

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA: HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND CONTEMPORARY REFORMS

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ABSTRACT

Community policing represents a critical shift in Nigeria from reactive, militarised policing to collaborative, trust-based approaches focused on crime prevention and addressing root socio-economic causes. Shaped by colonial legacies of repression, post-independence militarisation, and persistent ethno-religious and farmer-herder conflicts, its implementation continues to face significant structural and contextual challenges. This paper provides a comprehensive review of the historical evolution, motivations, police-community partnerships, and multifaceted obstacles to community policing, with Plateau State as a primary case study. Drawing on the 2019 National Community Policing Policy and the Plateau State Community Policing Programme (PSCPP), the paper further examines developments from 2023–2025, including UNODC-supported training programmes and the ongoing UNODC Nigeria Country Programme (2026–2030). It also notes the expansion of youth recruitment into Operation Rainbow (over 1,000 youths announced in 2025, with 1,450 operatives commissioned in December 2025) and state-wide awareness campaigns. However, the long-term outcomes of these recent initiatives remain unassessed. A 2022 study on community policing in Plateau State identified inadequate funding, lack of trust, political interference, corruption, inadequate training, and limited community participation as persistent major barriers. In Plateau State, violence such as the Christmas Eve 2023 attacks that killed over 140 people in Bokkos and Barkin Ladi LGAs, along with continued incidents across Riyom, Barkin Ladi, Bokkos, Mangu, and Bassa LGAs in 2024–2025, has resulted in widespread farm abandonments and heightened food insecurity. The paper concludes that sustainable progress depends on addressing systemic mistrust, resource constraints, elite manipulation, and socio-political complexities through culturally adapted, inclusive, and locally rooted frameworks.

Keywords: Community Policing, Plateau State, Ethno-religious Conflicts, Farmer-Herder Violence, Police-Community Partnerships, Security Sector Reform

Introduction

Community policing signifies a significant shift in global law enforcement strategies, transitioning from traditional reactive models, characterised by after-incident responses and a hierarchical divide between police and citizens, to proactive, partnership-based methods that emphasise collaboration to combat crime, social disorder, and underlying issues such as poverty, inequality, and fear of crime (Skogan & Hartnett, 2017; Braga & Weisburd, 2020). This approach not only aims to prevent crime through shared responsibility and problem-solving but also seeks to enhance police legitimacy by fostering trust, mutual respect, and community empowerment (Cordner, 2018; Reisig, 2020). Globally, successful initiatives such as the U.S. Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) programme and the UK's Reassurance Policing showcase how customised engagement can reduce crime, improve public perceptions, and strengthen social resilience (Shaw, 2023; Tuffin et al., 2016).

In Nigeria, however, community policing remains deeply linked to a colonial-era policing legacy, which was inherently extractive and repressive, designed to protect colonial interests rather than serve local communities, thereby fostering systemic mistrust (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2004). Post-independence, successive military regimes intensified this militarisation, institutionalising brutality, corruption, and a top-down command structure that alienated the public and prioritised regime security over citizen safety (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Contemporary security challenges, such as terrorism from groups like Boko Haram, organised crime, kidnapping for ransom, and inter-communal violence, have further exposed the limitations of traditional policing in addressing root causes and fostering cooperation (Olaniyan, 2019; Akinyemi & Ogunwale, 2021).

Plateau State, once celebrated as the "Home of Peace and Tourism," exemplifies these dynamics, having transformed into a centre for ethno-religious conflicts, armed banditry, and farmer-herder clashes that have claimed thousands of lives, hampered socio-economic development, displaced populations, and eroded social cohesion (Akanji, 2020). Its unique topography, comprising fertile highlands attractive to both farmers and herders, exacerbates resource-based tensions, often intersecting with ethnic and religious identities, which leads to cycles of retaliatory violence (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2017). Recent escalations, such as the Christmas Eve 2023 attacks that killed over 140 people in Bokkos and Barkin Ladi LGAs (Bordoni, 2023), and ongoing incidents throughout 2024–2025 across Riyom, Barkin Ladi, Bokkos, Mangu, and Bassa LGAs, have caused widespread farm abandonments, heightened food insecurity, and forced many residents to stay at home. Studies on community policing in Plateau State, including those conducted around 2022, consistently identify inadequate funding, lack of trust, political interference, corruption, inadequate training, lack of community participation, and lack of cooperation from citizens as the primary barriers to effective implementation (Nankap, 2022; Akanji, 2020). By late 2025, these persistent dynamics underscored the urgent need for community-centred alternatives.

