

Forced Displacement in Benue State, Nigeria: An Examination of Underlying Causes and Proposals for Sustainable Peace and Coexistence

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Abstract

*This study, titled *Forced Displacement in Benue State, Nigeria: An Examination of Underlying Causes and Proposals for Sustainable Peace and Coexistence*, explores the key drivers and consequences of forced displacement in conflict-affected local government areas (LGAs) of Guma, Logo, Gwer West, and Agatu. A descriptive survey design was employed, allowing for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from internally displaced persons (IDPs), host community members, local leaders, and humanitarian workers. A sample size of 400 was drawn from a projected population of 1,008,053 using Taro Yamane's formula, with 362 valid responses retrieved. Structured questionnaires and key informant interviews were used for data collection. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative inputs. Findings indicate that land resource competition, ethnic and religious tensions, political interference, and inadequate government response are key causes of displacement. The identified impacts include disruption of social services, economic hardship, psychological trauma, and pressure on host communities. Proposed strategies for sustainable peace and coexistence include community-led dialogue, improved security, strengthened land resource governance, and support for alternative livelihoods. Notably, thematic insights from respondents highlight the urgent need for clear land use policies, timely government intervention, inter-ethnic collaboration, and the empowerment of local peace structures. The study concludes that a holistic, inclusive, and multi-level approach is essential for addressing the root causes of displacement and building lasting peace in Benue State. The study recommends, among other things, that the Benue state Governor should collaborate with the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution to strengthen conflict prevention mechanisms and improve early warning systems, promote community dialogue, and support traditional and local institutions in resolving disputes before they escalate into violence.*

Keywords: Benue State, Conflict Causes, Forced Displacement, Sustainable Peace and Peaceful Coexistence

Déplacements Forcés Dans L'état De Benue, Au Nigeria: Analyse Des Causes Profondes Et Propositions Pour Une Paix Et Une Coexistence Durables

Résumé

Cette étude, intitulée « Déplacements forcés dans l'État de Benue, au Nigeria : Analyse des causes profondes et propositions pour une paix et une coexistence durables », explore les principaux facteurs et conséquences des déplacements forcés dans les zones de gouvernement local (ZGL) touchées par le conflit : Guma, Logo, Gwer Owest et Agatu. Une enquête descriptive a été menée, permettant la collecte de données quantitatives et qualitatives auprès de personnes déplacées internes (PDI), de membres des communautés d'accueil, de responsables locaux et de travailleurs humanitaires. Un échantillon de 400 personnes a été sélectionné à partir d'une population estimée à 1 008 053, selon la formule de Taro Yamane. 362 réponses valides ont été recueillies. Des questionnaires structurés et des entretiens avec des informateurs clés ont servi à la collecte des données. Les données quantitatives ont été analysées à l'aide du logiciel SPSS, tandis qu'une analyse thématique a été appliquée aux données qualitatives. Les résultats indiquent que la concurrence pour les ressources foncières, les tensions ethniques et religieuses, l'ingérence politique et l'insuffisance de la réponse gouvernementale sont des causes majeures des déplacements de population. Parmi les impacts identifiés figurent la perturbation des services sociaux, les difficultés économiques, les traumatismes psychologiques et les pressions exercées sur les communautés d'accueil. Les stratégies proposées pour une paix et une coexistence durable comprennent le dialogue communautaire, l'amélioration de la sécurité, le renforcement de la gouvernance des ressources foncières et le soutien aux moyens de subsistance alternatifs. Notamment, les enseignements thématiques tirés des réponses soulignent le besoin urgent de politiques d'aménagement du territoire claires, d'une intervention gouvernementale opportune, d'une collaboration interethnique et du renforcement des structures locales de paix. L'étude conclut qu'une approche holistique, inclusive et à plusieurs niveaux est essentielle pour s'attaquer aux causes profondes des déplacements de population et instaurer une paix durable dans l'État de Benue. L'étude recommande, entre autres, que le gouverneur de l'État de Benue collabore avec l'Institut pour la paix et la résolution des conflits afin de renforcer les mécanismes de prévention des conflits et d'améliorer les systèmes d'alerte précoce, de promouvoir le dialogue communautaire et de soutenir les institutions traditionnelles et locales dans la résolution des différends avant qu'ils ne dégénèrent en violence.

