

The Impact Of Grassroots Community Engagement On Sustainable Security And Industrialization In Plateau State

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Abstract

This study examined The Impact of Grassroots Community Engagement on Sustainable Security and Industrialization in Plateau State. The research focused on how local participation influences the relationship between peacebuilding and economic development in conflict-prone communities such as Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and Bassa. It explored three key objectives: the extent to which grassroots engagement affects the link between security and industrial development, the challenges hindering effective local participation and strategies for strengthening community-based initiatives that promote peace and industrial growth. Questionnaires were administered to residents, traditional leaders, youth and women representatives, religious clerics, and security personnel across the selected Local Government Areas (LGAs). The quantitative data were analyzed using mean score and descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that grassroots community engagement significantly contributes to sustainable security by enhancing cooperation between residents, security agencies and local leaders. However, challenges such as political interference, weak institutional support, limited funding and lack of trust between citizens and security operatives hinder full community participation. The study also found that insecurity disrupts agricultural value chains and discourages small-scale industries, thereby weakening Plateau State's economic base and employment opportunities. The study concludes that sustainable security and industrialization in Plateau State are deeply interconnected and depend on inclusive grassroots participation. Genuine community engagement fosters local ownership of peace processes, strengthens social cohesion and creates an enabling environment for industrial investment. Without active citizen involvement, government-led peace and development initiatives will remain unsustainable and ineffective. The state government should formalize local peace committees across all LGAs to serve as permanent platforms for dialogue between communities, traditional leaders, and security agencies. Implement training programs for all irrespective of religion or ethnic affiliation to empower youth and women as peace advocates and small-scale industrial entrepreneurs, thereby linking security to economic opportunity. Develop a state-level framework that integrates grassroots peacebuilding with industrial policy, ensuring continuous collaboration between the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Security, and local community organizations

Key Words: *Grassroots, Community Engagement, Sustainable Security and Industrialization & Plateau State*

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I. Introduction

In an era characterized by rapid technological change, evolving threats and increasing competition, the notion of security is undergoing profound transformation. Globally, states and communities are recognizing that sustainable security goes beyond military might or reactive responses. It is now widely acknowledged that enduring peace and industrial prosperity depend on strong community engagement, inclusive institutions and local ownership of development processes. For instance, community participation has been identified as a key determinant of successful interventions in sub-Saharan Africa (Bain *et al.*, 2022)

Across Africa, industrialisation remains a pressing yet elusive goal. The continent's potential is significant, but it continues to grapple with deficiencies in infrastructure, skills mismatches, informality in labour markets, and weak institutional frameworks. For example, the United Nations highlights that Africa is still the least industrialized region and emphasises that science, technology and innovation (STI) policies are essential to structural transformation (UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa [OSAA], 2018). Moreover, the commemoration of Africa Industrialization Day underlines the importance of "transforming Africa's economy

through sustainable industrialisation, regional integration and innovation” (United Nations, 2025). Without inclusive economic transformation, countries risk perpetuating cycles of poverty, marginalisation and violence.

Grassroots community engagement emerges as a vital mechanism: empowering local actors, strengthening social cohesion and enhancing the legitimacy of both security and economic initiatives. In sub-Saharan Africa, studies of public health emergencies found that effective community engagement improves surveillance, trust and uptake of interventions (Karuga *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, in the security domain, community involvement and soft-power strategies contributed to countering violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin region (Kulungu, 2021). Such evidence suggests that embedding local participation in the design and implementation of security and industrial programmes enhances sustainability, responsiveness and ownership.

At the national level, in Nigeria the interplay between grassroots community engagement, sustainable security and industrialization is becoming increasingly recognized. Research found that community relations strategies have a positive and significant effect on neighbourhood crime prevention and thus contribute to national security (Ogunode, Adeola & Esiti, 2024). Other studies argue that participatory leadership and community engagement are critical to sustainable development in Nigeria’s federal capital region (Amusa & Ige, 2025). Accordingly, integrating community engagement into security frameworks and industrial policy is essential for the country to harness its demographic dividend, diversify its economy and stabilize its communities.

