

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN MAINTAINING INTERNAL SECURITY IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA.

Kums Simon Nanka ^{1*}, Audu Nanven Gambo² & Ezekiel Major Adeyi¹

¹ Department of Political Science, University of Jos, Nigeria; kums43kums@gmail.com.

² Department of Political Science, Karl Kumm University Vom, Nigeria; audugmb@gmail.com.

¹ Department of Political Science, University of Jos, Nigeria; adeyimajor@gmail.com.

* Correspondence: kums43kums@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examines the challenges confronting Community Policing (CP) as a strategy for maintaining internal security in Plateau State, Nigeria. Factors such as recurrent violence, banditry, kidnapping, Fulani herdsmen terrorism, cattle rustling, political/elite interference, land-grabbing incidents, ethno-religious conflicts, weak collaboration between conventional security and community members, poor funding, among others, continued to undermine effective CP practice in Plateau State. The study adopted qualitative research approach, covering Bassa, Bokkos and Wase Local Government Areas (LGAs), as one LGA is carefully chosen in the three Senatorial Districts of Plateau State. KII and FGD are employed as instruments for data collection; with 9 key informant interviews conducted, that comprises of critical stakeholders such as traditional rulers, Fulani Ardos, heads, spokespersons of security agencies, and experts in CP vis-à-vis Internal Security Management (ISM); and 3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in each LGA, consisting of farmers, herders, and local security organisations. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized. The Key Informant Interview (KII) and FGD constitute the primary source, while relevant literature from journal articles, government reports and online materials used as secondary source. Thematic and content methods of analysis were employed in analysing data. The study finds that there is a significant trust deficit between communities and formal security agencies, which undermines intelligence sharing and weakens the effectiveness of CP initiatives. The findings also reveal that institutional and operational constraints; particularly inadequate funding, poor logistics, insufficient training, and weak inter-agency coordination; limit the capacity of CP structures to respond effectively to security threats. The study concludes that although CP remains a promising framework for improving internal security, its success in Plateau State is hindered by deep-rooted structural and contextual challenges. To address these gaps, the study recommends the establishment of a robust legal and institutional frameworks that clearly defines roles, ensures accountability, and regulates the activities of community-based security actors. The paper also suggests that a sustained investment in capacity building, logistics, and trust-building initiatives aimed at strengthening collaboration between communities and formal security agencies.

Key Words: Challenges, Community Policing, Maintaining, Internal Security

Introduction

The contemporary global security environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, poses profound challenges for the internal security of nation-states. In response, many governments have sought to strengthen Internal Security Management (ISM) frameworks by adopting community-centred policing models that prioritise prevention, local ownership and partnership between security and citizens. Community policing (CP), as employed in this study, denotes a holistic, proactive and

people-centred approach to policing that deliberately integrates conventional security with traditional, religious and community leaders, civil society actors and other stakeholders to identify, prevent and respond to security threats. In essence, CP embodies the idea that security is a shared responsibility, requiring sustained collaboration between state and society. It is premised on the idea that sustainable peace and security can only be achieved when communities are actively involved in identifying threats, shaping responses, and fostering trust with conventional security (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005). However, ISM remains central to sustainable development and political stability because the state's capacity to protect lives and property underpins economic activity, social cohesion and citizens' freedoms (Inyang & Abraham, 2014; Odeh & Umoh, 2015).

The paper argued that the relevance of ISM extends beyond immediate community safety; it is intrinsically linked to regional stability. Conflicts that emerge from seemingly local disputes in Plateau State can have cross-border repercussions, particularly in regions contiguous with Niger, Cameroon and Chad, where armed herders, bandits and insurgent groups exploit governance vacuum to extend their operations (Adekoya, 2019). For example, local conflicts like banditry in the North-West, Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East or Fulani herdsmen terrorism in the North-Central often escalate into violent cycles that draw in neighbouring communities and states, creating a ripple effect that can destabilise the wider West Africa region. Thus, the human security approach underscores the inseparability of local, national and regional security, arguing that threats to the safety and welfare of individuals; whether from communal conflict, crime or resource competition, can escalate to broader security concerns if not effectively addressed (UNDP, 1994).

Plateau State, located in Nigeria's Middle Belt, exemplifies a context in which conventional policing models have struggled to contain recurrent communal and ethno-religious violence, Fulani herdsmen terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling and land-grabbing. These dynamics have eroded social trust, disrupted livelihoods and diminished the sense of safety among residents, prompting scholars and practitioners to reassess the adequacy of traditional security responses and to explore CP as a complementary strategy (Ukwayi & Okpa, 2017 as cited in Para-Mallam Peace Foundation dialogues). CP's theoretical promise rests on its capacity to strengthen trust, enhance cooperation and distribute responsibility for safety across formal and informal actors; yet its practical application in Plateau State is mediated by entrenched governance deficits, historical grievances and resource constraints (Nweke & Nwankwo, 2023).

Effective CP presupposes four interdependent preconditions: legal and institutional clarity, mutual trust and sustained engagement, adequate resources and capacity building, and operational continuity insulated from partisan politics. When these conditions obtain, CP can facilitate timely intelligence sharing, community-led early warning systems and restorative mechanisms that reduce reliance on coercive responses. Conversely, the absence of statutory recognition for CP roles, ambiguous mandates for traditional authorities, and weak local governance structures undermine the legitimacy and coordination necessary for CP to function as an integrated component of ISM.