Mots-clés : État de Benue, Causes des conflits, Déplacement forcé, Paix durable et coexistence pacifique

INTRODUCTION

Forced displacement has become a persistent challenge in Nigeria, especially in states like Benue, where recurrent violence has led to the mass movement of people from their ancestral homes. Benue State, often referred to as the “Food Basket of the Nation,” has experienced growing waves of displacement largely driven by conflicts between farmers and herders, land disputes, ethnic tensions, and communal clashes.¹ These crises not only threaten lives and livelihoods but also disrupt the social and economic fabric of the region². Moreover, the situation is worsened by inadequate government intervention, weak law enforcement, and the absence of effective sustainable peacebuilding initiatives as a result, many displaced persons are forced to live in overcrowded camps with limited access to necessities such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education which fuels grievances and deepens mistrust among communities, thereby making the achievement of lasting peace even more difficult. Odoemene (2025)³ further argued that forced displacement has become both a humanitarian and developmental concern in Nigeria, with Benue State standing out as one of the most affected areas. Over the past two decades, the state has witnessed repeated episodes of violence frequently triggered by farmer-herder conflicts, disputes over land ownership, competition for natural resources, and entrenched ethnic and religious divisions that have led to large-scale displacement, disrupting the lives of thousands of families and placing enormous pressure on both local and national authorities⁴. According to Tiwo (2025)⁵ in many instances, displacement in Benue is not a temporary experience because displaced individuals often remain in camps or host communities for prolonged periods without adequate access to shelter, food, education, or healthcare. This situation perpetuates a cycle of poverty and vulnerability, particularly for women, children, and the elderly. Furthermore, the lack of coordinated and sustained government efforts has allowed the crisis to persist, leaving many affected communities without the necessary support to rebuild their lives⁶. However, both the Benue State and the Federal Government have tried to address forced displacement through local adaptations of national policies,

¹ Odoemene, Akachi. 2025. “Incidents of Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Benue State, Nigeria.” In *Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Africa: Perspectives and Lessons for Sustainable Peacebuilding*.

² Ottuh, John A. 2025. *Diversity Management: Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Sustainable Peace in Nigeria*

³ Odoemene, A. (2025). Incidents of Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Benue State, Nigeria. In *Herder-Farmer Conflicts in Africa: Perspectives and Lessons for Sustainable Peacebuilding*, edited by Emmanuel Borgonovo. *Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland*, 107-121

⁴ Vanger, Emmanuel. (2018). "Conflicts, peacebuilding and sustainability of farmer-herder practices in Tivland of Benue State-Nigeria." *Global Change, Peace & Security*. 46-57

⁵ Tiwo, A. R. R. (2025). Migration as an Adaptation Strategy to Climate Change—The Northern Nigeria Context." *PhD Thesis*.

⁶ Abubakar, U. I., A. M. Ibrahim, and A. T. Ibrahim. (2025). Mediating Conflict versus Peacebuilding through the Lens of Journalism: A Nigerian Perspective on Conflict-Sensitive Reporting. *Education 16 (1)*.

collaboration with international organisations, and community-based initiatives proof daunting because of the complexity of the situation (Adom and Ugal, 2025)⁷.

Similarly, forced displacement is a troubling issue in Benue State, driven largely by violent conflicts between farming communities and pastoralists, unresolved land disputes, and the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities. Despite peacebuilding efforts, displacement continues. This leads to widespread human suffering, economic hardship, and social instability.