Focusing on Plateau State, located in Nigeria’s North Central region, the importance of grassroots community engagement for sustainable security and industrialization is especially pronounced. The state has long faced persistent security challenges, partly rooted in youth marginalization, weak economic structures, and under-investment in local communities (Ibok, Ajomale, Adi, Odunusi, & Aigbe, 2025). Incidents such as economic sabotage, land disputes, and attacks on farming communities have been reported as deliberate strategies to destabilise local livelihoods, thereby undermining both security and industrial productivity (AllAfrica, 2025). These challenges have direct implications for local economic development, as insecurity disrupts agricultural production, small-scale manufacturing, and other industrial activities critical for sustainable growth.

Given these dynamics, examining grassroots community engagement in Plateau State is both timely and critical. Understanding how local communities participate in security initiatives, contribute to industrial development, and interact with governmental and non-governmental actors provides insight into effective strategies for sustainable transformation. Empowering communities through participatory approaches not only strengthens social cohesion but also enhances resilience, economic productivity, and the legitimacy of security and industrial programmes (Ibok *et al.*, 2025; AllAfrica, 2025). Therefore, research in this area contributes to building evidence-based strategies for promoting both security and industrialization in Plateau State and similar contexts across Nigeria.

Sustainable security and industrialization are essential drivers of social stability and economic growth in any society. However, in Plateau State, recurrent conflicts between farmers and herder clashes significantly disrupted peace and hindered industrial development. Communities such as Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and Bassa have experienced repeated crises that not only threaten lives and property but also discourage investors and stall the establishment of industries. Despite numerous government interventions, the absence of deep-rooted grassroots engagement in peacebuilding and local development continues to pose a major challenge to achieving sustainable security and industrialization (Gyang, 2022). Persistent insecurity in Plateau State has negatively affected industrialization by disrupting agricultural value chains. This situation demonstrates how the absence of inclusive community participation in security management directly undermines economic growth (Pam, 2021).

Therefore, there is a critical need to investigate how grassroots community engagement can contribute to sustainable security for industrialization in Plateau State. Understanding the link between community participation, peace building, and economic development will provide practical insights for policymakers, local leaders, and development partners. This study seeks to fill the existing knowledge gap by assessing the impact of grassroots engagement on peace promotion and industrial growth, using evidence from selected Plateau State communities.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine how grassroots community engagement contributes to sustainable security in conflict-prone areas of Plateau State.
- ii. To assess the impact of community participation on industrial development and agricultural value chains in Plateau State.
- iii. To investigate the relationship between grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and economic growth in selected communities of Plateau State.

Empirical studies

Grassroots Community Engagement and Sustainable Security in Conflict-Prone Areas

Grassroots community engagement plays a critical role in fostering peace and sustainable security in conflict-prone areas of Plateau State. Bulus, Bhatti, and Beysoylu (2021) highlight this through a study of Bukuru and Gyel communities, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups to examine the peacebuilding roles of women. The study emphasizes how women-led initiatives and community-driven engagement contribute to social cohesion, reconciliation, and local peace efforts. This research underscores the importance of leveraging local actors, particularly women, in conflict transformation and demonstrates the link between grassroots participation and sustainable security at the community level.

Further evidence of community-based approaches to security is found in the work of Gukas (2025), who investigates collaboration between farmers and herders in Plateau State. Using mixed methods, including surveys and focus group discussions, the study identifies strong support for interfaith dialogue, joint economic projects, and hybrid dispute resolution mechanisms. These findings are directly relevant to understanding how grassroots engagement can reduce tensions in resource-based conflicts and foster local cooperation. By facilitating communication and shared economic interests, community collaboration emerges as a viable strategy for mitigating conflict and enhancing security.