Empirical evidence from Plateau State highlights a constellation of barriers that impede CP implementation. A persistent mistrust between conventional security and community members, rooted in historical abuses, weak land-ownership regimes, open-grazing conflicts, land-grabbing incidents, perceived partiality and fear of reprisals, significantly weakens intelligence flows and discourages early-warning reporting; have created recurring flashpoints that conventional security architecture alone cannot resolve without the complementary role of CP.

Significantly, the study contributes to ongoing scholarly debates on the localisation of security and the role of non-state actors in contemporary security governance. By situating CP within the specific socio-political context of Plateau State, the study moves beyond abstract theorisation to offer grounded insights into how such initiatives operate in practice. It also provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges that constrain the effectiveness of CP, thereby informing policy interventions aimed at strengthening internal security frameworks. Furthermore, the study has practical relevance for policy-makers, security practitioners, and community leaders, as it highlights the conditions under which CP can either mitigate or exacerbate insecurity.

Plateau State has become a hotspot of recurring violence, displacement and systemic attacks, especially in rural areas. The internal security challenges confronting the state such as banditry, ethno-religious conflict, Fulani herdsmen terrorism, land grabbing debacle, cattle rustling, cult-related violence, kidnapping, political power rivalry, and other criminal activities continue to mount, and without clear combating strategy in sight.

Despite the formal adoption of community policing as a strategic framework for improving internal security in Nigeria, its practical effectiveness in Plateau State remains questionable. The state continues to experience violent conflict, suggesting a disconnect between the objectives of CP and security outcomes on the ground. While CP is intended to strengthen trust, enhance intelligence sharing, and foster collaborative problem-solving between the conventional security and local communities, its implementation in Plateau State has been undermined by persistent mistrust between citizens and security agencies, weak institutional support, inadequate training of personnel, and limited logistical capacity. Consequently, community policing has struggled to function as an effective mechanism for preventing violence and sustaining peace, raising critical concerns about its operational relevance and capacity to address the complex internal security dynamics of Plateau State. However, the following research questions guide the study; what is the nature of internal security situation in Plateau State?; and what are the challenges hindering effective CP for enhanced ISM in Plateau State? It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to examine the challenges confronting CP in enhancing internal security in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The Collaborative Policing Model (CPM) is adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. CPM is relevant because it encourages active community participation in policing efforts. The model was propounded by Goldstein (1979) and later supported by Weisburd (2004), who argued that when partnership and cooperation exist between law

enforcement agencies, community members, and stakeholders, crime and public safety issues are better addressed.

The core assumption of CPM is that effective crime prevention and control can be achieved through partnerships and collaborations between law enforcement agencies, stakeholders, and community members themselves. Effective collaboration is built on trust and open communication, and in Plateau State, fostering trust is essential for community members to feel comfortable reporting crimes and cooperating with law enforcement efforts. The model also assumes that empowering community members to take an active role in security management leads to more effective policing outcomes. In practice, this implies involving local leaders, organisations, and residents in decision-making processes related to security.

Applied to CP initiatives in Plateau State, CPM provides a framework for integrating traditional authority structures, such as village heads and community elders, into policing strategies. For example, local leaders often mediate disputes and mobilise residents to support collective security measures, thereby reinforcing police efforts. CP forums and neighbourhood watch groups are practical manifestations of CPM, where residents and police officers jointly identify security concerns and devise solutions. These initiatives demonstrate how CPM translates theory into practice by embedding collaboration and shared responsibility within everyday policing activities.

The relevance of CPM in Plateau State is further underscored by the State's dynamic security challenges, including communal clashes, farmer–herder conflicts, and banditry. These issues cannot be effectively managed by conventional security alone. Strategic synergy between conventional security and community, as advocated by CPM, ensures that security is managed holistically. By building trust between conventional security and communities, CPM addresses one of the most pressing challenges of CP in Plateau State: the historical mistrust of security. Trust-building initiatives, such as joint patrols and community dialogue sessions, encourage residents to share intelligence and cooperate with conventional security, thereby improving crime prevention.

Ultimately, CPM highlights the importance of strengthening CP as a means of enhancing internal security in Plateau State. By situating community members as active participants rather than passive observers, the model ensures that policing outcomes are more sustainable. In societies facing complex and evolving security threats, CPM demonstrates that collaboration, trust, and capacity-building between different actors with common interests are indispensable for effective internal security management.

Empirical Review

Gwaza, Dakum, and Bogoro (2015) conducted empirical research examined contemporary challenges of peace and security in Plateau State, Nigeria, with a focus on both traditional and political dimensions; highlighting how persistent conflict reflects a

clash between traditional notions of communal protection and modern human-centered conceptions of security.

The authors situate this tension within Nigeria's historical trajectory, noting that colonial rule and subsequent military regimes entrenched a reliance on coercive force. State responses to conflict were often characterized by the deployment of military hardware, reinforcing a security paradigm centered on territorial integrity, sovereignty, and regime survival. This approach mirrors the post-World War II conception of security, which prioritized the preservation of the state above all else. The study found that deep-seated historical differences and ethno-religious crisis responsible for violent conflict in Plateau state.

The study concludes that sustainable peace requires moving beyond militarized responses to incorporate non-militarist strategies such as dialogue, inclusive governance, and socio-economic reforms that engage directly with the underlying causes of conflict.

