

# ATHENA PERSPECTIVES

*Fresh and Deep Dimension to the News*

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**By Dr. Landi Amos Gideon**

Senior Visiting Fellow, Athena Centre for Policy and Leadership

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# 1. Insight for the Week

## 1.1 EDUCATION UNDER FIRE: REBUILDING LEARNING IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS – POLICY OPTIONS FROM TWO LOCAL GOVERNEMENTS OF PLATEAU STATE.

### Executive Summary

Ongoing violence in Plateau State - particularly in the Bokkos and Bassa LGAs—has devastated the educational ecosystem. Students in transitional classes (Primary 6, JSS3, SS3) have faced school closures, forced displacement, and psychological trauma. This brief explores the consequences of such violence and offers actionable policy options to ensure education continuity. Without swift intervention, the long-term human capital of the region is at risk of collapse.

### Introduction

Plateau State in Nigeria's Middle Belt has long suffered from communal, ethno-religious, and political violence. Among the worst-affected areas are Bokkos and Bassa, where educational institutions have become collateral victims. Schools have been destroyed, learning disrupted, and children traumatized. While limited governmental and NGO efforts have responded to the crisis, education remains in limbo. Despite efforts by the government and security agencies, the violence has persisted, leaving many communities in a constant state of fear. Students are among the most affected, as the learning environment has become increasingly unsafe and unpredictable.

*This policy brief, grounded in field research, proposes reforms to rebuild learning in conflict zones.*



### 1. Chronic Insecurity and Educational Fallout

Decades of unrest, rooted in land disputes and competition between farmers and herders, have deeply destabilized education in Plateau State. Recent years have seen intensified violence, particularly in Bokkos and Bassa. Thousands have been displaced, and numerous schools have closed due to direct threats. Despite security deployments, many communities remain vulnerable. The stakes are highest for students preparing for national exams—WAEC, NECO, BECE, and the First School Leaving Certificate—whose futures are jeopardized by the persistent disruptions.



## 2. Disruption of Academic Calendar: A Generation at Risk

In 2023, over 50 schools across Bokkos and Bassa were closed due to security threats, delaying academic activities. Examination classes are particularly vulnerable, as national exams such as [WAEC](#) and [NECO](#) follow fixed schedules. Students who have been displaced often miss crucial revision periods. Similarly, disruptions to Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) and First School Leaving exams hinder students' progression at key transitional stages.

Displacement has also led to a loss of access to proper learning facilities. Many affected families have sought refuge in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps or relocated to nearby towns where educational infrastructure is either overstretched or non-existent. Students in these settings often contend with overcrowded makeshift classrooms, a lack of essential learning materials, inadequate sanitation, and overall unsafe conditions.



## 3. Learning Under Crisis Conditions

IDP camps present dire learning environments: overcrowded tents, minimal resources, poor hygiene, and an overall lack of educational infrastructure. These environments are unfit for effective teaching or learning. Worse still, the trauma of displacement weighs heavily on young minds. A 2023 survey by the Plateau State Ministry of Education revealed that 65% of students exhibited trauma-related symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and lack of focus—all of which impair learning outcomes and increase dropout risks.



## 4. Girls and Teachers: Disproportionate Burden

Girls are especially vulnerable. The collapse of education and community safety nets has resulted in a surge of early marriages and exploitative practices. According to UNICEF Nigeria's 2024 report, dropout rates have surged by 30% in conflict-affected areas, with girls making up the bulk of withdrawals. Teachers are also fleeing these zones. Many refuse postings to insecure areas, while others have relocated for safety. Those who remain face extreme pressure, working in unsafe environments with inadequate support. This teacher drain compromises educational delivery, especially for students in exam classes.



## 5. Infrastructure Destruction and Declining Outcomes

December 2023 witnessed particularly brutal attacks: over 20 villages in Bokkos were razed, displacing around 5,000 students and destroying 15 schools. The destruction of infrastructure has directly impacted performance. In Bokkos, the WASSCE pass rate plunged from 72% in 2022 to 45% in 2023. In Bassa, ongoing violence has forced schools to operate under military protection, and BECE pass rates dropped from 68% to 40% over the same period.