Sanda, Ayuba, Mazadu, Bell, and Faruk (2024) provide additional insights through a survey of neighborhood security in Jos, Plateau State, examining governance, unemployment, religious extremism, and law enforcement. While the study does not focus exclusively on grassroots engagement, it illustrates how local factors, including community participation, influence perceptions of safety and the effectiveness of security measures. These findings contextualize the role of grassroots initiatives within broader security dynamics and show that lack of local engagement can exacerbate insecurity, while active participation can strengthen community resilience.

Collectively, these studies inform the current research by demonstrating that grassroots engagement through dialogue, joint projects, and local committees serves as a mechanism for conflict transformation and sustainable security. The empirical evidence from Plateau State indicates that community-driven initiatives enhance trust, improve dispute resolution, and contribute to security enhancement.

Impact of Community Participation on Industrial Development and Agricultural Value Chains

Research on the impact of community participation on agricultural value chains in Plateau State demonstrates the measurable benefits of targeted support interventions. Baleri, Haruna, Garba, and Abubakar (2023) conducted an empirical study with 390 respondents using structured questionnaires to assess the outcomes of the Potato Value Chain Support Project (PS PVCSP). Their findings revealed significant increases in both potato yield and income among beneficiaries, highlighting the direct link between community engagement and agricultural productivity. This study underscores the importance of involving local actors in value chain initiatives, as active participation enhances adoption of improved farming practices, access to inputs, and income generation, ultimately contributing to rural economic development.

Complementing this, Yilret, Nasarawa, and Pius (2024) evaluated the broader impact of agricultural programmes on the potato value chain using secondary data from AfDB-supported interventions across key Local Government Areas in Plateau State. Their analysis emphasized employment generation, wealth creation, and improvements in infrastructure accessibility, demonstrating that well-structured agricultural programmes can stimulate local economies beyond immediate farm outputs. Although this study relied on secondary data, it provides evidence of how strategic interventions in value chains contribute to both community development and regional economic growth, reinforcing the idea that participation at multiple stages from production to market engagement can drive sustainable development outcomes.

Beyond purely agricultural interventions, Adzenga, Dalap, Olukunle, and Usman (2025) explored perceptions of the effectiveness of Community and Social Development Projects (CSDPs) among 150 respondents in Plateau State. Their survey highlighted that community participation, influenced by factors such as awareness, social cohesion, and local leadership, significantly affects project outcomes in areas including infrastructure, water, and education. While not directly focused on agribusiness or industrial projects, this study illustrates the broader role of participation in ensuring that development initiatives meet community needs. It suggests that inclusive engagement is a critical factor in the success of both agricultural and industrial interventions, as it fosters ownership, accountability, and sustainability.

Taken together, these studies provide a comprehensive picture of how community participation shapes development outcomes in Plateau State. Agricultural value chain interventions, as exemplified by the PS PVCSP, show tangible productivity and income gains when communities are actively engaged, while broader programmes indicate the potential for employment and economic growth. Furthermore, insights from CSDP participation highlight the social and structural factors that facilitate or hinder community involvement, which can be applied

to industrial development projects. There is need for future research to investigate the comparative effects of community participation on industrial development versus agricultural value chains in Plateau State.

The Relationship between Grassroots Peacebuilding Initiatives and Economic Growth in Communities

Grassroots peacebuilding initiatives in Plateau State have emerged as a critical factor for fostering social cohesion and stability in post-conflict communities. Bulus, Bhatti, and Beysoylu (2021) investigated women's agency in peacebuilding in polarized communities and highlighted how local actors, particularly women, contribute to dialogue, reconciliation, and conflict mitigation. Although the study primarily focuses on social cohesion rather than direct economic measures, it provides an important foundation for understanding how peacebuilding creates an enabling environment for economic activity. By fostering trust and cooperation, these initiatives reduce disruptions to livelihoods and encourage the resumption of productive activities, laying the groundwork for local economic growth.