Musa (2018) carried out an empirical study aimed at assessing the efforts of the military in internal security challenges in Plateau State. He argued that the primary responsibility of a state is the protection of its citizens against external aggression and internal violence and disturbances. The study adopted descriptive research design, where data were generated using the instrument of Key Informants Interviews (KII) and personal observation, and data analysed qualitatively. The study found that using the military evokes several challenges which undermine both the legitimacy of the military mission and its professional image. It also found that the military acts unprofessionally and soldiers abuse of civilians is a recurring phenomenon, hence civilians are dissatisfied with the military. The research recommended that the military should be well-trained and/or acts professionally in internal security situation, doing otherwise affected civil-military relations.

The reviewed study emphasized an exclusive role of the military in ensuring security in Plateau State without making attempt to co-opt and/or partner with the members of the affected communities or local security to help them with information and to a large extent, intelligence.

In a study conducted by Ojo (2024) identified the historical grievances, competition over scarce resources, political marginalisation, and weak governance as key factors contributing to internal security challenges in Plateau State. Inter-communal tensions and the proliferation of illicit arms exacerbate the situation. Literature review, interviews with community leaders, and analysis of historical data. It showed there is limited scope in addressing the role of external actors in perpetuating internal security challenges. The study failed to examine the social media and ethno-religious factors as contributing also to conflicts in Plateau State. Also, the study did not unveil the actors involved in conflict in Plateau State and no theory was adopted.

Moses and Ojo (2019) conducted empirical research that examined the state, challenges and prospects of the sustenance of peace in communities and fostering internal security in Plateau state (2010-2018). Data used in the study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were sourced through questionnaire instrument and

semi-structured interviews. They argued that in Nigeria today, the country is becoming more vulnerable to security challenges due to several factors prominent among which are the inefficient and unprofessional policing system. They argued further that there is a form of contention with the general public's perception of the Nigeria Police as unfriendly, brutal, corrupt, unprofessional, inefficient, public's lack of trust of the police force, which is of importance to the community policing model and assists the community to sustain peace. The study revealed that armed robbery, stealing/theft, house/store burglary, car theft, murder, ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, political conflicts and cultism are the prevalent internal security challenges in Plateau State. The study found that factors such as general public's perception of the Nigeria Police as unfriendly, brutal, corrupt, unprofessional, inefficient, public's lack of trust of the police force, ignoring non-cooperative behaviour of the community members and lack of enlightenment about community policing further compound the challenges. The study limitation in its inability to clearly bring out the strategies for strengthening CP practice. The study ignored factors such as lack of political will, capable of shattering the initiative.

Study carried out by Diop (2023) on the challenges and opportunities of community policing in Mali, aimed to improving its internal security by studying closely the internal security challenges such as lack of resources, training, and community engagement hindering their effectiveness. The study used a qualitative approach, including interviews with police officers, community leaders, and residents. The study suggested that future research should focus on addressing the challenges facing community policing programme in Mali to enhance their impact on internal security. Also, challenges such as lack of cooperation by community members with the police, weak leadership and lack of professionalism on the side of the police can hinder the effectiveness of community policing in Mali.

Omeje, Davis and Ogbu (2021) examined community policing as an effective strategy for crime reduction in Enugu State looking at the issues and challenges. The work is anchored on Broken Window Theory popularized by James Wilson and George Kelling in 1982. Survey research design was adopted as a methodology. The major instrument of data collection was structured questionnaire. Four hundred (400) respondents aged eighteen years and above were selected through simple random sampling from target population of 5, 995, 39 of the residents of Enugu State to respond to questions to know their opinion concerning Community Policing as an effective strategy for crime reduction.

Findings revealed that crime has reduced since the introduction of Community Policing. The study also revealed that though the residents welcomed the strategy as a good but suggested that employment would be a better strategy that could reduce criminality. Finally, it is recommended that the Nigerian Police and other security agencies should put more effort to improve on their relationship with the members of the public in order to gain the confidence of the people for easy flow of information because without information by both parties. This study is also reductionist for the fact that it did not highlight factors (such as lack of political will) affecting police-community collaboration in the fight against crime in our society;

Augustine and Ogunkayode (2018) undertook empirical research on the challenges of community policing and internal security architecture in Nigeria: an explanatory discourse. This work interrogated the salient factors that hinder the effectiveness of the most desirous community policing architecture in Nigeria. This found that corruption, the improper incorporation of the informal police (Vigilante) and the working conditions and poor remuneration of the Nigeria police, is the reason why community policing is less effective in Nigeria. It concluded that when these intractable challenges are properly addressed the internal security architecture of Nigeria will be viable enough to combat all forms of crime and foster viable security, sustainable peace and development in society. The major limitation of this study is in its inability to investigate external factors affecting the collaboration between the police and the community members.

Johnson (2020) conducted study on community policing and internal security challenges in urban America: A Literature Review. This study revealed that community policing has shown promise in addressing internal security challenges in urban areas by fostering trust between law enforcement and communities. The research found that there is limited research on the specific challenges faced by marginalised communities in urban settings. The major constraint of the study lies in its inability to examine security challenges in rural America and it is believed that security challenges are more pronounced in rural setting than in urban setting.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach within the constructivist paradigm, which is particularly appropriate for examining the challenges of community policing in maintaining internal security in Plateau State, Nigeria. A qualitative design enables the exploration of perceptions, lived experiences, and local dynamics that quantitative methods cannot adequately capture. By situating the research within the constructivist paradigm, the study acknowledges that reality is socially constructed and shaped by the meanings individuals and groups attach to their experiences. This orientation ensures that the analysis remains sensitive to cultural context and the subjective interpretations of stakeholders, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of community policing practices and challenges.