This paper critically examines the evolution of community policing in Nigeria, exploring its motivations, the transformative potential of police-community partnerships, and the complex challenges hindering its success, with Plateau State as the focal point. It incorporates contemporary developments from 2023–2025, such as UNODC-supported capacity-building workshops for divisional police officers (including in Plateau State) and state-led initiatives like the expansion of Operation Rainbow, to provide a nuanced, forward-looking analysis. By exploring these elements in depth, the review highlights that the global model must be substantially adapted to Nigeria's socio-cultural, political, and conflict-specific realities to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Conceptual Clarification

Before examining the historical development and practical application of community policing in Nigeria, it is essential to clarify its core concepts. Globally, community policing is

a philosophy, strategy, and set of practices that shifts the police role from an isolated enforcer to an integrated community partner (Peak & Glensor, 2022; Goldstein, 2017). It rests on three interconnected pillars: problem-solving (collaboratively identifying and addressing root causes of crime), community engagement (building sustained relationships through forums, outreach, and shared decision-making), and organisational transformation (restructuring police structures for decentralised, accountable operations) (Cordner, 2015; Reisig, 2020). Success is measured not primarily by arrest rates but by enhanced trust, reduced fear of crime, and improved quality of life (Kelling & Moore, 2018).

In the Nigerian context, community policing is understood as a symbiotic and concerted partnership between the police and community members aimed at reducing crime and criminal activities through active partnership, problem-solving, and organisational change tailored to local realities (Fomnya, 2024). This localised definition emphasises collaboration to overcome historical mistrust and address context-specific challenges such as ethno-religious tensions and resource constraints. In diverse, conflict-prone settings like Plateau state, it further incorporates cultural mechanisms, including the involvement of traditional rulers, religious leaders, community peace compacts, peace meetings, and community development associations, to manage sensitivities and ensure inclusive participation (Kew, 2021).

Crime prevention complements community policing as a multifaceted framework. It encompasses social prevention (tackling root causes like poverty through education and employment), situational prevention (reducing crime opportunities via environmental design), and community-based prevention (leveraging local partnerships for vigilance and intervention) (Welsh & Farrington, 2022; UNODC, 2020). These approaches are interdependent and particularly valuable in Nigeria's resource-limited environment, where community-based strategies amplify police capacity through local intelligence (Ekpenyong, 2020; Farrington & Welsh, 2017).

In Plateau State, two prominent initiatives operationalise these concepts. The Plateau State Community Policing Programme (PSCPP) and Operation Rainbow. PSCPP was launched in 2016, establishing Community Policing Committees (CPCs) across all 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs). It integrates vigilante groups under formal oversight and includes specialised Conflict Mediation Units to address disputes proactively, especially farmer-herder conflicts (Olatunji, 2019; Plateau State Police Command, 2022).

Furthermore, Operation Rainbow, established in 2010 by the Plateau State Government as a hybrid community security outfit, focuses on early warning systems, intelligence gathering, conflict response, and grassroots engagement to support formal policing and peace efforts. These initiatives illustrate the adaptation of global community policing principles to Plateau State's complex socio-cultural landscape.

Evolution of Community Policing in Nigeria

The trajectory of community policing in Nigeria reflects a gradual reform process amid deeply rooted historical barriers. Colonial policing, established in the late 19th century, was essentially coercive, with organisations like the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) serving as tools of imperial control, suppressing dissent, extracting resources, and maintaining order for colonial elites rather than protecting indigenous communities (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2004). This legacy created a widespread culture of fear and alienation, where police were perceived as oppressors. This perception was reinforced after independence in 1960 under military rule, which further militarised the force through decrees prioritising regime stability over public service, leading to widespread corruption, extrajudicial killings, and human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

