



Community-Led Responses to Rural Insecurity

Lessons from Jibia and Batsari, Katsina State

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Cover Image: Peace dialogue session between bandits and community leaders in Katsina.

© Naija News, June 2024

Executive Summary

Katsina State remains at the epicentre of Nigeria’s rural insecurity crisis, with nine frontline local government areas (LGAs)—Safana, Kankara, Dan-musa, Musawa, Funtua, Matazu, Faskari, Batsari, and Jibia—long besieged by banditry. In 2024 alone, hundreds of residents were killed or kidnapped, and thousands displaced. Faced with the limits of conventional military operations, communities in Jibia and Batsari took the unprecedented step of negotiating directly with bandit leaders in early 2025.

These community-brokered accords have delivered immediate relief. Attacks and kidnappings have sharply declined, residents are returning to farms and markets, and displaced families are gradually resettling. Yet the peace is fragile. Bandits retain their weapons, the deals are geographically uneven, and there is a real risk that armed groups gain legitimacy without responsibility.

The experience underscores three policy lessons.

- First, peace efforts must be inclusive and state-wide, not confined to a few LGAs.
- Second, durable peace requires structured reintegration of repentant fighters alongside livelihoods support.
- Third, the state must strengthen law enforcement and local security institutions, ensuring that negotiations complement—not replace—governance and justice.

To build on early gains, Katsina State must pursue a balanced approach: consolidate grassroots negotiations, embed them within a formal state peace framework, expand development investment in rural communities, and implement security sector reforms. By learning from Jibia and Batsari, the state can craft a pathway from precarious truces to sustainable stability.

Introduction: Rural Insecurity in Katsina State

Security is the bedrock of human development. Across history, societies have devised strategies to protect lives and property, yet in present-day Nigeria, these foundations are increasingly under siege. Armed banditry and kidnapping for ransom have escalated sharply in recent years, [particularly across the northwestern states](#). This is mainly because the Rugu Forest, which spans Katsina, Zamfara, Kaduna, and Niger, has become a fortified sanctuary for armed groups.

The consequences of armed banditry are humanitarian, social, political, psychological, and [economic](#) in scope. Katsina State has borne a disproportionate share of this turmoil. [It ranked third among the most affected states in terms of killings, kidnappings, and displacement](#). Nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) are officially designated as frontline zones. These are Safana, Kankara, Danmusa, Musawa, Funtua, Matazu, Faskari, Batsari, and Jibia. Among them, Jibia has suffered acutely, with nearly all its communities subjected to repeated attacks. The devastation extends beyond physical insecurity: markets have collapsed, livelihoods eroded, and social trust fractured.

Banditry in the region is carried out by loosely organised groups engaged in village raids, cattle rustling, and ransom kidnappings. Operating with the support of local collaborators, these groups attack residents and travellers alike, seizing money, livestock, and valuables before retreating to forest enclaves. Their actions are opportunistic and profit-driven, aimed at accumulating wealth through violence and coercion.

Government responses have been overwhelmingly militarised. Large-scale operations such as Sharan Daji, Harbin Kunama, Thunder Strike, Sahel Sanity, and Hadarin Daji, have produced temporary gains but failed to secure lasting peace. Heavy reliance on air strikes, often unaccompanied by sustained ground operations, has [allowed armed groups to simply relocate](#). State-level strategies have been inconsistent: some governors have pursued negotiations, [offering amnesty or material](#)

[incentives](#); others rejected dialogue altogether. These divergences further created opportunities for armed groups to exploit jurisdictional gaps.

The inability of formal security institutions to guarantee safety has forced rural communities into self-help strategies such as [vigilantism, community patrols, and informal surveillance networks](#). While these measures testify to local resilience, they remain fragmented and under-resourced. Meanwhile, the violence has intensified. [Between July 2023 and June 2024, Katsina State experienced 119 kidnapping incidents, resulting in 887 individuals being abducted](#). The state was among the top three states with the most victims killed in banditry-related violence. The true scale is almost certainly higher, as many cases go unreported.