## 6. Fragmented and Inadequate Responses

Several actors have attempted interventions. UNICEF and local NGOs have created temporary learning centres in some IDP camps. Exam bodies like WAEC and NECO have made minor adjustments to accommodate affected candidates. Trauma support services from organizations like the Red Cross have reached some students. The Plateau State government has deployed security to selected schools.

However, these responses remain uneven, poorly funded, and largely ineffective. Interviews with community leaders and education officials showed that 70% of respondents had not seen or benefited from any intervention. Where responses existed, they were rated only 2.3 out of 5 in effectiveness.



## 7. Comparative Insights: Global Parallels

The situation in Plateau mirrors education crises in other conflict zones like Mali, Burkina Faso, and South Sudan. Ethnic violence, political instability, and insurgency in these countries have also led to school closures, massive displacements, and teacher shortages. Burkina Faso, for instance, saw over 6,000 schools shut down affecting over a million children. As in Plateau, children suffer severe trauma, rising dropout rates, and deteriorating academic performance. Girls are particularly at risk, facing early marriage and child recruitment. These parallels demonstrate that without systemic and international responses, Plateau's crisis could deepen, following the patterns seen elsewhere in conflict-torn regions.



## 8. Methodology and Field Insights

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach to examine how frequent attacks have impacted education in Bokkos and Bassa LGAs of Plateau State. A descriptive survey design was used to guide data collection from 400 respondents, equally drawn from both areas. Participants include students, teachers, parents, school administrators, education officers, community leaders, and security personnel. Bokkos and Bassa were purposively selected due to their exposure to violence. Schools were stratified by type and location, and participants were chosen through simple random sampling. Quantitative data were collected via structured questionnaires focusing on safety, enrolment, infrastructure damage, emotional effects, and academic performance.

Qualitative data was gathered through interviews with principals and education officers, focus group discussions with students and parents, and non-participant observation of school conditions. Data analysis involved statistical software SPSS/Stata, using descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages to summarize the findings and respondent characteristics.

### Impact of Insecurity on Education



**72%**  
exposed to  
violent  
attacks



**85%**  
experienced  
school  
closures



**60%**  
were  
displaced



**40%**  
reported  
death of a  
teacher or  
classmate



**80%**  
reported  
missed  
lessons



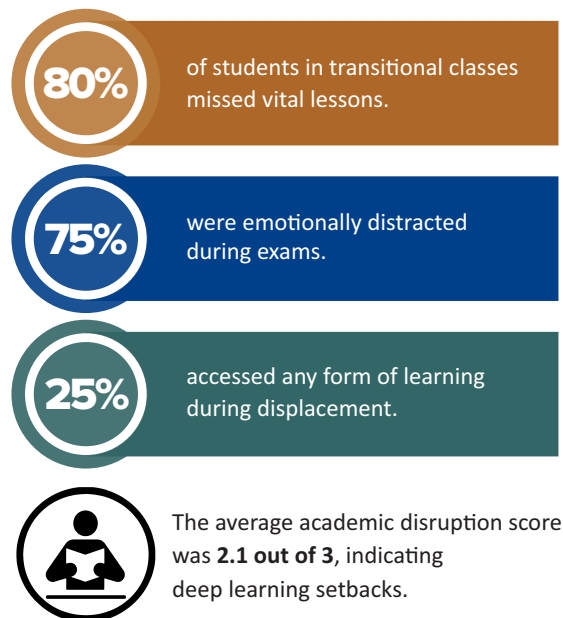
**78%**  
cited dropout  
due to  
insecurity