The return to civilian rule in 1999 marked the beginning of meaningful reform efforts. The 2004 Police Act introduced a legal basis for greater community participation, paving the way for initiatives such as the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC), which aimed

to foster dialogue and joint problem-solving between police and citizens (Okunola, 2017). While the PCRC achieved modest successes in urban areas by creating platforms for engagement, its impact remained limited in rural and conflict-affected regions due to inadequate funding, bureaucratic resistance, and the persistence of militarised attitudes (Alemika, 2019). A more comprehensive national push came with the 2019 Community Policing Policy under President Buhari, which sought to institutionalise the approach by recruiting community-based special constables, establishing local stakeholder committees, and integrating problem-oriented policing strategies tailored to Nigeria's diverse security landscape (Odotola, 2021).

These national reforms were driven by a confluence of factors: surging crime rates, severe resource shortages (with the NPF maintaining a police-to-citizen ratio of approximately 1:600, below the United Nations-recommended ratio of 1:450 (UK Home Office, 2024), public demands for accountability following the 2020 #EndSARS protests against police brutality and impunity (Iwuoha, 2021; Unachukwu, 2024), and socio-economic pressures such as unemployment and inequality that fuel criminality (Olaniyan, 2019; Akinyemi & Ogunwale, 2021; Amnesty International, 2020). The #EndSARS protests, in particular, amplified calls for systemic police reform by highlighting issues of aggressive policing, trust deficit, and public alienation (Ameh, 2025). International partnerships, including UNODC-supported capacity-building programmes, have provided critical technical assistance, helping to embed principles of human rights and community engagement into police training (UNODC, 2023a).

In Plateau State, these national developments have intersected with local crises to produce a remarkably adaptive form of community policing. Early responses to sectarian violence in Jos during the 2000s included ad-hoc neighbourhood watch groups established in 2006 under Governor Jonah Jang, which offered initial grassroots involvement but were undermined by issues of politicisation and extrajudicial conduct (Akanji, 2020). These early efforts evolved into the more structured Plateau State Community Policing Programme (PSCPP) launched in 2016, featuring Community Policing Committees (CPCs) across all 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs), formal mechanisms for vigilante integration and oversight, and specialised Conflict Mediation Units designed to resolve farmer-herder disputes proactively (Olatunji, 2019; Plateau State Police Command, 2022).

Recent advancements (2023–2025) reflect continued policy momentum: UNODC delivered targeted workshops in 2023 for divisional officers from Plateau and neighbouring states, and the UNODC Nigeria Country Programme (2026–2030) aims to strengthen integrity and trust-building (UNODC, 2023a, 2025a). In September 2025, Governor Caleb Mutfwang announced the recruitment of over 1,000 youths into Operation Rainbow, followed by the commissioning of 1,450 operatives in December 2025 to strengthen grassroots coverage across all LGAs. A state-wide community awareness campaign was also launched in December 2025 by the Plateau State Police Command. While these initiatives demonstrate ongoing commitment to grassroots engagement, their long-term impact on security and community trust is yet to be systematically evaluated (Auta, 2025; Gbaoron, 2025). This progression, from ad-hoc local responses to structured, inclusive state programmes, demonstrates Plateau State's growing capacity to adapt community policing to its unique ethno-religious and resource-based conflicts. However, persistent violence highlights the ongoing need for more profound institutional commitment and continuous refinement.

In September 2025, Governor Caleb Mutfwang announced the recruitment of over 1,000 youths into Operation Rainbow, followed by the commissioning of 1,450 newly trained operatives in December 2025 to strengthen grassroots coverage across all LGAs (Auta, 2025). A state-wide community awareness campaign launched in December 2025 by the Plateau State Police Command aimed to curb crime and social vices through multi-stakeholder sensitisation (Gbaoron, 2025). Additionally, a June 2025 multi-stakeholder roundtable organised by the

Para-Mallam Peace Foundation positioned community policing as a "panacea for insecurity," stressing elite accountability and rejecting divisive narratives (Para-Mallam Peace Foundation, 2025). This progression, from ad-hoc local responses to structured, inclusive state programmes, demonstrates Plateau State's growing capacity to adapt community policing to its unique ethno-religious and resource-based conflicts. However, persistent violence highlights the ongoing need for more profound institutional commitment and continuous refinement. As noted in analyses of police reform, elite manipulation, political incitement, and state failure often actively generate or exacerbate social disorganisation, undermining reform efforts (Omotola, 2023).