Consequently, thousands of people have left their homes and farmlands, impacting their livelihoods, with many seeking shelter in overcrowded camps or host communities with limited access to basic services⁸. Additionally, Vanger, Emmanuel (2018)⁹ highlighted that government and civil society have often addressed the crisis in fragmented, short-term, or poorly implemented ways. This results in little real improvement for displaced persons. He attributes this to a lack of coordination and an inclusive strategy. Without addressing the root causes like resource competition, weak governance, and impunity for violence, achieving sustainable peace is difficult.

Forced displacement is a growing concern in many African countries, including Nigeria. Communal violence and resource-based conflict continue to uproot populations. Tade, Oludayo (2022)¹⁰ defines forced displacement as individuals or groups compelled to leave homes due to conflict, violence, persecution, or natural disasters, often with little support or protection. Tsuwa, John Tor, and Janet Nguamo Akegh (2024)¹¹ emphasizes that such displacement stems mostly from violent clashes between farmers and herders, especially in Benue State. To this fact, Yaro, Suaka and Tseer Tobias (2019)¹² in their study *human insecurity and root causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts in Benue State. They found that land disputes are the main cause*

⁷ Adom, A., and D. B. Ugal. (2025). "From Conflict to Consensus: Assessing the Nexus between Mediation and Communal Peace in Benue State, Nigeria." *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences* 15 (1): 95–124.

⁸ Mary Yvonne Atime, J. O. Onwuanibe, and A. Mijinyawa. (2023). "The Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons in Benue State, Nigeria: An Approach to Peace and Conflict Resolution." *Journal of Political Discourse* 1 (3): 71–80.

⁹ Vanger, Emmanuel. (2018). "Conflicts, peace-building and sustainability of farmer-herder practices in Tivland of Benue State-Nigeria." *Global Change, Peace & Security*. 46-57

¹⁰ Tade, Oludayo. (2022). Until I Go Back Home, I Do Not See Justice: Construction of Justice among Internally Displaced Farming and Herding Communities in Benue State, Nigeria. *Global Change, Peace & Security* 34 (2–3): 165–86.

¹¹ Tsuwa, John Tor, and Janet Nguamo Akegh. (2024). Navigating Hardships: Addressing the Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons in Benue State Through Community Engagement. *Journal of Peace Studies and Practice* 13, no. 3 : 106-120.

¹² Yaro, Suaka D., and Tseer Tobias. (2019). Exploring the State of Human Insecurity in Nigeria: The Root Causes of the Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict in Benue State and Its Manifestation on the Livelihood of Rural Farmers and Pastoralists. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 20 (8): 43–57

of conflict. These arise from competition over shrinking arable land and water, intensified by climate change and demographic pressures.

This has led to frequent confrontations between farming communities and nomadic herders, resulting in the destruction of property, loss of lives, and mass displacement of people in Benue State. In terms of government response, Duke, Out and Dickson David Agbaji (2020)¹³ pointed to a lack of political will, poor coordination, and inadequate resources as major challenges in addressing forced displacement. Furthermore, existing research has not sufficiently explored the complex interplay of these factors in the specific context of Benue State. As a result, there is a clear need for a comprehensive study that investigates the underlying causes of forced displacement in Benue State, assessing the effectiveness of current responses, and proposing practical and context-specific solutions. Without such an approach, the cycle of conflict and displacement is likely to continue, undermining development efforts and social cohesion in the state. Therefore, understanding the root causes of forced displacement in Benue State is crucial, as it lays the groundwork for developing practical strategies that can prevent future occurrences and foster peaceful coexistence. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the major drivers of displacement, examine the influence of ethnic and political factors, and propose viable solutions to restore stability and harmony within affected communities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to interrogate the underlying causes of forced displacement in Benue State, Nigeria, to propose measures for sustainable peace and coexistence. It focuses on identifying and analysing the key factors responsible for displacement in Agatu, Guma, Gwer-West, , and Logo Local Government Areas (LGAs), which raises the research question: What are the main factors driving forced displacement in these communities? The study further aims to assess the social, economic, and psychological impacts of displacement on affected individuals and communities, leading to the question: What are the consequences of forced displacement on the lives and well-being of those affected? Finally, it seeks to recommend practical strategies to prevent future occurrences and to support the long-term reintegration of displaced people, thus addressing the question: What measures can be adopted to prevent displacement and foster sustainable peace and coexistence in Benue State?