Data were generated using Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). KIIs provided insights from individuals with specialised knowledge and authority, including traditional rulers, Fulani Ardo, and conventional security personnel. FGDs were employed to capture collective perspectives among farmers, herders, and local security organisations, with each group comprising six to eight participants in line with Creswell's (2014) recommendation. In each of the three selected Local Government Areas (LGAs), three KIIs and three FGDs were conducted, amounting to a total of nine KIIs and nine FGDs. Additional stakeholders such as the spokesperson of the Joint Task Force-Operation Enduring Peace (OPEP), the Coordinator of Operation Rainbow (OR), the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), the Director General of the Plateau Peace Building Agency (PPBA), and government officials were included to provide institutional and policy-level perspectives.

The study covered the three Senatorial Districts of Plateau State, with one LGA purposively selected from each based on demographic, cultural, and security relevance. In the Northern District, Bassa LGA's Kimakpa-Kwall community was chosen due to its recurrent farmer-herder clashes and ethnic diversity. In the Central District, Bokkos LGA's Mbar community was selected for its cultural significance and exposure to violent conflict affecting farming livelihoods. In the Southern District, Wase LGA's Kadarko community was included because of its strategic border location and vulnerability to violent attacks. This purposive selection ensured that the study captured diverse experiences across ethnic, cultural, and geographical divides. Data were analysed thematically, consistent with the constructivist paradigm, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns and meanings while integrating diverse perspectives on CP across Plateau State.

Table 1**Breakdown of KII and FGDs participants across LGAs**

S/N	LGAs	Communities	KII Respondents	Key Informants
1.	Bassa	Kimakpa-Kwall	3	- 1 traditional ruler - 1 Fulani Ardo - 1 Conventional security agent
2.	Bokkos	Mbar	3	- 1 traditional ruler - 1 Fulani Ardo - 1 conventional security agent
3.	Wase	Kadarko	3	- 1 traditional ruler - 1 Fulani Ardo - 1 conventional security agent
4.	Key Stakeholders in Other LGAs (KII)		5	-JTF-OPEP's spokesperson, -PPRO -DG PPBA -Govt official & - Coordinator, OR)

Total			14	
FGD	Respondents		for	
5	Bassa	Kimakpa-Kwall	6-8 (3 FGDs)	- 1 FGD (Farmer) - 1 FGD (Fulani) - 1 FGD (Local Security Org.)
6	Bokkos	Mbar	6-8 (3 FGDs)	- 1 FGD (Farmer) - 1 FGD (Fulani) - 1 FGD (Local Security Org.)
7	Wase	Kadarko	6-8 (3 FGDs)	- 1 FGD (Farmer) - 1 FGD (Fulani) - 1 FGD (Local Security Org.)
Total			9	

Source: Field Work, 2025

Results

Perceptions on the nature of security challenges

A traditional ruler when asked to lend his view on the nature of insecurity in Plateau State noted:

“.....the nature of security challenges in our community Kimakpa to my understanding I will say is land grabbing where the fulanis herders ambush or attack our people on their way to the farm, on the farm, graze on farms, destroy our crops, and even rape our girls and wives. And in places where because of fear, some people cannot go back to farm, and the next thing you will see Fulanis grazing there....”

“.....and to shock you, when they grazed on your farm and you try to confront them and react, even a small boy will open his jacket to show gun and will even insult on it. Threatening that if there do anything, whatever becomes of it, is what you bargain for....” (KII, Kimakpa, Bassa, LGA).

A group of farmers (R1, R4, R5, & R8) in community also affirmed their experience on the security challenges said

“.....attacks vary because at times in a week, we might experience up to three times; but most of these attacks are mostly happen on Sunday’s evening, night and even afternoon in this very community. At times they may take a longtime planning for their evil and they will just come and attack us. We have not attack them (the fulanis), not even ones. And if you see us reacting, it is when our people have been killed; you will see women protesting with leaves on the road demonstrating their anger on what happened. We know those attacking to be Fulani herders because they speak fulfuldi/Fulani language and threat they issue when they destroyed our crops with their cows when we tried to react. Our farm produce either at home or in the farm and also animals, especially cows are stolen whenever stack is carried out.....(FGD, Farmers, Kimakpa-Kwall, Bassa)”

“.....security challenges in Bokkos LGA are in different forms. It always started small as though it is nothing but will later escalate. The issue of people taking laws into their hands; for example jungle justice where for instance cattle mistakenly grazed on somebody’s land and instead of the farm owner to report the matter to Law enforcement agents, they will attack the cattle or the cow boy, injure him and sometime killed the cow boy; and before you know the matter is escalated because the Fulani will want to retaliate the killing of the person and when the Fulani attacked and killed a Ron person may be in the farm, they too will launch a reprisal attacks; so that has been the trend of insecurity in Bokkos.....” (KII, Ardo, Bokkos LGA).

.....here in Bokkos, the issue of displacement cut across all religion and persons. For example, there are many places in Bokkos where fulanis have vacated and cannot go there to graze for fear of being attacked or cattle rustled and also there are areas where Ron people cannot return there for farming for fear of being attacked. So, if peace returns, everybody goes back to his farm and nobody will deny or stop you farming your land. Places like Muzu, Mandang-Muzu, Faranti, Dimish, etc, fulanis have run away from such places. Also, somewhere in Mangun and because of this crisis, the Ron people staying there have run away and if peace returns, they can go back and cultivate their farms and nobody will stop them; so, it is not land grabbing. I disagree totally with that....”