Police-Community Partnerships and Crime Prevention

Building on the conceptual foundations and historical evolution outlined above, police-community partnerships serve as the practical mechanism through which community policing aims to translate its philosophy into tangible crime-prevention outcomes. These partnerships fundamentally transform law enforcement from an isolated, hierarchical authority into a collaborative entity that leverages local knowledge, trust, and resources to address crime proactively rather than reactively (Ekpenyong, 2020; Gill et al., 2014). At their best, partnerships facilitate intelligence sharing, early detection of crime trends, and the design of targeted interventions that address both immediate threats and underlying vulnerabilities, such as socio-economic disparities, conflict triggers, or youth marginalisation (Ikechukwu & Agbor, 2019; Braga et al., 2019).

In the Nigerian context, where decades of police misconduct have severely undermined legitimacy, partnerships serve a dual purpose: they rebuild public trust through transparency, procedural justice (fair and respectful treatment), and mutual accountability, while also encouraging citizens to report crimes, provide information, and actively participate in solutions (Okunola, 2017; Tyler, 2004; Tyler & Fagan, 2018). Research in Nigeria has demonstrated that principles of procedural justice, such as voice, neutrality, respect, and trustworthiness, greatly influence perceptions of police legitimacy and willingness to cooperate, even in contexts of low baseline trust (Akinlabi, 2018; Tankebe, 2013).

The effects are diverse and mutually reinforcing: improved cooperation results in higher crime reporting rates and quicker offender apprehension; locally informed strategies enable police to focus resources on specific hotspots (e.g., through joint patrols or youth engagement programmes); and strengthened collective efficacy, the residents' shared willingness to intervene, creates informal social controls that deter potential offenders (Skogan & Hartnett, 2017; Sampson et al., 2017; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Empirical evidence supports these benefits. Systematic reviews suggest that community-oriented policing can reduce violent crime by 10–20% in targeted areas while also enhancing public satisfaction and perceived legitimacy (Gill et al., 2014; Rosenbaum et al., 2015). In Nigeria, urban programmes such as Lagos' Safe City Project have shown measurable reductions in crime through integrated surveillance, patrols, and public awareness campaigns, while Enugu's Neighbourhood Watch has significantly increased reporting rates and community trust (Lagos State Government, 2021; Ugwuoke, 2015).

In Plateau State, partnerships under the PSCPP provide a particularly instructive example in a high-conflict environment. The Community Policing Committees (CPCs) act as inclusive platforms bringing together police officers, traditional leaders, youth representatives, and women to mediate disputes, develop locally tailored prevention strategies, and foster social cohesion across ethnic and religious divides (Akanji, 2020). However, despite these promising structures, studies on community policing in Plateau State, including those from 2022, indicate that significant challenges persist, such as inadequate funding, lack of trust, political interference, corruption, inadequate training, lack of community participation, and limited cooperation from citizens (Nankap, 2022).

Recent initiatives, such as efforts to empower women in mediation and UNODC-supported training, represent attempts to strengthen inclusivity in partnerships. However, their effectiveness requires further empirical assessment (CLEEN 2024). Furthermore, to CLEEN Foundation (20024), activities including high-level engagements on community policing roadmaps have promoted strengthened partnerships in Middle Belt regions (CLEEN, 2024). UNODC's collaborative efforts, including training on child rights and vulnerability reduction, further support preventive engagement (UNODC, 2023a). These partnerships not only deter crime through increased guardianship and visibility but also cultivate social capital, networks of trust, norms, and reciprocal relationships enabling collective action for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1995). The result can be more sustainable outcomes, including reduced recidivism, lower fear of crime, and improved community cohesion (Umeobika, 2022; Kirby & Pettitt, 2015).

