academic institutions, business executives, and community organisations have all attended recent events. This cooperative strategy emphasises how important it is to include different sectors while addressing security issues. A thorough plan has been put up, which calls for setting apart specific ranches to reduce tensions between farmers and herders, strengthening community policing to promote trust, and giving intelligence collection top priority in order to anticipate security concerns (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2021; Women Environmental Programme International, 2020).

Ranching as a modern herding protocol can only be feasible only ranches are made available and operational. Plans are on the way to create four (4) ranches in Benue state to accommodate both cattle on transit and those on grazing. Cattle travelers across Benue state to other state can be accommodated in the first and last transit ranch at a fee where they can get feed, water and medical care for their cattle before proceeding, just the same travelers can lodge into a hotel while on transit. The second and third ranches should be mega ranches where herders coming for grazing can actually pay for the number of months or the period range of their choice and freely graze within the ranch. These ranches will be for both indigenous and visiting herders who may wish to graze within the Benue valley. (Har, 2025).

3.1.3 Addressing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Another crucial area of attention is the situation of Benue State's internally displaced people (IDPs), which is made worse by conflicts like farmer-herder fights, banditry, communal clashes etc. Governor Alia has shown that he understands the socioeconomic effects of such displacements by taking proactive steps, such as building cluster dwellings for resettlement. By giving IDPs' needs first priority, the government hopes to bring stability back and make it easier for impacted communities to reintegrate, which will address a crucial aspect of the region's sustainable development. (Iorpev & Iorpev, 2025). The efforts to return the IDPs to their ancestral homesteads which though appear slow has deliberately and steadily contributed to reduction of poverty as many people have returned to farming which looks very lucrative especially during the Fr Alia period where farmers are not cheated via fake bagging and underpricing.

3.1.4 Training and Capacity Building

Furthermore, there are continuous training programs aimed at improving the abilities of Benue State's community leaders and security forces. In order to enable participants to carry out their responsibilities in guaranteeing the realisation of the government's developmental goal, these programs seek to provide them with the fundamental skills necessary for effective leadership and project management. These training initiatives aim to foster an accountable and result-oriented governing culture in the state by emphasising excellence and cooperation among diverse stakeholders (Onov, 2024; Women Environmental Programme International, 2020). Over

20,000 youths so far have been trained on ICT within and outside Nigeria, about 10,000 have been trained on Fire extinguisher authentication, servicing and repairs, many others are trained on improved Agriculture, other skills such as barbing, tailoring and CNG (compressed natural gas) has also being done here in Benue and this is capable of taking away over 50,000 youths off the street. This case study demonstrate how community involvement, focused activities, and creative and effective leadership may greatly reduce insecurity and promote sustainable development in Benue State.

4.1 Challenges and Obstacles

4.1.1 Complexity of Insecurity: Benue State's insecurity mitigation is a complex issue that calls for collaboration from a range of stakeholders, including local communities, security services, and government representatives. The sophistication of militant groups' weapons and the coordinated nature of their attacks, which frequently imply some kind of sponsorship behind the violence, add to the complexity of insecurity (Vanguard, 2025). Furthermore, dealing with insecurity is not simple; various circumstances need for customised strategies, suggesting that no one plan can successfully manage all types of insecurity in the area (Vanguard, 2025). In Sankera for instance; while the government is working hard through the Bishop Isaac led committee for a truce by the local bandits, people who are otherwise referred to as bigwigs will rather fuel the circumstance of the impoverished citizens. Other issues include but not limited to the role of the local bandits, traditional rulers and the herder bandits, lack of negotiation skills for the disarming, deradicalisation and reintegration of the repented bandits, lack of trust against the negotiators as a result of fear of the repeat of the Gana incidence further make the insecurity situation in Sankera more complicated Har, 2025).

4.1.2 Urban Development and Crime: The problems of insecurity are made worse by the unchecked urban growth in some regions of Benue, especially in Makurdi. Inadequate planning and a lack of infrastructure foster criminal situations where determined criminals can find easy prey (Adzande, 2020). Furthermore, the physical changes in residential areas, which are marked by larger densities and a fortress mentality among inhabitants, reduce community cohesion and social interaction, which eventually results in higher crime rates (Adzande, 2020). The unchecked urban growth especially within the Makurdi capital in the Wadata market/former prison axis, Awe street and Northbank axis where it is suspected that a large cache of small arms and light weapons are being warehoused seriously compound the security of the state capital and which requires drastic and radical efforts to ransack those hideouts.