The human costs are staggering. Women and girls face sexual violence, forced marriages, and the collapse of farming and trading livelihoods. Children endure trauma, displacement from schools, and, in some cases, coercion into vigilante activity or exploitation by armed groups. These realities demand that any credible peace framework be gender-sensitive and inclusive, recognising both the vulnerabilities and the agency of those most affected.

As a last resort, many communities entered into peace deals with bandits. Negotiation efforts have delivered mixed outcomes. In Katsina and elsewhere, peace deals collapsed within months, due to weak transparency, inadequate consultation with local stakeholders, and limited intelligence on the fluid leadership structures of the groups. Excluded factions often acted as spoilers, and many who accepted amnesty quickly returned to violence.

Taken together, these dynamics reveal the limitations of militarisation and fragmented negotiation. They underscore the urgent need for a recalibrated strategy—one that is coordinated across states, attentive to local dynamics, and grounded in community participation. Only such an approach holds promise for building durable peace in Katsina State and across the wider northwest.

Community-Led Peace Deals in Katsina State

Batsari Case Study

In 2019, community mediators in Batsari Local Government Area, brokered a ceasefire between the notorious bandit leader Abu Radde. The dialogue was facilitated by traditional rulers, elders, and local observers as well as military representatives.

At the core of agreement were three elements: first, a halt to attacks on villages and highways; second, conditional access for farmers to farmlands and artisanal gold mines, notably the Nahuta forest area; and third, permitting the bandits to retain their weapons for what they described as “self-defense.”

The deal offered respite. Only for a brief period, during which farmers who had been displaced for months returned to their fields, and eleven kidnap victims regained their freedom. However, within weeks, Abu Radde’s men killed two traders in Batsari market for allegedly “violating territory.” Splinter groups continued to raid western Batsari villages. It was soon clear that the absence of formal state involvement in the negotiations meant the ceasefire was devoid of enforcement mechanisms or accountability structures.

The Batsari case highlights the paradox of local ceasefires with armed groups. While such a situation can generate immediate relief, the danger outweighs the benefits. Without state backing, disarmament, or credible monitoring, such a deal risks entrenching bandits. More critically, peace arrangements leave unresolved the social wounds of violence. It as well perpetuates a cycle in which “peace” exists in name but insecurity persists in practice.

Jibia Case Study

In Jibia Local Government Area, a striking development occurred when Audu Lankai, a prominent bandit leader, used a local radio broadcast to request negotiations with authorities. The call was unusual both for its public nature and for the leverage it gave to the armed group in shaping the terms of engagement. Local government officials, security agencies, community leaders, and Islamic clerics took up the mediation role.

The agreement that followed promised safe passage for travellers along key corridors of Jibia–Katsina, Jibia–Batsari, and Jibia–Kauran Namoda roads. Eleven hostages were also released. Overall, the agreement reflected the bandits’ leverages as they were granted access to markets, schools, clinics, and water sources in nearby towns.

For two months, attacks ceased. A local assembly member, Hon. Mustapha Yusuf, reported that the lull allowed markets to revive, traders to move goods more freely, and the local economy to rebound. But the structural flaws of the arrangement soon surfaced. The bandits refused disarmament, insisting that their weapons were necessary to “protect” communities from rival gangs. More damaging, the state government refused to endorse the deal. The Katsina governor denounced the talks outright, leaving the agreement in a policy vacuum with no formal backing or enforcement.

The Jibia episode illustrates both the promise and perils of community-led peace deals. They can deliver rapid, visible benefits: security on vital roads, release of hostages, and economic revival. However, without state alignment or credible disarmament, such agreements risk institutionalising armed groups as parallel authorities. In this case, the peace was short-lived, and the contradictions between local accommodation and state rejection undermined any prospects for durable stability.