Focus Group Discussion from Mbar, in Bokkos collaborates the view of the Ardo above in Key Informant Interview.

“.....the nature of security challenges in this community Mangor, Bokkos is greed, selfishness and self-centeredness; people like only themselves but that which will help the entire community people are not interested in it. Whenever there is crisis, our cows are stolen. sometimes when our children go for grazing; sometimes when they go grazing, they are being attacked, wounded and sometimes killed. We the fulanis have loss many cows and our people in this community.....” (FGD, Herders, Bokkos).

“.....the nature of security in Kadarko is incessant killings on the grounds of self-appointed traditional heads or stool. We experience kidnapping in Wase but mostly in

Bashir axis. Cattle rustling is another issue. In many villages around here, we have different illegal traditional stools and they causing problem to the community.

“.....the nature of insecurity in Kadarko and its environs are more clannish issue and competition over resources; land grabbing issue and has religious colouration. These atrocities have become a business to those who are engaged in; as people properties (farm produce and animals) looted. Our nature of insecurity here has reached one level which is full-fledged banditry as each group has commandos with well organized leadership structure in virtually all the villages in Wase LGA. They use motorcycles like the Boko Haram we use to see in social media, everyone well-armed; a well-organized attacks they launch, very perfect like that of Boko Haram....” (KII, Traditional ruler, Kadarko, Wase LGA).

“.....security situation in Plateau state is very complex, very dicey, though, people centric. You know, the issue of security challenges on the Plateau is not like other theatre of operations, because this one, we have two sides of the device where the locals and the other warring faction in the state. So, the challenge, mostly with this operation, is that sometimes has religious correlation; sometimes ethnic and sometimes you know community-based crisis. So, security challenges in Plateau state have both religious and ethnic colouration. When cattle are being rustled, the community that carried out that rustling will begin to raise false alarm when they perceive that there is going to be presence of the security; they will begin to go on propaganda to put the military on their toe, so that if there will be any attack or retaliatory attack has affected the community, the military will thwart it. If cattle rustled and the soldiers were not present at the time reprisal is being brought to the community; you will hear allegation that military are not protecting us.

“.....another security concern is the issue of illegal mining, because when a mining site is discovered,

you will hear the issue of it is not your land, it is my land among other things.” (KII, Spokesperson JTF-OPEP).

A government official from Bokkos LGA also gave his view as he said that:

“.....yes, on the issue of insecurity in plateau and most especially in Bokkos LGA has lingered for quite long; though the government has been coming in to see that the security situation is arrested, but it keeps persisting. In my opinion, the issue of insecurity in plateau state is an issue of land grabbing. And the attacks occur both in rainy and dry seasons but more frequent in rainy season; this is because as at that moment, it is discovered that farms are being cultivated. The farmers have started using those farms, leading to limited number of land or grazing area, has been taken over by farmers necessitates the attacks, because they discover that if the land areas have been taken over by farmers and they no longer have space to graze, come back to attack the communities so that they will desert the place. In some of the communities that the fulanis herders dislodged the people, they come there to stay after dislodging the people. Bad roads and poor networks make movement and communication difficult when there is attack. This

makes it difficult conventional to stay in those areas too.....” (KII, Govt. official, Bokkos).

Another FGD from Kadarko, in Wase LGA gave his view on the nature of security challenges as he said:

“.....insecurity challenges in Plateau state and Wase in particular political struggle for power and as religious coloration in it. we the farmers-herders clashes where the fulanis blame the natives for cattle rustling and the natives blame the fulanis for farmland destroying. So, this has been the nature of insecurity in Wase LGA. Also, the issue of killing experiencing in some villages in Wase is a clear case of banditry and not attached any religious inclination or land grabbing.

“.....in my opinion, CP is not a solution to internal security challenges in our community for now, because those who supposed to participate in safeguarding the community collaborate with criminals to loot our property and killed our people.....” (FGD, Herders, Wase LGA.).

Perspectives on collaboration btw LEAs and Community members

“.....yes, before now, collaboration use to take place under a platform call “community security

dialoguing” where both the natives and fulanis come together deliberate on the triggers or issues exacerbating insecurity and proffer solutions; under the supervision of the LEAs. They sometimes, organize football community that bring together the natives and the fulanis communities. Also, synergy between traditional rulers, community members and LEAs in the area of information sharing; but that form of collaboration is no longer there because of lack of trust and injustices meted on our people by the LEAs” (FGD, Farmers, Bassa).

“.....the issue of collaboration with law enforcement agencies is always a challenge to us, truly of

coordination is not there, because an attack is carried out in some particular place, you hardly can see the security men coming over to see for themselves what happened. So, the communities are even saying that they can do without the security, because they are no longer helping matters.....” (KII, Political office holder, Bokkos-LGA).

The traditional ruler in Bokkos community also affirmed their role as actors in CP.

“.....the conventional security encourages our youths to join vigilante, hunters, community police, Man O’War. Precisely within my area here, the area commander encourages that. Our vigilante and hunters have been working together in the check-point here. They do go for night patrol together according to what they are telling me. But truly, the collaboration is weak because of the limitation in strength of arms.....” (KII, Traditional ruler, Bokkos-LGA).

“.....one way is dialogue; where both Ron-Kulere and fulanis should come together and discuss issues that will bring peace. Another one is seeking sincere forgiveness. Also, the traditional and religious leaders, vigilante, professional hunters, market women, etc should come together and educate one another on the gains of collaboration anchored on community policing....” (KII, Ardo, Bokkos-LGA).