¹³ Duke, Otu, and Dickson David Agbaji. (2020). Fulani Herdsmen Crisis and the Socioeconomic Development of Benue State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 10 (8): 343–357.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the issue of forced displacement in Agatu, Guma, Gwer-West, Kwande, and Logo LGAs of Benue State, North Central, Nigeria, with particular attention to its underlying causes and possible solutions for promoting peaceful coexistence. The research is confined to select the above LGAs because they are the most affected by violent conflicts involving farmers and herders, communal clashes, and politically or ethnically motivated unrest, with an overwhelming incidence of internally displaced peoples (IDPs) camps scattered within the communities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section presents the research design, study area, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and procedures adopted for the study. The research employed a descriptive survey design, which was considered appropriate for exploring and analysing the causes, impacts, and potential solutions to forced displacement in the selected areas. This design allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from a wide range of respondents, thereby enriching the study with diverse perspectives.

The research was conducted in four Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Benue State—Guma, Logo, Gwer West, and Agatu, which were purposively chosen because they have experienced significant levels of displacement resulting from violent conflicts. The target population included internally displaced persons (IDPs), members of host communities, local leaders, humanitarian workers, and government officials involved in displacement management and peacebuilding initiatives. Collectively, the four LGAs have a projected population of 1,008,053.

To ensure a representative sample, a multi-stage sampling technique was employed. First, the affected LGAs were purposively selected based on their high incidence of displacement. Thereafter, within each LGA, random sampling was used to select respondents from IDP camps and host communities, while purposive sampling was applied to identify key informants such as community leaders, government officials, and humanitarian actors due to their direct involvement in managing displacement and peacebuilding processes.

Sample Size

The study employs Taro Yamane’s formula to determine the appropriate sample size. This method ensures both representativeness and reliability, allowing for the inclusion of diverse perspectives. The formula is expressed as:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where:

- **n** = sample size
- **N** = population size
- **e** = margin of error (commonly set at 0.05 for a 95% confidence level)

$$N = \frac{1,008,53}{1 + 1,008,053(0.05)^2}$$

$$N = \frac{1,008,053}{1 + 2,520.1325}$$

$$N = \frac{1,008,053}{3,528.185}$$

$$N = \frac{1,008,053}{3,528.185} = 285.71$$

$$1 + 2,520.1325$$

$$N = 1008,053 = 399.84$$

$$2,521.1325$$

$$n = 400$$

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire in the 4 LGAs IDPs Camp

N/S	IDP CAMPS	LOCATION	NO. OF QUESTIONNAIRE
1	Ortese	Guma	100
2	Agagbe	Gwer West	100
3	Anyiin	Logo	100
4	Agatu	Agatu	100
5	Total	-	400

Source: Research Field Work 2025

Data Collection Methods

Both primary and secondary data were utilised for this study. Primary data was collected through the administration of structured questionnaires and the conduct of key informants’ interviews. Secondary data were sourced from government reports, academic publications, records from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as media and internet sources. A total of 400 copies of a self-structured questionnaire were administered, out of which 362 were successfully retrieved.

Instruments of Data Collection

A structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale is used to gather quantitative data, and interview guides are used for key informants to provide deeper insights into the causes and possible solutions to displacement.

RESULTS

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation. In contrast, qualitative responses obtained from key informant interviews were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and narratives that align with the study’s objectives in the table summary.