## 9. Key Findings

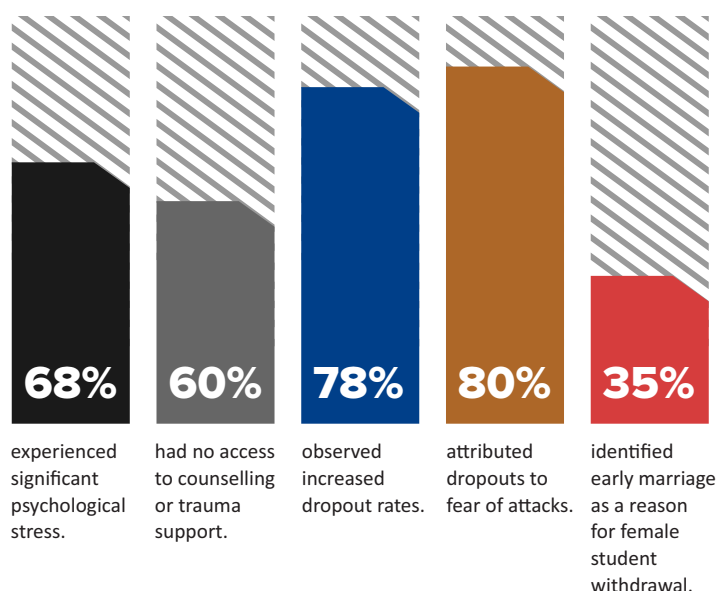
### Exposure to Violence:



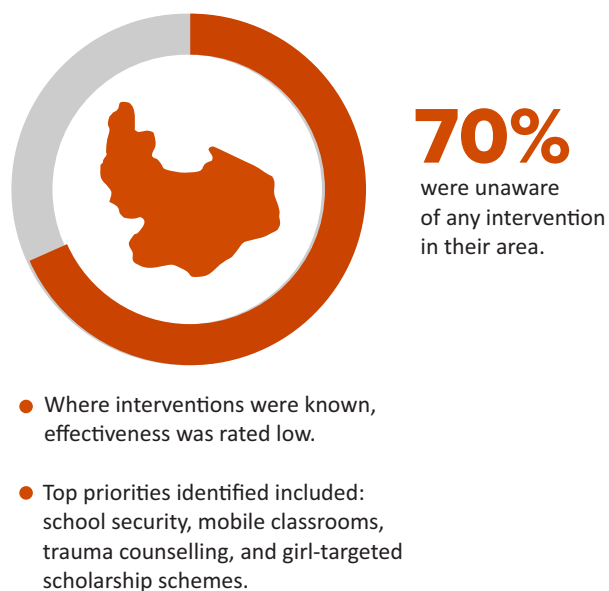
### Examination Disruption:



### Psychosocial Impacts and Dropouts:



### Gaps in Response:



These findings illustrate a dire educational emergency in Plateau State with long-term consequences unless remedial actions are taken.

## 10. Policy Recommendations: A Roadmap for Recovery

Dr. Gideon outlines a set of tiered recommendations spanning short-, medium-, and long-term interventions.

### ☑ Short-Term (Immediate Relief)

#### a. Deploy Security to Schools:

Provide professional, community-sensitive protection to high-risk schools via trained guards and vetted vigilantes—not to militarize learning spaces, but to ensure safety and deterrence.

#### b. Set Up Temporary Classrooms:

Establish mobile learning centres in IDP camps and host communities with learning materials and essential facilities like water and sanitation.

### ☑ Medium-Term (Stabilization)

#### a. Integrate Trauma Counselling into School Systems:

Train teachers to identify and support trauma-affected students. Partner with mental health NGOs to deliver regular psychosocial services.

#### b. Incentivize Teachers to Serve in Conflict Zones:

Provide hazard pay, secure accommodation, and career advancement pathways to attract and retain teachers in high-risk areas.

### ☑ Long-Term (Systemic Reforms)

#### a. Develop Conflict-Sensitive Curricula:

Implement educational content that addresses resilience, peacebuilding, and civic responsibility. Ensure ongoing teacher training and curriculum reviews.

#### b. Reinstate Dropouts with Support Programs:

Launch scholarships and conditional cash transfer schemes targeted at girls and displaced students. Link these to mentorship and reentry support.