Table 1: Comparative Insights of the Jibia and Batsari Peace Deals

KEY DYNAMICS	OBSERVED OUTCOMES
 Bandit leaders initiated dialogue Their willingness to enter negotiations suggested a shift in the internal calculus of armed groups, driven by conflict fatigue, the costs of prolonged fighting, or a desire for greater legitimacy.	Temporary reduction in violence Attacks and kidnappings declined significantly for several weeks, creating a window of relative calm
 Broad stakeholder participation Negotiations include traditional rulers, community leaders, vigilante groups, security agencies, and local government officials. This broad participation created a multi-sectoral platform that reflected local ownership and sought to build legitimacy	Resumption of daily life Markets and schools reopened, displaced persons began to return, and local economies showed early signs of revival
 Agreements converged on similar terms Communities desired cessation of kidnappings and village raids, safe passage on key roads, release of captives, and restoration of farming access. Bandits demanded protection from rival gangs, partial integration into communities, and access to basic services such as markets, water, schools, and clinics	Restoration of livelihoods Farmers cultivated previously abandoned fields, while communities expressed cautious optimism after years of violence

Table 2: Katsina Peace Deals in the African Context

Community-Led and Locally Driven Peace Initiatives

The Katsina agreements underscore the strategic importance of community ownership in conflict resolution. Engaging traditional leaders, vigilantes, religious scholars, and repentant bandits mirrors bottom-up strategies observed elsewhere on the continent. In northern Uganda, dialogue with the Lord's Resistance Army relied on community elders and local intermediaries to complement formal negotiations. This demonstrated the effectiveness of locally anchored mediation.

Negotiations with Non-State Armed Actors

Katsina's experience reflects a wider African pattern of negotiating with non-state armed actors. Though risky, dialogue often becomes necessary when military interventions alone cannot secure lasting peace. The agreements with the M23 rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Darfur Peace Agreement are examples.

Conditional Disarmament and Reintegration

The gradual and conditional disarmament approach in Katsina aligns with Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programmes implemented in post-conflict contexts in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Bandits' insistence on retaining arms for self-protection reflects a common challenge in DDR processes.

Role of Religious and Traditional Authorities

The role of Islamic scholars and traditional elders in mediating agreements in Katsina mirrors broader African experiences, in Somalia, for example, where clan elders and religious leaders mediate conflicts and enhance the credibility of peace initiatives.

The community-led peace negotiations in Jibia and Batsari LGAs represent a pragmatic, locally grounded approach to addressing insecurity in Katsina State. These initiatives resonate with broader patterns of peacebuilding across Africa, where formal state mechanisms often intersect with grassroots efforts to restore order and protect livelihoods.

Policy Lessons from Jibia and Batsari

1. Community engagement reduces violence, but cannot replace state authority

The peace deals show that local actors can negotiate short-term security improvements. However, without formal state backing and enforcement, agreements remain fragile and reversible.

2. Disarmament remains the critical fault line of negotiations

Allowing bandits to retain weapons perpetuates their coercive power and undermines accountability. Future frameworks must link concessions, such as safe passage or access to services, to verifiable disarmament and demobilisation, which must be supported by credible monitoring.

3. Ambiguity of motivations fuels policy incoherence

Some bandit groups act as profit-driven criminal enterprises. Others articulate grievances over land, exclusion, and pastoralist marginalisation. Policymakers must distinguish between actors motivated primarily by crime and those rooted in governance failures. A one-size-fits-all approach risks entrenching the conflict.

4. Fragmentation of armed groups complicates peace processes

The absence of unified leadership means that deals with one faction are not binding on others. Policy must therefore prioritise intelligence gathering, mapping of group structures, and inclusive negotiations that minimise spoilers.

5. Victim-centred approaches are essential for legitimacy

While negotiations reduced attacks, victims' voices highlight lingering trauma, loss, and resentment. Durable peace frameworks must address justice, reparations, and the social reintegration of survivors. Without this, peace remains shallow and contested.

Policy Recommendations

The crisis of banditry in Northwest Nigeria demands a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach that prioritises security, governance, and socio-economic inclusion.

The following recommendations are proposed:

Short-Term (0–12 months)

1. Integrate state and community efforts: Local peace initiatives should be embedded within coordinated federal and state strategies to ensure legitimacy, monitoring, and enforcement. The efforts of local mediators, vigilante groups, and traditional leaders should complement state security operations.

2. Link concessions to disarmament: Tie temporary security guarantees and access to resources for bandits to verifiable compliance with weapon surrender. Implement immediate oversight mechanisms to prevent relapse into violence.