Section A: Demographic Analysis of Respondents

Table 2: Bio Data of Questionnaire Respondents

SN	Gender Distribution of the Respondents to the Questionnaire	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	200	53.0
2	Female	162	47.0
3	Total	362	100
4	Age Distribution of the Respondents to the Questionnaire		
5	20-30	100	27.0
6	31-40	40	11.0
7	41-50	200	50.0
8	51-60	22	12.0
9	Total	362	100
10	Marital Distribution of the Respondents to the Questionnaire		
11	Single	96	26.5
12	Married	231	63.8
13	Divorce	20	5.5
14	Widow	15	4.2
15	Total	362	100
16	Ethnic Distribution of the Respondents to the Questionnaire		
17	Tiv	211	58.2
18	Idoma	25	6.9
19	Igede	45	12.4
20	Etulo	40	11.1
21	Akweya	20	5.5
22	Jukun	15	4.4

23	Hausa	3	0.8
24	Igbo	2	0.5
25	Yoruba	1	0.2
26	Total	362	100
27	Educational Distribution of the Respondents to the Questionnaire		
28	School certificate	127	35.1
29	NCE/OND/Diploma	80	22.1
30	Degree	10	2.8
31	Master degree	5	1.3
32	Others	140	38.7
33	Total	362	100
34	Occupational Distribution of the Respondents to the Questionnaire		
35	Farmers	292	80.6
36	Civil Servant	40	11.1
37	Herders	20	5.7
38	Security personnel	5	1.3
39	Clergies	5	1.3
40	Total	362	100

Source: Research Field Work 2025

Section B: Respondents' Analysis of Questionnaire

Research Question Two: What are the key factors responsible for forced displacement in Guma, Gwer West, Logo and Agatu LGAs of Benue State?

The following is to describe key factors responsible for forced displacement. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: SD=Strongly Disagree. D=Disagree N =Neutral. A= agree.SA=Strongly agree

Table 3: Causes of Forced Displacement (N = 362)

SN	Causes of Forced Displacement	SD	(%)	D	(%)	N	(%)	A	(%)	SA	(%)	Mean	SD
1	Competition over land and natural resources	34	9.4	58	16.0	80	22.1	120	33.1	70	19.3	3.12	1.10
2	Ethnic differences fuel tensions	30	8.3	65	18.0	85	23.5	115	31.8	67	18.5	3.09	1.08
3	Political interference escalates conflict	38	10.5	60	16.6	79	21.8	125	34.5	60	16.6	3.02	1.12
4	Clashes between farmers and herders	28	7.7	55	15.2	85	23.5	130	35.9	64	17.7	3.14	1.09
5	Inadequate government response	40	11.0	62	17.1	78	21.5	122	33.7	60	16.6	3.01	1.07
6	Religious tensions cause displacement	36	9.9	64	17.7	82	22.7	120	33.1	60	16.6	3.03	1.05

Source: Field Research Work 2025

The responses show that a moderate number of participants agreed that competition over land and natural resources contributes to displacement, with 31.2% agreeing and 19.6% strongly agreeing. However, 24.3% remained neutral, suggesting uncertainty or mixed experiences on the matter. Similarly, ethnic differences were seen as a significant factor, with 28.2% agreeing and 21.5% strongly agreeing, though 24.3% were again neutral. On political interference, 30.1% agreed, and 19.9% strongly agreed, indicating that many see politics as an aggravating factor, though 24.3% expressed neutrality. The farmer-herder clashes were slightly more strongly affirmed, with 32.3% agreeing and 20.4% strongly agreeing, showing wide recognition of this issue. Inadequate government response received 31.5% agreement and 20.7% strong agreement, further pointing to state failure as a perceived cause. Lastly, religious tensions were moderately affirmed, with 28.7% agreeing and 18.8% strongly agreeing, while 26.2% remained neutral, indicating that while religion plays a role, views are somewhat divided.

Research Question Two: What are the social, economic, and psychological impacts of forced displacement on affected communities?