“...must of the times, we collaborate within ourselves consisting of the vigilante, the hunters,

community police and sometimes with operation rainbow in our community. Though, sometimes we collaborate with federal security, depending on the type of sector commander deployed in the community. And on the side of the Fulani, and because of these crises, we don’t do anything with them again, since 2014. In short, the collaboration is weak...” (FGD, Local security org. Bokkos).

“.....there is no serious collaboration between the community members and government security because the security sees the community police (vigilantes and hunters) as thieves themselves or those involving in armed robbery and vice-versa. The community members and/or local security do see the police as betrayers because, there were several instances where NPF denied some vigilante members who arrested some criminals and when the matter came up, they denied knowing. This really affects collaboration today. So, today, there is no collaboration, because the vigilantes do not trust the government security to work with.....” (FGD, herders, Wase-LGA).

Perspectives on Information/Intelligence Gathering and Sharing

“.....yes, we share security information whenever we hear with traditional rulers and also the

government security but they hardly share security information with us.....” (FGD, herders, Wase-LGA).

“.....Mostly we do not. Let me say we are not free sharing intelligence with community members because sharing it might create tension in the community. And sometimes when you share intelligence with the community, there are some that are agents within the community that can make those who are planning to perpetrate that act not to. So, since the target is to ensure that we arrest or neutralize them, sometimes, we do not share intelligence with them, especially the issue of creating tension.....” (KII, JTF-OPEP).

Another Focus Group Discussion from Kimakap, in Bassa Local Government Area gave his view on the challenges in sharing intelligence that helps enhance internal security.

“..... it is good to share security information but many community members sometime are not willing to share security information with the LEA for the fear that they might later be single out as informant and also fear of safety. Some fear for lack of trust of the LEAs and vice-versa.....” (FGD, local security org., Kimakpa, Bassa-LGA).

Perceptions on challenges confronting CP in improving internal security

A security agent from JTF-OPEP noted:

“.....one of the issues that is affecting our operation is the inability to avoid triggers of the crisis. You know when cattle are rustled, it leads to reprisal. When farmland is being grazed or crops destroyed by cattle, it also leads to cattle poisoning, killing of cattle. Culture and traditions of some communities too is a challenge to effective CP; as women are not allowed to come during traditional festivals of masquerade festivity in some traditions, and these women personnel may be on duty on save lives. So, that is a major problem to ISM. Inadequate modern and sophisticated weapons or gadgets. Though, of recent, the new CDS has helped improved on the equipment and logistics, motorcycles increased, CCTV cameras mounted in strategic location that have night vision capabilities in some of the crisis threatened areas like Bassa, Riyom, Barkin Ladi, Mangu LGs, where we have personnel manning in 24 hours, yet the government needs to do more given the changing security dynamic. Another challenge is the inability of some communities out of fear of being identified, or the fear that they will not be protected, failed to share intelligence with us. In short, no trained persons to share early warning signals or drivers to insecurity with the LEAs.

“.....weak judicial system is identified as another challenge to effective internal security management. Lack of political will is another lacuna.....” (KII, Spokesperson, JTF-OPEP).

“.....lack of collaboration between the government security and community members or local security; open grazing is a problem, injustice on the side of the soldiers, lack of training and poor motivation of community police.....” (FGD, Farmers, Kimakpa-Kwall, Bassa LGA).

Further view corroborated previous opinion on this section, response from another interviewee stated that:

“.....discrimination on ethnic ground and selfishness is a major problem. For example, when we see or discover any of our people in suspicious behavior or criminal act, we do arrest or bring the person out and take it to them but when it happens on their own side, that is, someone from their side steal our thing or engage in criminal act, they do same. For example, there was this committee inaugurated to oversee the issue of cattle crops destructions. So, each time they arrest any cattle grazing on someone’s farm, they will sit down and bargain on compensation. Farming on grazing routes is also a trigger to conflict, but today, the trust is no longer there.....” (FGD, Herders, Bokkos LGA).

The traditional ruler from Mbar, in Bokkos LGA also affirmed his view on the challenges confronting community policing in the locality

“.....the first challenge of community policing is that, it has no law backing it establishment. Lack of sophisticated weapons make it difficult for vigilantes who use den-gun, and what is den-gun to face somebody who carry AK47, G-3 and others. Another challenge is fear of betrayal that is trust deficit.....” (KII, traditional ruler, Bokkos LGA).

“.....the issue of receiving order first before shooting is weakening security work generally in Nigeria and in Plateau state. That one must receive order to shoot even when lives of people are in danger and even when you shoot you will see security person will end up being in danger, facing prosecution, why did he shoot; while people under attack.

“.....another challenge and most important is wrong deployment of security agencies. How will soldiers be deployed to do internal security work that are trained to fight war or fight Bokom Haram insurgency. How will someone who studied mathematics is employed to teach English and you expect result?” (KII, NSCDC Commander, Bokkos LGA).

Further view corroborated previous opinion on this section, response from another interviewee stated that:

“.....one of the challenges is lack of understanding between the security agencies and the community members. because of sometimes lack of awareness and training, the locals find it difficult to collaborate with the conventional security, and therefore, find it hard to security information with them. Another one, is the fear of sharing early warning information. Many community members feel threatened to share information on security threat with the security agencies for fear of expose or attacked by the criminals. They feel unprotected or vulnerable as their safety is not guaranteed. Constitutionally unclear role of the traditional institutions in strengthening community policing, which has to do with unleashing light punishment to the offenders. Lack of political will by the local authorities. This lack of involvement of local authorities in security at the local level, affects effective internal security management.....(KII, DG, PPBA).

