



POLICY BRIEF

**ENHANCED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND
SURVEILLANCE: A PATHWAY FOR SAFETY, SECURITY,
AND STABILITY IN BURUKU LGA, BENUE STATE**

UNDER THE PROJECT

PROMOTING AGROPASTORAL RECONCILIATION AND
RESILIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS
AND PEACE (PARSULP)



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ACRONYM

CPRP	Community Peace and Resilience Plan
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth Development Organization
GPD	Global Peace Development
LGA	Local Government Area
PARSULP	Promoting Agropastoral Reconciliation Resilience for Sustainable Peace and Livelihood Project
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Promoting Agropastoralism Reconciliation and Resilience for Sustainable Livelihood and Peace (PARSULP) project high-level policy dialogue in Buruku Local Government Area (LGA), Benue State mobilized policymakers, traditional leaders, community representatives, security agencies, civil society organizations, women, youth, and Persons Living With Disabilities (PWDs) development partners to review the persistent farmer-herder conflict and to identify practical pathways to sustainable peace through a mutually beneficial agropastoral initiatives and structured reconciliation.

The high-level policy dialogue established that farmer-herder conflict in Benue State is driven by interrelated factors including intense competition over land and water resources, weak enforcement of land-use and grazing regulations, climate-induced migration, land degradation, proliferation of small arms, and limited coordination among state and local institutions (Nextier, 2025; SBM Intelligence, 2024). Benue State continues to record high levels of farmer-herder related violence and displacement within Nigeria's North Central region, with Buruku LGA identified as a recurrent hotspot (NCRMI, 2024).

Participants emphasized that although the Benue State Anti-Open Grazing Law (2017) provides a legal framework for regulating livestock movement, inconsistent enforcement, limited surveillance, and low community awareness continue to undermine its effectiveness. These gaps allow minor disputes to escalate into violent confrontations with severe humanitarian and security consequences.

Key priorities outlined from the high-level policy dialogue included strengthening land and natural resource governance, improving coordination between government institutions and security agencies, institutionalizing inclusive community-based mediation mechanisms, expanding climate-resilient livelihood opportunities, addressing arms proliferation, and ensuring meaningful participation of women and youth in peacebuilding processes.

This policy brief synthesizes evidence from the high-level policy dialogue outcomes into actionable recommendations tailored to support peaceful coexistence, improve security, and strengthen agropastoral resilience in Benue State.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Benue State remained one of the epicenters of farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria's North Central region. Recurrent violence linked to disputes over farmland, grazing areas, and water points has resulted in significant loss of lives, population displacement, destruction of livelihoods, and deepening food insecurity (Nextier, 2025; NCRMI, 2024). Conflict tracking and displacement reports consistently identify Benue as one of the states most affected by resource-based violence in the Middle Belt.

Buruku LGA is particularly affected due to its agricultural importance, fertile riverine areas, high population density, and seasonal influx of migrating pastoralists. Climate variability, including irregular rainfall and prolonged dry seasons, has altered traditional grazing patterns and increased pressure on farmlands and water sources (SBM Intelligence, 2024). These dynamics have intensified encroachment, crop destruction, retaliatory attacks, and cycles of mistrust between communities.

Despite the existence of the Benue State Anti-Open Grazing Law (2017), implementation challenges persist. Limited enforcement capacity, weak surveillance mechanisms, insufficient coordination between communities and security actors, and low awareness of legal provisions have reduced the law's deterrent effect. As a result, disputes frequently escalate from localized incidents into large-scale violence.

Under the PARSULP project, Global Peace Development facilitated a high-level policy dialogue in Buruku LGA to identify conflict drivers, assess security and governance gaps, and co-develop community-informed and policy-relevant solutions aligned with Benue State frameworks.

METHODOLOGY

The high-level policy dialogue adopted a participatory and evidence-based approach, consistent with the PARSULP dialogue model applied in Kaduna and other states. The process was implemented in 2025 and included the following components:

Institutional and expert inputs from relevant government ministries, security agencies, traditional authorities, and civil society organizations on policy gaps, enforcement challenges, and emerging conflict risks.

Plenary synthesis and collective validation of proposed actions to ensure feasibility, inclusiveness, and alignment with existing state policies and institutional mandates.

- **01** Presentation and validation of community findings derived from prior consultations and PRA-assessments conducted by GPD in conflict-affected wards of Buruku LGA.
- **02**
- **03**
- **04**
- **05**

Thematic breakout discussions focusing on peacebuilding, land and natural resource governance, climate change and environmental degradation, arms proliferation, and social inclusion.

Systematic documentation of agreed conflict drivers, solutions, and policy implications to inform this brief.