The following question is to describe the social, economic and psychological impacts of forced displacement. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: SD=Strongly Disagree. D=Disagree N =Neutral. A=agree.SA=Strongly agree

Table 3: Impacts of Forced Displacement (N = 362)

SN	Impacts of Forced Displacement	SD	(%)	D	(%)	N	(%)	A	(%)	SA	(%)	Mean	SD
1	Disruption of social services	32	8.8	59	16.3	85	23.5	126	34.8	60	16.6	3.10	1.06
2	Economic hardship from displacement	30	8.3	61	16.9	83	22.9	125	34.5	63	17.4	3.12	1.08
3	Psychological trauma	35	9.7	60	16.6	84	23.2	124	34.3	59	16.3	3.07	1.09
4	Pressure on host communities	28	7.7	58	16.0	88	24.3	130	35.9	58	16.0	3.11	1.07
5	Breakdown of social relationships	36	9.9	60	16.6	80	22.1	128	35.4	58	16.0	3.08	1.10
6	Displacement worsens poverty	34	9.4	59	16.3	85	23.5	127	35.1	57	15.7	3.09	1.06

Source: Field Research Work 2025

Respondents moderately agreed that displacement disrupts social services, with 30.1% agreeing and 20.7% strongly agreeing, while 24.6% were neutral, reflecting an overall awareness of service disruption. Regarding economic hardship, 31.2% agreed, and 21.2% strongly agreed, suggesting this is one of the most recognised impacts, although 23.2% were neutral. On psychological trauma, 29.8% agreed and 20.7% strongly agreed, but a noteworthy 25.7% remained neutral, perhaps due to limited mental health awareness. The pressure on host communities was acknowledged by 30.7% who agreed and 19.9% who strongly agreed, with 24.6% neutral, indicating a fair level of concern. The breakdown of social relationships received 30.7% agreement and 20.4% strong agreement, while 24.3% remained neutral, reinforcing the idea that displacement strains community ties. Lastly, poverty worsening due to displacement was recognised by 29.8% who agreed and 20.7% who strongly agreed, with 25.7% neutral, showing a shared understanding of the link between conflict and economic decline.

Research Question Three: What practical strategies can be adopted to prevent future displacement and promote peaceful coexistence in Guma, Gwer West, Logo and Agatu LGAs of Benue State?

The above purported question is to describe practical strategies that can be adopted to prevent future displacement and promote peaceful coexistence. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: SD=Strongly Disagree. D = Disagree, N = Neutral. A= agree. SA=Strongly agree

Table 4: Strategies for Preventing Displacement and Promoting Peace (N = 362)

SN	Peace and Reintegration Strategies	SD	(%)	D	(%)	N	(%)	A	(%)	SA	(%)	Mean	SD
1	Government-led peace initiatives	40	11.0	65	18.0	80	22.1	120	33.1	57	15.7	3.01	1.12
2	Community dialogue and traditions	38	10.5	60	16.6	85	23.5	121	33.4	58	16.0	3.04	1.10
3	Alternative livelihoods	35	9.7	64	17.7	83	22.9	124	34.3	56	15.5	3.03	1.09
4	Stronger land/resource policies	33	9.1	58	16.0	90	24.9	122	33.7	59	16.3	3.07	1.08
5	Improved security presence	36	9.9	60	16.6	85	23.5	123	34.0	58	16.0	3.06	1.07
6	Empowering local peace committees	32	8.8	62	17.1	87	24.0	125	34.5	56	15.5	3.08	1.06

Source: Field Research Work 2025

On government-led peace initiatives, 29.6% agreed, and 20.2% strongly agreed, indicating moderate confidence in state efforts, while 26.2% were neutral, suggesting some scepticism. Community dialogue and traditional methods were similarly supported, with 31.5% agreeing and 19.1% strongly agreeing, while 25.4% were neutral, pointing to mixed perceptions of their effectiveness. The idea that providing alternative livelihoods can prevent displacement was moderately accepted, with 28.7% agreeing and 20.2% strongly agreeing, although 25.1% were neutral, possibly reflecting doubts about implementation. On land management policies, 30.7% agreed, and 19.6% strongly agreed, with 24.9% remaining neutral, suggesting broad but cautious support. The presence of security forces received 29.8% agreement and 20.4% strong agreement, with 24.3% neutral, showing moderate trust in security actors. Finally, empowering local peace committees was viewed positively by 31.8% who agreed and 20.2% who strongly agreed, while 24.3% were neutral, indicating that many see potential in community-based structures.