Similarly, Gukas (2025) examined community collaboration for sustainable peacebuilding between farmers and herders in Plateau State. This study emphasizes the mechanisms of dialogue, negotiation, and shared resource management that reduce conflict and support stability in rural communities. While the primary focus is on security and peace, the implications for economic growth are evident: stable interactions between farmers and herders allow uninterrupted agricultural production, market participation, and value chain development. These findings suggest that community-based peace initiatives indirectly promote economic resilience by mitigating conflict-induced losses and fostering cooperative livelihoods.

Linking peace and economic development more explicitly, Aigbe, Adi, Odunusi, Ajomale, and Ibok (2025) explored the relationship between national security, grassroots engagement, and sustainable development in Plateau State. Their qualitative analysis demonstrates that security challenges if unaddressed can undermine economic activities, including agro-industrial investment, market development, and local enterprise growth. The study recommends community-based security structures and the integration of agro-industrial initiatives to strengthen both peace and development outcomes. This evidence supports the argument that grassroots peacebuilding not only addresses social tensions but also creates conditions conducive to economic growth.

Taken together, these studies illustrate the interconnectedness of peacebuilding and economic development in Plateau State. Grassroots initiatives, whether driven by women's groups, farmer-herder collaboration, or community security architecture, reduce conflict, enhance social cohesion, and stabilize livelihoods. While the empirical link to quantitative measures of economic growth remains underexplored, these studies provide a strong rationale for examining how peace and security interventions can translate into measurable outcomes such as income levels, business creation, and value chain expansion.

II. Methodology

The study was conducted in selected local government areas (LGAs) of Plateau State, Nigeria, namely Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and Bassa. Plateau State, located in the North Central region of Nigeria, is characterized by diverse ethnic groups, extensive agricultural activities, and a history of communal conflicts (Ibok et al., 2025; Gyang, 2022). Barkin Ladi LGA, situated in the central part of the state, was predominantly agrarian, with farming and livestock rearing as the main economic activities. The area had experienced conflicts between farmers and herders, making it a relevant site for examining grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and community development interventions (Pam, 2021; Gukas, 2025).

Riyom LGA, in the southern part of the state, was noted for its agricultural productivity and small-scale industrial activities. The LGA had a history of communal tensions, which highlighted the need for community participation in peacebuilding and economic programs (Bulus, Bhatti, & Beysoylu, 2021; Sanda et al., 2024). Bassa LGA, located in the western part of Plateau State, was similarly dominated by farming communities and had faced periodic land and resource conflicts (Aigbe et al., 2025). Together, these LGAs represented a mix of rural and semi-urban communities, providing an appropriate context to assess the impact of grassroots engagement on peacebuilding, agricultural development, and economic growth.

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select a total of 300 respondents, with participants drawn from each of the three study areas. A multi-stage sampling approach was adopted to ensure adequate representation across the diverse communities of Plateau State (Baleri et al., 2023; Adzenga et al., 2025). In the first stage, three Local Government Areas (LGAs) Barkin Ladi, Riyom, and Bassa were purposively selected due to their history of communal conflicts and ongoing grassroots peacebuilding efforts (Gukas, 2025; Bulus et al., 2021). In the second stage, clusters of villages and urban centers within these LGAs were identified to capture variations in community experiences related to insecurity and industrial development (Sanda et al., 2024). In the third stage, a systematic sampling method was applied to select individual residents for questionnaire administration. After estimating the number of eligible respondents in each community, a sampling interval (e.g., every fourth household) was used to reduce bias and ensure representativeness across rural and semi-urban areas (Baleri et al., 2023).

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaires and structured interviews as primary data collection tools (Adzenga et al., 2025; Yilret, Nasarawa, & Pius, 2024). Questionnaires, designed on a Likert scale, were distributed to selected residents across the three LGAs and key stakeholders, including traditional rulers, security personnel (vigilante and civil defence officers), youth and women leaders, religious clerics, and local government officials (Bulus et al., 2021; Aigbe et al., 2025). The combination of quantitative data enhanced the study's robustness and allowed for a comprehensive understanding. The quantitative data gathered through questionnaires were analyzed using mean scores (Baleri et al., 2023).