3. Restore essential services: Markets, schools, healthcare centres, and water points in frontline LGAs should be reopened to reinforce immediate security gains and revive local livelihoods.

Medium-Term (1–3 years)

4. Initiate reintegration and alternative livelihoods: Provide structured support for repentant bandits, including vocational training, agricultural programmes, and social reintegration. Ensure these initiatives address community tensions and reduce incentives to return to crime.

5. Implement conflict-sensitive development: Implement targeted interventions addressing root causes, such as land disputes, pastoralist-farmer tensions, and exclusion from economic opportunities. Encourage local governance structures to mediate disputes and strengthen social cohesion.

6. Establish gender and victim-centred programmes: Psychosocial support, rehabilitation, and protection programmes should be established for women, children, and other vulnerable groups affected by abduction, sexual violence, and displacement.

Long-Term (3–5 years and beyond)

7. Institutionalise state-community coordination: Develop formal frameworks that integrate community-led security initiatives into state and regional governance structures to ensure the sustainability of peace processes.

8. Strengthen infrastructure and economic resilience: Invest in roads, schools, water systems, healthcare, and local markets. This will reduce vulnerability to banditry and promote sustainable development.



Community members and armed groups interacting after the signing of a peace agreement in Musawa LGA, Katsina, 30 August 2025. © firstdaily.ng

Conclusion: From Fragile Peace to Sustainable Stability

The peace initiatives in Jibia and Batsari LGAs demonstrate that community-driven dialogue can deliver immediate relief. This highlights the capacity of local actors to mediate conflict where state mechanisms alone have struggled.

Yet the agreements remain fragile. Retained weapons, splinter factions, and limited state oversight underscore that ad hoc arrangements cannot ensure lasting security. Addressing grievances, supporting victims, and integrating community efforts into state-led frameworks are essential for durable peace. The complexity of the conflict and the continued risks posed by armed groups demand a comprehensive approach that combines community engagement with strong government leadership, effective security measures, and sustainable development efforts.

Katsina's experience shows that pragmatic, locally grounded approaches, combined with enforcement, development, and gender-sensitive support, can transform short-term gains into sustainable stability.

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Nigeria Meets 2025 Revenue Target

President Bola Tinubu has disclosed that his government has met its 2024 revenue target, mainly from non-oil earnings, and is no longer borrowing from local banks. He stated that his administration had also achieved its projected non-oil revenue for 2025.

Recent reports indicated that non-oil tax revenue for the first seven months of the year amounted to N13.07 trillion.

Tinubu, who said, "I can brag that Nigeria is no longer borrowing any dime from local banks to run the economy," avowed that the economy is stabilised.

"Nobody is trading piece of paper for exchange rate anymore. When I took over it was N1,900 to a dollar. It's N1,450 now. Rates have been stabilising; you don't have to know a CBN governor to be rich," he added.

<https://businessday.ng/politics/article/we-have-met-our-revenue-target-no-more-borrowing-tinubu/>

Regulator Issues Directives to Curb Digital Lending Abuses

The Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) has introduced the Digital, Electronic, Online, or Non-Traditional Consumer Lending Regulations (DEON) 2025 to curb widespread abuses in Nigeria's digital credit market.

The rules target exploitative practices, data breaches, unethical loan recovery, and anti-competitive behaviour. They mandate transparency, fairness, responsible conduct, data privacy, and effective redress mechanisms, all under FCCPC oversight.

Effective from July 21, 2025, the regulations require all digital lenders to register with the FCCPC within 90 days. Key provisions ban automatic lending, enforce clear loan terms, prohibit unethical marketing, and demand joint registration of partnerships. Sanctions for non-compliance include fines of up to N100 million or 1% of turnover, and possible director disqualification for up to five years.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/fccpc-issues-regulations-to-tackle-digital-lending-abuses/>

Boko Haram Kills 63 in Deadly Attack

At least 63 people, including five soldiers, were killed when Boko Haram attacked Darajamal, a recently resettled community in Bama, Borno State, on Friday night. The insurgents stormed the village on motorcycles, shooting residents and burning houses, shops and vehicles, before security reinforcements arrived.

The killings underline the continued dangers faced by resettled communities after years of insurgency.