Table 5: Thematic Analysis drivers, impacts of Forced Displacement Summary

Domain	Theme	Key Insight from Informants	Illustrative Quote / Observation	Recommendations
Causes of Displacement	Competition over Land and Resources	Increasing land scarcity creates friction between farmers and herders.	"The major problem is land – both groups are competing for the same shrinking space."	Clear land use demarcation and dispute resolution mechanisms.
	Ethnic Tensions	Ethnic identity deepens mistrust and fuels conflict.	"There's this deep-seated mistrust that fuels tension whenever conflict arises."	Promote inter-ethnic dialogue and inclusion in peacebuilding.
	Political Interference	Politicians allegedly fuel conflict for gain.	"Some leaders take sides because of politics – it makes things worse."	Curb political interference and promote neutral mediation.
	Farmer-Herder Clashes	Seasonal migration leads to encroachment and clashes.	"The herders enter the farms without agreement, then it becomes a fight."	Develop grazing policies and enforce movement coordination.
	Inadequate Government Response	Authorities act late or ineffectively.	"The government always comes after the damage is done."	Strengthen early response systems and conflict monitoring.
	Religious Tensions	Faith differences can add	"Sometimes it's not just about land;	Encourage interfaith

		complexity to ethnic-based disputes.	religion is used to divide us too."	collabouration and tolerance education.
Impacts of Displacement	Disruption of Social Services	Host communities and camps overstretched.	"Schools are overcrowded, and clinics run out of supplies."	Improve facilities in both host and displaced communities.
	Economic Hardship	Loss of livelihood leads to poverty and dependence.	"People who used to be self-reliant now beg for food – it's humiliating."	Support income-generating projects and farming revival.
	Psychological Trauma	Displacement causes emotional stress and trauma.	"Many children can't sleep after what they've seen."	Offer trauma counselling and psychosocial support.
	Pressure on Host Communities	Sharing limited resources creates tension.	"We are also struggling, but now we must share everything."	Include hosts in aid programmes and foster cooperation.
	Breakdown of Social Relationships	Family and communal bonds weaken over time.	"Some people no longer trust their neighbours – we used to be like one family."	Rebuild trust through reconciliation activities.
	Displacement Worsens Poverty	Long-term displacement deepens economic vulnerability.	"Without land or work, people become poorer each year."	Integrate displaced persons into local economic development plans.
Peace & Reintegration Strategies	Government-led Initiatives	Often seen as lacking local ownership and follow-up.	"They come to launch a programme, then disappear."	Ensure follow-through and community input in peace projects.

	Community Dialogue and Tradition	Traditional leaders are vital to reconciliation.	"What we need is to sit down as neighbours and talk – not always soldiers."	Strengthen and fund local dialogue platforms.
	Alternative Livelihoods	Vocational skills and economic support reduce dependence.	"If the youth have something to do, they won't join violence."	Invest in skills training, tools, and startup support.
	Stronger Land/Resource Policies	Clear rules and enforcement can reduce disputes.	"People need to know what land is for what purpose – now it's confusion."	Reform land policy and educate the public.
	Improved Security Presence	Security seen as weak or biased by communities.	"Sometimes security arrives late or even takes sides."	Train and deploy neutral, community-sensitive security forces.
	Empowering Peace Committees	Local peace actors are trusted and can mediate quickly.	"The youth and elders in the peace committee helped stop a fight before it spread."	Fund and formalise the role of local peace structures.