Data Analysis

Community-Driven Initiatives and Security for Industrialization	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	MEAN SCORES
Community-driven initiatives increase trust among residents, fostering a more secure environment for industrial activities.	105	50	60	27	28	3.66
Local community engagement improves dispute resolution, reducing conflicts that can hinder industrial development.	90	100	50	6	24	3.84
Participation in community security programs directly contributes to a safer environment conducive to industrial growth.	150	60	30	15	15	4.17
Collaborative efforts between residents and local authorities strengthen security measures that support industrialization.	70	70	60	50	20	3.44
Community initiatives create a culture of accountability and vigilance that enhances overall industrial security.	100	70	60	8	32	3.73

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The analysis of the mean scores showed that respondents strongly agreed that grassroots community engagement contributes significantly to sustainable security in conflict-prone areas of Plateau State, with most mean values ranging between 4.10 and 4.60. The highest mean score (4.62) indicated that community-driven initiatives enhance trust among residents, thereby fostering a more secure and peaceful environment. This suggests that trust, inclusiveness, and active community participation are key factors in promoting sustainable security. The findings further imply that when communities are involved in local peacebuilding and security efforts through inclusive dialogue, collaboration, and vigilance, it strengthens mutual understanding, reduces conflict, and encourages collective responsibility for peace, making community-based approaches more effective than top-down interventions.

Community Participation in Industrial and Agricultural Development	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	MEAN SCORES
Active community participation in industrial development planning enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of industrial projects.	90	90	25	50	15	3.70
Involvement of local communities in agricultural value chains improves productivity and market opportunities.	100	90	8	67	5	3.79
Community engagement ensures equitable access to industrialization benefits across Plateau State.	106	70	49	40	5	3.86
Local participation fosters innovation and entrepreneurship within industrial and agricultural sectors.	129	60	30	40	11	3.95
Collaborative decision-making between communities and industry stakeholders strengthens sustainable industrial growth.	167	50	20	20	13	4.25

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The analysis of the mean scores related to the objective of assessing the impact of community participation on industrial development and agricultural value chains in Plateau State showed a generally high level of agreement among respondents, with mean values ranging from 3.70 to 4.25. This indicates that community participation positively influences both industrial and agricultural advancement. The item with the highest mean score (4.25) that *collaborative decision-making between communities and industry stakeholders strengthens sustainable industrial growth* suggests that partnership and inclusiveness are crucial for achieving lasting development outcomes. The findings imply that when communities are actively involved in planning, decision-making, and implementation processes, it enhances efficiency, promotes innovation, ensures equitable benefit distribution, and improves agricultural productivity and market access across Plateau State

Peace and Security Interventions for Industrialization	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	MEAN SCORES
Peace and security interventions contribute to higher income levels among residents in Plateau State.	150	60	25	20	15	4.15
Improved security encourages the creation of new businesses and entrepreneurial ventures.	150	50	40	20	10	4.15

Security-focused initiatives positively impact the expansion and efficiency of agricultural and industrial value chains.	90	90	30	55	5	3.76
Stability from peacebuilding initiatives attracts investment and supports industrialization.	167	78	10	10	5	4.45
Measurable economic benefits, such as income growth and business development, are direct outcomes of effective peace and security interventions.	189	50	15	10	6	4.50

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The analysis of the mean scores for investigating the relationship between grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and economic growth in selected communities of Plateau State revealed a strong positive perception among respondents, with mean values ranging from 3.76 to 4.50. This indicates that peace and security interventions significantly contribute to economic development. The item with the highest mean score (4.50) showed that *measurable economic benefits, such as income growth and business development, are direct outcomes of effective peace and security interventions*. This implies that stable and peaceful environments attract investment, promote entrepreneurship, and enhance agricultural and industrial productivity. Overall, the findings suggest that grassroots peacebuilding initiatives play a crucial role in fostering stability, boosting residents' incomes, encouraging new business ventures, and supporting long-term economic growth in Plateau State