“....poor funding of community policing, weak collaboration, lack of trained persons to report early

warning signals; and also early response mechanism.....” (KII, Ardo, Kadarko, Wase LGA).

Discussion, Findings, Implications, Conclusion and Recommendations

The assessment carried out by this study examined issues about the challenges confronting CP in maintaining internal security in Plateau State. Attention was paid to two key components with broad impact on the nature of insecurity and challenges facing CP in an attempt to improve internal security; as it is key in understanding and addressing the security issues facing the state.

Major findings point to the trajectory that internal security situation in Plateau State is precarious and deeply rooted in structural and socio-political complexities. Insecurity is sustained by recurrent land disputes, open grazing conflicts, sexual violence, and weak land tenure laws, which destabilise communities and perpetuate cycles of violence. The deployment of military personnel, whose training is primarily for territorial defence, has further complicated internal security management, as their reliance on excessive force, harassment, and intimidation erodes trust and discourages intelligence sharing. Ethnic and religious intolerance also fuels suspicion and division, weakening collective security efforts and leaving rural communities particularly vulnerable where government presence is minimal. Other impediments include corruption, lack of political will, trust deficits, and weak collaboration between law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and community members, all of which undermine intelligence-led policing that is critical for crime reduction (Omeje, Davis & Ogbu, 2021). Thus, the nature of internal security in Plateau State is characterised by fear, distrust, and recurring conflict, with citizens often reluctant to engage with law enforcement agencies due to concerns about retaliation or victimisation.

In relation to the challenges hindering effective community policing, the study identifies several impediments. Corruption and lack of political will undermine institutional commitment to community policing, while discriminatory practices and ethnic marginalisation obstruct collaboration between law enforcement agencies and communities. Citizens' fear of being singled out by criminals or security agents discourages intelligence sharing, which is the cornerstone of effective policing. Local vigilante groups and neighbourhood watch initiatives demonstrate potential but remain unsustainable due to inadequate funding, lack of training, and insufficient institutional support. Traditional rulers and local government authorities, despite their proximity to communities, lack constitutionally defined roles and resources to support community policing, leaving grassroots initiatives vulnerable to collapse (Kenneth & Evans, 2023). Frequent personnel rotations hinder long-term trust-building, while politicisation of security structures shifts focus away from preventive and community-oriented strategies towards short-term, politically expedient actions. These challenges collectively frustrate the operationalisation of community policing and weaken its legitimacy.

Theoretically, CPM which emphasises collaboration between law enforcement agencies and communities in identifying and addressing security concerns. However, the findings indicate that this model remains largely aspirational in Plateau State. Poor awareness and orientation mean that community policing is alien to many communities, while distrust, marginalisation, and inadequate institutional support prevent its effective implementation. Nonetheless, the presence of vigilante groups and community-based initiatives illustrates the potential of the partnership model when supported by legal frameworks, governance reforms, and sustained resource allocation. Strengthening community policing in Plateau State therefore requires embedding it within broader institutional reforms that prioritise inclusivity, accountability, and trust-building across ethnic and religious divides. The summary of key findings are;

1. The study found that there is a significant deficit of trust between communities and formal security agencies, which undermines intelligence sharing and weakens the effectiveness of CP initiatives.
2. The findings also reveal that institutional and operational constraints; particularly inadequate funding, poor logistics, insufficient training, and weak inter-agency coordination; limit the capacity of CP structures to respond effectively to security threats.
3. The study revealed that the socio-political factors such as ethnic and religious biases, political interference, and the proliferation of unregulated local vigilante groups further complicate implementation and, in some cases, exacerbate insecurity.

Implications of CP for Internal Security Management in Plateau State, Nigeria

1. Deepening trust and legitimacy of security institutions: CP reshapes the relationships between citizens and LEAs by promoting regular interaction, dialogue, and mutual respect. In Plateau State, where suspicion of state security actors has often been high, this approach helps rebuild confidence, making residents more willing to cooperate, report incidents, and support security operations. Policing in divided societies is most effective when it is rooted in trust and community partnership (Alemika, 2013). Buerger (1994), emphasizes that legitimacy is central to sustaining citizens cooperation in crime control.

2. Strengthening grassroots intelligence and early warning systems: By involving local actors who understand the terrain and social dynamics, CP enhances the quality and timeliness of intelligence. Local knowledge is indispensable for preventive policing in complex environments (Bayley, 2005). This has significant implications for internal security, as it allows authorities to detect and respond to emerging threats such as communal tensions or suspicious movements before they escalate into full-blown crisis.

3. Advancing conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts: CP provides platforms for continuous engagement among diverse ethnic and religious groups. Through dialogue for a and collaboration with traditional and religious leaders, it addresses grievances at an early stage, thereby reducing the frequency and intensity of violent conflicts that have historically affected Plateau State. Procedural fairness and inclusive dialogue enhance compliance and reduce conflict tendencies (Tyler, 2004); while Adebayo (2010) links community participation in security governance to improved peacebuilding outcomes in fragile societies.

4. Encouraging shared responsibility for security: The model shifts security from being seen solely as a government function to a collective societal duty. This sense of ownership empowers communities to take proactive roles in safeguarding their environment, fostering resilience and making security interventions more sustainable over time. As Goldstein (1990) argues, effective policing requires problem-solving partnership between police and communities.