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE

- Weak enforcement of land-use and grazing regulations
- Poor enforcement of the Benue State Anti-Open Grazing Law,
- Unclear boundaries of Local Government Areas limits monitoring and tracking of herders grazing thus exacerbate conflict
- Absence of ward level, LGA, and State Level institutional coordination
- Fragmented roles and weak collaboration among state ministries, LGAs, security agencies, and traditional institutions result in delayed responses and reactive crisis management rather than prevention.
- Low community awareness of legal and mediation mechanisms
- Many farmers and herders lack access to simplified information on land-use laws, dispute-resolution channels, and reporting mechanisms, contributing to rapid escalation of disputes.
- Women and youth remained underrepresented in peace committees and land governance structures, despite their critical roles in early warning, livelihood management, and social cohesion.
- Irregular rainfall, land degradation, and shrinking grazing areas act as conflict multipliers by increasing competition and forcing unpredictable pastoral migration.
- The availability of locally fabricated and trafficked weapons (small arms and light weapons) increases the depth of conflicts, reduces opportunities for mediation, and heightens community insecurity.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR SAFETY, SECURITY, AND PEACE

POSITIVE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

If effectively implemented, the Benue State Anti-Open Grazing Law (2017) and related land-use policies provide a clear legal framework for regulating livestock movement and reducing uncontrolled competition over land and water resources. Consistent enforcement can deter violations, reduce crop destruction, and lower the frequency of farmer-herder clashes, particularly in high-risk LGAs such as Buruku.

Strengthened land and natural resource governance can improve predictability and transparency in access to farmland, grazing routes, and water points. Clear demarcation of wards and LGA boundaries and monitoring would reduce ambiguity that often triggers disputes and create conditions for negotiated solutions rather than violent confrontation.

Improved coordination among state ministries, LGAs, security agencies, and traditional institutions can shift security responses from reactive deployments to preventive engagement. Functional early warning and early response mechanisms would enhance timely intervention, reduce casualties, and lower the financial and operational burden on security agencies to stem herders and farmers violence

Inclusive peacebuilding policies that formally integrate women and youth into mediation and land governance structures can strengthen social cohesion and local ownership of peace processes. Evidence from community dialogue indicated that inclusive structures improve information flow, early detection of tensions, and compliance with locally agreed rules.

Policies that integrate climate adaptation and livelihood support into security and peacebuilding frameworks can reduce conflict pressures linked to environmental stress. Climate-smart agriculture, soil restoration, and diversified livelihoods would improve resilience and reduce the likelihood that climate shocks translate into violent competition for arable land and water resources.

NEGATIVE POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Inconsistent enforcement of the Anti-Open Grazing Law risks reinforcing perceptions of bias or selective justice, particularly if violations are not addressed uniformly across communities. This can deepen mistrust in government institutions and encourage self-help, vigilante actions, and retaliatory violence.

Strict enforcement without adequate sensitization, alternative livelihood options, or phased implementation may unintentionally marginalize pastoralist groups, increase displacement

and heighten cross-border migration pressures. Such outcomes can shift conflict rather than resolve it, spreading insecurity to neighboring LGAs and states.

Weak institutional coordination creates overlapping mandates and accountability gaps, limiting the effectiveness of security and land governance policies. Fragmentation can delay response times, reduce intelligence sharing, and allow local disputes to escalate before authorities intervene.

Exclusion of women and youth from formal decision-making structures undermines the sustainability of peace initiatives. Policies that fail to address structural exclusion risk missing critical early warning signals and reinforcing existing power imbalances that fuel grievances that escalate into violent conflict.

Security-focused responses that prioritize enforcement without parallel investments in mediation, arms control, and livelihood support may increase short-term deployments but fail to address underlying drivers of conflict. This approach can strain security agencies, increase operational costs, and normalize prolonged militarization of rural communities.

Failure to integrate climate and environmental considerations into land and security policies risks escalating future conflict. As climate variability intensifies, policies that do not anticipate seasonal migration patterns and resource scarcity may become increasingly ineffective.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

CONCLUSION

The PARSULP project high-level policy dialogue in Buruku LGA demonstrates that sustainable peace in Benue State requires an integrated approach combining effective land governance, inclusive peacebuilding, climate adaptation, livelihood support, and strengthened security coordination. Implementing these recommendations will reduce conflict risks, rebuild trust between communities and institutions, and support resilient agropastoral livelihood in Benue State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen land and natural resource governance
- Strengthen enforcement of the Anti-Open Grazing Law through coordinated monitoring.
- Conduct sustained community sensitization on land-use regulations and dispute-resolution mechanisms.
- Improve coordination of early warning and early response mechanism particularly strengthening of LGA and state level multi-agency coordination platforms.
- Operationalize community-based early warning and early response mechanism wherein information sharing between communities and security agencies will be enhanced and contribute to stem herders and farmers conflict and other crime.
- Promote inclusive women-and youth-led peacebuilding and livelihood initiatives- climate-smart agriculture, agroforestry, soil restoration, and water harvesting.
- Strengthen surveillance, joint patrols, and arms-control campaigns.
- Strong political commitment and budgetary support at state and LGA levels.
- Capacity building for peace committees, extension officers, and local mediators.

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