However, realising these benefits in Plateau requires careful navigation of existing power imbalances: for example, integrating vigilante groups risks co-optation by political elites or perpetuation of ethnic biases unless supported by robust oversight, training, and accountability mechanisms (Akanji, 2020). Overall, these collaborations demonstrate community policing's potential to foster procedural justice while highlighting the importance of empirical monitoring and adaptive refinement to ensure equitable and inclusive impacts, especially given the persistent structural barriers (Tyler, 2004, 2015).

Resource Constraints and Institutional Barriers

Compounding the trust deficit are longstanding structural and resource limitations that systematically hinder the police from performing their duties effectively. Nigeria's national security budget in 2025 allocated approximately ₦4.91 trillion to defence and security (including the military, police, interior ministry, and related agencies), out of a total federal budget of ₦47.9–49.7 trillion (Budgit, 2025). Within this, the Ministry of Police Affairs received roughly ₦1.31 trillion, representing about 26% of the security budget but less than 3% of overall federal expenditure (calculated as ₦1.31 trillion / ₦49.7 trillion, 2.6%) (Budgit, 2025). This structural imbalance continues a cycle of operational incapacity: the NPF remains critically understaffed (with a police-to-citizen ratio of approximately 1:600–650, below the UN-recommended 1:450), officers frequently lack basic logistics such as fuel, vehicles, and communication tools, and training programmes are inconsistent and underfunded (UK Government, 2024; Ikechukwu & Agbor, 2019).

High officer turnover is worsened by poor welfare, delayed salaries, inadequate housing, and limited career advancement, leading many personnel to engage in informal income-generating activities that undermine professionalism and public trust (Ekpenyong, 2020). Political interference further worsens these issues, as resources are often diverted to elite protection, short-term political goals, or patronage networks rather than long-term, community-focused policing (Alemika, 2019).

Studies focused on Plateau State have consistently highlighted these implementation gaps. For instance, Nankap (2022) found that despite the establishment of the Plateau State Community Policing Programme (PSCPP) and Operation Rainbow, key challenges remain, including inadequate funding, lack of trust between the police and communities, political interference, corruption, inadequate training of officers, and limited community participation. These findings echo broader observations in the literature and underscore why many community policing initiatives in the state have struggled to achieve sustained impact despite policy commitments at the national and state levels (Akanji, 2020).

In Plateau State, despite the innovative design of the PSCPP (including multi-stakeholder CPCs and conflict mediation units), implementation continues to face challenges with inconsistent federal and state funding, logistical difficulties in remote and conflict-affected rural areas, and bureaucratic resistance to decentralisation (Auta, 2025). Studies on

community policing in Plateau State have long documented these issues, noting that the state government introduced the Operation Rainbow security outfit as part of early efforts to strengthen local security architecture (Nankap, 2022; USIP, 2016).

A clear sign of escalating frustration emerged in late October 2025, when the Berom Community Development Association (BECA) formally endorsed Governor Caleb Mutfwang's advocacy for state police. In a widely reported press statement, BECA argued that only a state-level policing structure could effectively address insecurity and constant attacks on rural communities (Auta, 2025).

These resource and institutional barriers are not merely quantitative but systemic: they undermine community policing's ability to transition from rhetoric to effective practice, perpetuate reliance on reactive military deployments, and erode trust and cooperation. Addressing them may require structural reforms such as constitutional amendments to enable state-level policing, alongside transparent, ring-fenced funding mechanisms. However, such proposals represent significant policy recommendations that warrant separate, detailed legal and political analysis beyond the scope of this review.