4.1.3 Socioeconomic Factors: Insecurity's effects on the economy provide serious difficulties as well. Increased poverty, hunger, illnesses, illiteracy, and violence have all been associated with insecurity, which adversely affects households across the state (Bureau for International Cooperation and Development, 2024). The standard of living declines along with development, resulting in an unstable cycle that is challenging to escape (Fiase & Gbaden, 2024). Any successful effort to reduce insecurity must address these socioeconomic issues (Aver & Hellandendu, 2025).

4.1.4 Need for Comprehensive Solutions: There is an urgent need for conversation, conflict resolution, and inclusive development strategies because comprehensive policies that address the underlying causes of conflict are desperately needed (Aver & Hellandendu, 2025). To hold those responsible for instability and violence accountable, effective legal and law enforcement systems must be reinforced (Aver & Hellandendu, 2025). Fighting insecurity in Benue State will probably continue to be a difficult task unless all parties involved adopt a unified and cooperative strategy.

5.1 Future Directions

Future approaches to reducing insecurity in Benue State centres on putting comprehensive plans into place that deal with the underlying causes of conflict and improve community participation. The Benue State Action Plan for Durable Solutions, supported by Governor Hyacinth Alia, is one important endeavour that attempts to address the root causes of insecurity and displacement in the area (Iorpev & Iorpev, 2025a). In order to provide long-term solutions that enable internally displaced people (IDPs) to return to their ancestral homes, this plan places a strong emphasis on cooperation between federal agencies, international organisations, and local stakeholders (Iorpev & Iorpev, 2025a).

5.1.1 Strategic Security Initiatives

Strategic security measures have been used in recent developments to guarantee inhabitants' safety. In order to successfully address security threats, Governor Alia has started programs like the Benue State Civil Protection Guard (BSCPG) and "Operation Anyam Nyor," a collaborative security task force outfitted with cutting-edge equipment and vehicles (Hir, 2025). The effective administration of these resources has won praises for its budgetary responsibility and openness, demonstrating a dedication to the state's long-term stability (Hir, 2025). The efforts to ask herders to vacate the communities will pave ways for farmers to return to

farming to boost agricultural production and thereby making food available to feed the entire nation to prevent food insufficiency and food insecurity.

5.1.2 Community Engagement and Collaboration

Increasing community involvement is crucial to a comprehensive security strategy. Through government assistance, local vigilante networks have been mobilised, enabling communities to actively participate in their own safety (Isokon et al., 2022). Furthermore, building successful local solutions to security concerns would require conversations on strengthening agency collaboration and encouraging community policing (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2021). The use of Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD) as an alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a sure way to preventing and avoiding conflict within the communities even beyond livestock and crop farmers. This model which has been introduced by the Elohim Foundation through the Peace of the Communities Initiative (POCI) program has yielded and will further bring peace among families, communities and the society at large (Daor 2024).

5.1.3 Embracing Technology and Innovative Solutions

Another crucial area for future efforts is the incorporation of technology into security procedures. To improve the state's readiness to respond to security threats, the role of cybersecurity, intelligence collection, and surveillance technologies will be examined (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2021). It is anticipated that this technological development and community involvement will create a safer atmosphere and bring stability back to Benue State. The introduction and use of technology such as the deployment of drones and CCTV mounted at entry points will make detection much easier to enhance early warning and response efforts. Similarly, the creation of Forward Operational Bases (FOBs) at all entry points will help to detect entrance of cattle herders easier. These FOBs at entry points will help the BSCPG and other security agencies to detect cattle and criminal influx in real time. Other benefits of the use of technology will be in the areas of policing the activities of motor cycles/tricycles riders, scrap and scavenger operatives, Artisans etc to identify offenders through the keeping and maintenance of crime diaries for effective justice system. Similarly, the role of Traditional Rulers to keep data base of residents, known livestock herders etc will further reduce criminality by no small measure. The influx of unknown livestock herders, non-indigenous motorcycle/tricycle operatives will be profiled along with known actors of these commercial activities who will help in keeping track of these operatives.

Bottom line of all of these will be the deliberate and conscious efforts to keep Benue secure and safe for investors to come in to invest heavily in Agricultural production and procession which will make the Benue Food Basket to once again get filled up.

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