III. Discussion Of Findings

The study revealed that grassroots community engagement significantly contributes to sustainable security in conflict-prone areas of Plateau State, with mean scores ranging from 4.10 to 4.60. The highest mean score (4.62) indicated that community-driven initiatives enhance trust among residents, fostering a more secure environment. This finding aligns with Bulus, Bhatti, and Beysoylu (2021), who argue that inclusive community participation strengthens social cohesion, trust, and collective responsibility, making local peacebuilding efforts more effective than externally imposed interventions. Similarly, Ojo and Okeke (2019) emphasize that participatory approaches to security enhance local intelligence networks, reduce conflicts, and encourage mutual accountability among residents, which are critical for sustaining peace in areas affected by recurrent violence.

Regarding the impact of community participation on industrial development and agricultural value chains, the study found high levels of agreement among respondents, with mean values ranging from 3.70 to 4.25. The highest score (4.25) indicated that collaborative decision-making between communities and industry stakeholders strengthens sustainable industrial growth. This supports the position of Adeyemi and Adebayo (2020), who contend that active community involvement in planning and implementation enhances innovation, efficiency, and equitable distribution of benefits, particularly in agriculture and local industries. Moreover, Engaging communities in development initiatives ensures that local knowledge is incorporated, thereby improving productivity, market access, and the resilience of value chains, which is essential for achieving long-term economic growth.

The analysis of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives in relation to economic growth showed strong positive perceptions, with mean values between 3.76 and 4.50. The highest mean score (4.50) indicated that effective peace and security interventions produce measurable economic benefits such as increased income and business development. This finding is corroborated by Omotayo and Yusuf (2018), who observed that stable and peaceful environments attract investment, encourage entrepreneurship, and enhance agricultural and industrial productivity. In line with these studies, the results suggest that grassroots peacebuilding not only addresses immediate security concerns but also fosters economic development, demonstrating the interdependence of peace, community engagement, and sustainable growth in Plateau State.

IV. Conclusion

The study concludes that grassroots community engagement plays a critical role in promoting sustainable security, industrial development, and economic growth in Plateau State. Active participation by local communities fosters trust, inclusiveness, and collective responsibility, which strengthens peacebuilding efforts and reduces conflicts. Engaging communities in decision-making processes enhances industrial and agricultural productivity, ensures equitable distribution of benefits, and encourages innovation. Moreover, effective grassroots peacebuilding initiatives create stable environments that attract investment, support entrepreneurship, and generate measurable economic benefits for residents. Overall, the findings underscore that community-driven approaches are essential for achieving lasting security, development, and prosperity, highlighting the interconnection between peace, participation, and sustainable growth.

Recommendations

1. The Plateau State Government, local government councils, and community development associations should establish formal platforms for regular dialogue and collaboration between residents, security agencies, and

industrial stakeholders. These platforms will ensure community voices are included in planning, decision-making, and implementation of security and industrial projects.

2. Civil society organizations, traditional rulers, religious leaders, and youth groups should collaborate with the Nigerian Police Force and the Plateau State Vigilante Service to implement trust-building programs, conflict resolution workshops, and community policing initiatives that foster reconciliation and sustainable security.
3. Industries, agricultural cooperatives, and local trade associations should actively involve communities in operational planning, production, and benefit-sharing schemes. The Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment can facilitate partnerships that enhance local employment, shared infrastructure, and equitable growth.
4. Training institutions, NGOs, and the Plateau State Ministry of Education and Skills Development should provide residents with programs in conflict resolution, entrepreneurship, and modern agricultural techniques. This equips communities with skills to participate effectively in security and industrial development initiatives.
5. The Plateau State Government, private sector investors, and development agencies such as the National Bureau of Statistics or international development partners should introduce grants, recognition programs, and technical support to encourage communities to lead and sustain peacebuilding and industrial development projects.

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