Comparative Overview Table of Community Policing Initiatives in Nigeria

Aspect	Plateau State (PSCPP / Operation Rainbow)	Other Nigerian States (Lagos, Enugu, Kaduna)	Key Differences
Focus Areas	Ethno-religious mediation, farmer-herder conflict resolution, vigilante integration, youth recruitment (over 1,000 in 2025)	Urban surveillance, technology-driven patrols & Neighbourhood Safety Corps (Lagos); Neighbourhood Watch for community vigilance (Enugu); farmer-herder & communal conflict management (Kaduna)	Rural, identity-based & conflict resolution focus vs. urban crime prevention and technology-supported models
Partnerships	Community Policing Committees (CPCs) with traditional rulers, women, youth; UNODC trainings; multi-stakeholder roundtables	Government-NGO & corporate partnerships (Lagos Safe City); formal Neighbourhood Watch schemes (Enugu); mixed formal-informal collaborations (Kaduna)	Deep multi-ethnic & traditional leader involvement vs. urban institutional & tech-focused alliances
Challenges	Inadequate funding, deep mistrust, political interference, persistent farmer-herder violence	Resource & urban-rural disparities, coordination issues, vigilante accountability	Entrenched ethnic/religious tensions in rural areas vs. general insecurity, modernisation & implementation gaps in urban settings
Outcomes (2023–2025)	Increased awareness campaigns; women's participation in mediation; modest local peace gains in some CPC areas; ongoing calls for state police	Crime reductions in targeted urban hotspots (Lagos); improved crime reporting & community engagement (Enugu Neighbourhood Watch); varied conflict mitigation (Kaduna)	Localised peacebuilding & resilience in high-conflict zones vs. more quantifiable urban crime metrics

Sources: Author compilation based on Lagos State Government (2021); British Council community policing reports; Akanji (2020); Ojo et al. (2023); UNODC (2023a); Nankap (2022).

Theoretical framework

The preceding sections, covering conceptual foundations, historical development, the promise of partnerships, and ongoing challenges, reveal a complex and evolving landscape for community policing in Nigeria. Plateau State's experience, marked by recurrent ethno-religious violence and farmer-herder conflicts, reflects broader national insecurities while also highlighting local innovations, including inclusive Community Policing Committees (CPCs) and the youth-focused expansion of Operation Rainbow. Recent developments, such as the recruitment of youth into Operation Rainbow and UNODC-supported training programmes,

demonstrate how such partnerships can strengthen guardianship and rebuild social cohesion (UNODC, 2023a).

These efforts align conceptually with Routine Activity Theory (RAT) (Cohen & Felson, 1979), which posits that crime occurs when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian converge in time and space. In Plateau, joint patrols, CPC-led interventions, and vigilante oversight increase capable guardianship, decrease target suitability through early warning and conflict mediation, and disrupt crime hotspots in areas such as Riyom and Bokkos LGAs.

However, RAT's situational focus has limitations in Nigeria's ethno-religious context. While it explains opportunistic violence (e.g., banditry or kidnapping), it underestimates structural and identity-based causes of deep-rooted ethnic and religious grievances, historic land disputes, and collective mobilisation that sustain prolonged cycles of retaliatory communal conflict (Ahmed, 2013a; Salawu, 2010). Critics further highlight RAT's Western-centric assumption of rational, individual offenders. In Nigeria, violence frequently stems from group-based, identity-driven actions embedded in extended social conflicts rather than isolated opportunities (Ahmed, 2013a; Omotola, 2023).

Social Disorganisation Theory (SDT) (Shaw & McKay, 1942) offers a complementary perspective, suggesting that poverty, residential instability, ethnic heterogeneity, and weakened institutions erode collective efficacy, the shared willingness of residents to intervene for the common good (Sampson et al., 1997). In Plateau State, ethnic and religious diversity, forced displacement, and economic hardships (e.g., farm abandonments) contribute to social disorganisation, weakening informal social controls and enabling violence (Akanji, 2020). Community policing initiatives such as CPCs aim to rebuild collective efficacy through inclusive platforms.

Nevertheless, SDT also faces significant limitations in the Nigerian context. Its Chicago origins assume heterogeneity inherently weakens cohesion, overlooking how pre-colonial social structures (such as segmentary lineage systems in some African societies) can mobilise collective action, including conflict (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, as a classic comparative reference). More critically, analyses of police reform in Nigeria emphasise that elite manipulation, political incitement, and state failure often actively generate or exacerbate social disorganisation, rather than it arising solely from community characteristics (Omotola, 2023).

To better capture the identity-based and prolonged nature of conflicts in Plateau State and Nigeria, Protracted Social Conflict Theory (Azar, 1980s–1990s; Bakare, 2021) provides a useful supplementary lens. This theory explains enduring conflicts as stemming from the denial of basic human needs, such as security, recognition, access to resources, and political participation, particularly along communal (ethnic, religious, or cultural) lines. In Nigeria, it highlights how unaddressed grievances and structural inequalities sustain cycles of violence beyond situational or disorganisational factors.