#### c. Strengthen Cross-Sector Coordination:

Establish state-level education-in-emergency task forces involving government agencies, NGOs, religious institutions, and community leaders to align responses, share data, and scale interventions.

## 11. Conclusion: Seizing a Turning Point

The conflict in Plateau State, especially in Bokkos and Bassa, has devastated the educational sector.

Displacement, trauma, and the collapse of infrastructure have left students unable to pursue their academic paths. Without urgent, multi-level action, Plateau faces a generational catastrophe in learning and human development.

This policy brief calls for a paradigm shift from fragmented efforts to a coordinated and inclusive education recovery strategy. If the outlined measures are adopted, not only can learning be restored, but education itself can become a catalyst for peace and resilience in these troubled communities.

For media enquiries or implementation support, contact the Athena Centre at [info@athenacentre.org](mailto:info@athenacentre.org).



## 2. Issues in the News:

Top four stories on our thematic areas in Nigeria...



**Support children's access to healthcare,  
Ekiti urges stakeholders**

The Ekiti State Government has called on stakeholders to support efforts to keep children safe and healthy by promoting access to healthcare, especially immunization. Speaking at a UNICEF-backed meeting, the Ministry of Information's Permanent Secretary, Olusesan Alabi, stressed that children's health is vital for a better future. He highlighted the challenges of cultural barriers and misinformation and urged the Social and Behavioural Change Committee to spread awareness about the importance of immunising children to prevent deadly diseases and secure healthier generations in Ekiti and across Nigeria <https://punchng.com/support-childrens-access-to-healthcare-ekiti-urges-stakeholders/>



**Lagos needs over ₦3trn to tackle coastal  
erosion — Commissioner**

The Lagos State Government says it needs over ₦3 trillion to fight coastal erosion and protect shoreline communities. Commissioner Ekundayo Alebiosu revealed this during a press briefing, noting the high cost of extending groyne technology a barrier that

reduces erosion across the state's 180 km coastline. Lagos has started using groynes but faces major funding challenges. Alebiosu urged support from the Federal Government and private sector, calling it a national issue. He also visited the Netherlands to study effective coastal solutions and confirmed Lagos is working on a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) to fund and expand its shoreline protection efforts. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/05/shorelines-lagos-needs-over-₦2%82%A63trn-to-tackle-coastal-erosion-commissioner/amp/>



**2027 coalition: Atiku camp offers Obi VP  
role in one-term deal**

There are indications that former Vice President Atiku Abubakar may have offered the 2023 Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi a vice president role in a joint single-term ticket.

Reliable multiple sources involved in the coalition efforts, who requested anonymity due to a lack of authorisation to speak on the matter, told The PUNCH that the proposal was initially discussed during a meeting between Atiku and Obi early this year in the United Kingdom.

<https://punchng.com/2027-coalition-atiku-camp-offers-obi-vp-role-in-one-term-deal/>

### 3. Regional Updates

Top stories from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (BCCN)



**Sahel alliance recalls ambassadors from Algiers over downed drone**

The Alliance of Sahel States—Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger—has withdrawn its ambassadors from Algeria after Algerian forces shot down a Malian drone. The bloc condemned the act as a breach of international law and labeled it “proof” of state-sponsored terrorism. The incident has escalated tensions in the region, raising concerns about diplomatic relations and regional stability.

<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20250407-sahel-alliance-recalls-ambassadors-from-algiers-over-downed-drone>



**Chad condemns Sudan's airport threat as 'declaration of war'**

Chad has strongly condemned a threat by Sudanese General Yasir al-Atta to target its airports, calling it a “declaration of war.” In response, Chad’s foreign ministry warned it would defend its territory in line with international law. The threat follows accusations that the UAE is using Chadian airports to supply weapons to Sudan’s paramilitary RSF. Sudan’s army has long claimed the UAE supports the RSF in the ongoing civil war, which has caused one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. The remarks have further strained already tense regional relations.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn7v40e2p43o>

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## **Athena Centre for Policy and Leadership**

[info.centre@athenacentre.org](mailto:info.centre@athenacentre.org)