<https://punchng.com/anger-as-fresh-bharam-attack-leaves-63-dead/>

NABTEB Reviews 26 Technical Trade Programmes

The National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) on Monday, September 8 commenced reviewing and validating syllabuses for 26 trade areas in technical colleges.

The exercise, in collaboration with education regulators, curriculum experts, college principals and industry stakeholders, aims to modernise technical training and align it with global standards.

Speaking at the opening of the five-day review meeting in Abuja, NABTEB Registrar/Chief Executive Dr. Mohammed Aminu Mohammed called the initiative a landmark reform set to transform Nigeria's technical education landscape.

The 26 trade areas cover emerging technologies and traditional vocations, including Robotics, Coding, Machine Learning, Industrial Mechanics, Automotive Mechatronics, Cinematography and Creative Media Production, Smart Agriculture, Solar PV and Electrical Installations, Social Media and Digital Communications, Hospitality and Catering, Mechanised Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/fg-targets-natl-devt-through-tvet-as-nabteb-reviews-26-trade-syllabuses/>





Cameroon Separatists Kill Seven Soldiers in Deadly Attack

A separatist group has claimed responsibility for a roadside bomb attack in southwestern Cameroon that killed seven soldiers. The incident occurred on Friday morning near Malende. The Fako Unity Warriors, an English-speaking separatist group, claimed responsibility later the same day.

Cameroon's western regions have been affected by fighting since 2017, when English-speaking separatists launched a rebellion aiming to establish an independent state in the west. The conflict, which began with peaceful protests by lawyers and teachers, turned deadly following a government crackdown. More than 6,000 people have been killed and over 600,000 displaced, according to the International Crisis Group.

Although deadly attacks have decreased in recent years, the conflict shows no sign of resolution, with stalled peace talks and mutual accusations of bad faith.

Friday's attack coincided with the indictment in Minnesota of two separatist leaders, naturalised U.S. citizens, who allegedly financed and ordered bombings, executions and kidnappings in Cameroon while living in the United States.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cameroon-separatists-claim-deadly-roadside-attack-killed-7-125318634>

Chad Launches Website to Report Corruption

Chad's Independent Authority for the Fight Against Corruption (AILC) launched a website on August 28 allowing citizens to report acts of corruption anonymously.

The initiative aims to enhance transparency and encourage public participation in the fight against corruption by providing Chadian citizens with a secure space to submit reports anonymously. This initiative forms part of President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno's pledge to strengthen transparency and good governance.

Established in February 2025, the AILC is tasked with preventing and punishing corruption in the public sector while raising awareness among state officials about the legal sanctions for corrupt practices.

The website, www.ailec.td, complements the toll-free hotline 1222, which was already set up to encourage public engagement. Since its creation, the AILC has recovered hundreds of administrative vehicles misappropriated by officials, contributing to the cleanup of state institutions.

<https://apanews.net/chad-launches-website-to-report-corruption/>



Niger Tightens Visa and Residency Regulations for Foreign Nationals

Niger is tightening rules on foreign entry and residence, while more strictly regulating visas for certain European nationals as part of broader reforms to secure the territory and manage economic activity.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Nigeriens Abroad announced that only the Nigerien embassies in Geneva, Ankara, and Moscow may now issue visas to nationals of Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. The Brussels embassy remains responsible solely for diplomatic and service passport holders.

<https://fr.apanews.net/diplomacy/le-niger-renforce-le-contrôle-des-visas-et-du-sejour-des-etrangers/>

African, American Forces Meet in Benin

Over 85 military personnel, including commanders and legal advisers from 24 African partner countries and the United States, participated in the ninth African Accountability Symposium, held 26–28 August in Cotonou, Benin.

The symposium focused on the legal responsibilities of operational commanders, their collaboration with legal advisers, and how adherence to the rule of law in military operations supports national security objectives.

The event was organised by Benin's Ministry of Defence and the U.S. Africa Command's Office of Legal Counsel (AFRICOM), with support from Task Force Southern Europe, U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and the North Dakota National Guard.

<https://fr.apanews.net/news/securite-et-droit-militaires-africains-et-americains-reunis-au-benin/>

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