5. Exposing structural and operational challenges in security governance: CP also reveals critical gaps such as inadequate funding, uneven training, and risks of bias or elite capture. These challenges underscore the need for stronger institutional frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and inclusive practices to ensure that the approach contributes positively to internal security rather than reinforcing existing divisions. Skogan (2006) observes that weak institutional support often undermines CP initiatives, while Alemika (2013) warns that socio-political interference can distort its intended objectives if not checked.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while CP remains a critical strategy for enhancing internal security in Plateau State, its effectiveness is significantly constrained by a range of structural, institutional and socio-cultural challenges that undermine its full potential. Issues such as inadequate funding, limited training of CP actors, weak collaboration between formal security agencies and community stakeholders, and persistent mistrust between citizens and law enforcement institutions continue to hinder its operational efficiency. Furthermore, politicization of security initiatives, ethnic and religious tensions, and lack of a clear legal and policy framework for CP exacerbate implementation gaps and reduce community participation. These challenges collectively weaken intelligence sharing, delay timely response to threats, and limit the sustainability of grassroots security collaboration. Therefore, for CP to contribute meaningfully to internal security management in Plateau State, there is a need for strengthened institutional synergy, sustained capacity building, improved accountability mechanisms, and the cultivation of trust-based relationships between communities and security agencies, all of which are essential for achieving a more resilient and responsive security architecture.

Policy Recommendations

- 1. Institutionalise clear legal and operational frameworks:** Government should develop and enforce a well-defined policy architecture that clarifies the roles, limits, and accountability mechanisms of CP. This includes standard operating procedures, oversight bodies at state and local levels, and legal safeguards to prevent abuse, politicization, or duplication of duties with formal security agencies.
- 2. Invest in sustained training and professionalization:** CP initiatives should be supported with continuous capacity-building programmes focusing on conflict sensitivity, human rights, intelligence handling, and mediation skills. Training should not be a one-off exercise but an ongoing process, ensuring that community actors and formal security personnel operate with professionalism and shared standards.
- 3. Institutionalise inclusive participation and safeguards against elite capture:** Recruitment and participation mechanisms must deliberately reflect the social diversity of Plateau State, including minority groups, women, and youth. Transparent selection processes, rotational leadership structures, and community validation for a can help prevent domination by local elites or partisan interests.

Inclusivity not only enhances legitimacy but also ensures that security responses are informed by a broad spectrum of local knowledge and perspectives.

4. **Enhance resource allocation and logistical support:** Effective CP requires adequate funding, communication tools, transportation, and basic operational infrastructure. Policy-makers should prioritise dedicated budget lines and transparent disbursement systems to ensure that local units are functional and responsive, particularly in rural and high-risk areas.
5. **Establish robust monitoring, evaluation, and feedback systems:** There is a need for regular assessment of CP outcomes through data collection, independent audits, and community feedback channels. This will enable policy-makers and practitioners to identify gaps, measure impact, and adapt strategies in line with evolving security challenges in Plateau State.

References

- Adekoya, A. (2019). *Transnational Security Threats in West Africa. African Security Review*, 28(3), 243-260.
- Brogden, M., & Nijhar, P. (2005). *Community Policing: National and International Models and Approaches*. Willan.
- Creswell, J.W. (eds.) (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage: University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Diop, D. (2023) "Challenges and Opportunities of Community Policing in Mali: Lessons Learned". *African Security Review*, Publisher: Taylor & Francis
- Gwaza, P.A, Dakum, H.I and Bogoro, A. (2015). Contemporary Issues of Peace and Security in Plateau State, Nigeria: The Traditional and Political Perspectives. *International Journal of Advanced Legal Studies and Governance*, 5(2), 76-78.
- Inyang, J. D. and Abraham, E. U. (2014) Private Guard Companies and Crime Control in Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*. SAS Publishers.
- Johnson, M. (2020). *Community Policing and Internal Security Challenges in Urban America: A Literature Review*.
- Moses, O.1 and Ojo O. O. (2019) Effective Community Policing and Vigilante Neighborhood Watch: The Panacea to Insecurity and Oluwa Sustainable Peace in Plateau State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) | Volume III, Issue VIII, August 2019*.
- Musa S.Y. (2018) Military internal security operations in Plateau State, North Central Nigeria: Ameliorating or exacerbating insecurity? Stellenbosch University <https://scholar.sun.ac.za> Stellenbosch University.
- Nweke, K., & Nwankwo, E. O. (2023). Community policing and security challenges in Nigeria. *South East Political Science Review*.
- Odeh, A.M., & Umoh, N., (2015). State policing and national security in Nigeria *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(1), MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, SI January 2015 ISSN 2039-2117 (online) ISSN 2039-9340 (print)
- Okokah, E., et al. (2021). *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research: Community policing and neighbourhood watch in Plateau State*.

- Ojo, B. (2024)"Exploring the Root Causes of Internal Security Challenges in Plateau State, Nigeria". *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Publisher: ACCORD
- Omeje, P.N, Davied M.E.W.and Ogbu M.O (2021). Community Policing as an Effective Strategy for Crime Reduction in Enugu State Issues and Challenges. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 26, Issue 1, Series 10* (January. 2021) 35-48 e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845. www.iosrjournals.org
- Ukwayi, J. K., & Okpa, I. (2017). Effective community policing and vigilante neighbourhood watch: Panacea to insecurity and sustainable peace in Plateau State, Nigeria. (Cited in Effective Community Policing and Vigilante Neighborhood Watch, 2018).
- UNDP (1994). Human Development Report: New Dimensions of Human Security. United Nations Development Programme.