Comparative insights place Plateau's experience within a broader context. Nationally, Lagos' Safe City Project achieves measurable reductions in urban property crime through technology but struggles to build trust in diverse slum areas, in contrast to Plateau's emphasis on ethnic mediation and rural vigilance (Lagos State Government, 2021). Kaduna and Benue share similar farmer-herder dynamics but rely more heavily on informal vigilantes with limited formal integration, increasing the risk of extrajudicial conduct (Ojo et al., 2023).

Internationally, South Africa's post-1994 community policing in high-crime townships offers parallels in rebuilding trust amidst inequality, yet faces comparable resource and political constraints (Marks & Wood, 2007). Kenya's Nyumba Kumi household-based vigilance model demonstrates effective grassroots engagement in ethnically tense areas, suggesting Nigeria could benefit from hybrid formal-informal structures (Mutahi & Ruteere, 2019). These comparisons indicate that while the Plateau State Community Policing

Programme (PSCPP) is an innovative localisation approach, scaling it nationally requires navigating federal-state jurisdictional tensions, and international lessons emphasise the need for sustained political will and equitable resource distribution.

Conclusion

Community policing in Nigeria, as exemplified in Plateau State, represents a resilient yet profoundly challenged shift from colonial-era repressive policing and post-independence militarisation toward collaborative, community-centred security governance. This review has synthesised the historical legacies of mistrust, the motivations behind the 2019 national policy and state-level initiatives such as the PSCPP and Operation Rainbow, and the practical workings of police-community partnerships. Key findings indicate that while partnerships under CPCs have facilitated some local mediation, awareness campaigns, and modest gains in social cohesion, persistent structural barriers, inadequate funding, deep-rooted mistrust, political interference, corruption, and limited community participation continue to undermine effectiveness (Nankap, 2022; Akanji, 2020). In Plateau State, ethno-religious conflicts and farmer-herder violence have exposed the limitations of centralised, reactive policing, even as Recent efforts (2023–2025), such as youth recruitment into Operation Rainbow and UNODC-supported programmes, offer potential for building guardianship and social cohesion, though their outcomes remain preliminary and require rigorous evaluation. However, without addressing elite manipulation, resource constraints, and the need for culturally grounded adaptations, these initiatives risk remaining aspirational. Sustainable progress demands inclusive, locally rooted frameworks that integrate traditional institutions, ensure accountability, and prioritise procedural justice. Future research should prioritise longitudinal evaluations to assess long-term impacts on trust, crime reduction, and social cohesion in conflict-affected regions like Plateau.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed:

1. Integrate Routine Activity Theory (situational prevention) with Social Disorganisation Theory and Protracted Social Conflict Theory by developing hybrid training modules for police and CPC members. These modules should include practical tools for mapping crime hotspots, rebuilding collective efficacy through community dialogues, and addressing identity-based grievances in farmer-herder and ethno-religious conflicts.
2. Prioritise adequate and ring-fenced funding for community policing initiatives, consistent police training on procedural justice and cultural sensitivity, and mechanisms to reduce political interference and corruption. This aligns with recommendations from Plateau-focused studies emphasising enhanced community involvement and professionalisation.
3. Institutionalise community peace compacts, regular peace meetings, and inclusive representation of women, youth, and traditional leaders within CPCs, while establishing independent oversight bodies to monitor vigilante integration and prevent ethnic bias.
4. As a policy option, states such as Plateau could pilot enhanced state-level coordination mechanisms (within current constitutional limits) or advocate for phased constitutional amendments to enable state police. A potential roadmap includes: (a) broad stakeholder consultations, (b) legislative drafting with safeguards for accountability and human rights, (c) pilot implementation in selected LGAs, and (d) independent evaluation before national rollout. Such reforms require extensive political consensus and should be grounded in further legal and comparative analysis.
5. Implement long-term, mixed-methods evaluation frameworks that track not only crime statistics but also indicators of trust, collective efficacy, and social cohesion. This should involve collaboration between researchers, UNODC, and state institutions for evidence-based policy refinement.

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