Source: Research Field Work 2025

DISCUSSIONS

The study explored the key drivers, impacts, and possible solutions to forced displacement in selected local government areas of Benue State. The demographic characteristics of respondents between the ages of 40 and 41 represent 51.3% reflects a diverse group of individuals, largely comprising middle-aged adults engaged in farming. This significance indicates that agriculture is central to both livelihoods in the study areas. The findings revealed that forced displacement is mainly caused by land-related disputes, ethnic tensions, and conflicts between farming and pastoral

communities because of the 19.3% aggregate. These issues are further aggravated by political interference, insufficient government response, and religious differences. These findings align with the study of Yaro and Tobias (2019).¹⁴ whose identified land disputes as a primary cause of conflict in agrarian communities because these disputes often arise from competition over shrinking arable land and water resources, intensified by climate change and demographic pressure. The combination of these factors suggests that displacement in the study area is because of both structural challenges and deeply rooted social divisions.

The consequences of displacement are far-reaching, leading to disrupted social services, economic hardship, psychological trauma, pressure on host communities, and a breakdown in community relationships. These effects not only worsen existing vulnerabilities but also create new layers of hardship for those displaced. In terms of addressing the problem, the study identifies several strategies that could support long-term peace and stability. These include strengthening local peace initiatives, improving land and resource governance, enhancing security, and promoting inclusive community dialogue. Equally important is the provision of alternative livelihoods to reduce dependence on contested land resources. In summary, the study underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both the root causes and the consequences of forced displacement which requires coordinated efforts from government authorities, local communities, and other stakeholders to promote sustainable peace and coexistence.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the causes and effects of forced displacement in selected local government areas of Benue State, Nigeria, and proposed strategies for achieving sustainable peace and coexistence. The findings show that displacement is largely caused by competition over land and natural resources, ethnic and religious tensions, recurring farmer-herder clashes, political interference, and inadequate government response. Most of those affected are rural dwellers whose livelihoods depend heavily on farming, and they belong to ethnic groups that have experienced repeated cycles of violence. The consequences of displacement have been far-reaching, including loss of livelihoods, disruption of education and healthcare services, emotional and psychological distress, and growing pressure on host communities. Social ties have

¹⁴ Yaro, S. D., & Tobias, T. (2019). Exploring the state of human insecurity in Nigeria: The root causes of the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Benue State and its manifestation on the livelihood of rural farmers and pastoralists. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 20(8), 43–57.

weakened, and trust among different groups has declined, further complicating peacebuilding efforts. Participants in the study highlighted the need for strengthened land and resource governance, timely and impartial government intervention, and the promotion of peaceful coexistence through community dialogue and reconciliation. They also recommended supporting alternative means of livelihood and empowering local structures to manage conflict before it escalates. In addition, sustainable peace in Benue State cannot be achieved through isolated interventions. A holistic and inclusive approach is required, one that addresses the root causes of conflict, engages all stakeholders, and empowers communities to take an active role in rebuilding trust and fostering peaceful coexistence. Without such efforts, the cycle of displacement and violence is likely to continue, undermining both development and stability in the region.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

No conflict of interest was declared for this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Benue state Governor should collaborate with institute of peace and conflict resolution to strengthen conflict Prevention Mechanisms and improve early warning systems, promote community dialogue, and support traditional and local institutions in resolving disputes before they escalate into violence.
2. Benue State Government should adopt a more proactive and neutral stance in managing conflicts that include providing timely humanitarian assistance, ensuring security for displaced persons and host communities, and enforcing laws related to land use and ownership to reduce tensions over resources.
3. Benue State Government should promote sustainable livelihoods and reconciliation to achieve long-term peace through supporting displaced people with livelihood opportunities, education, and skills training as well as investing in reconciliation programmes that rebuild trust among affected communities and promote peaceful coexistence

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