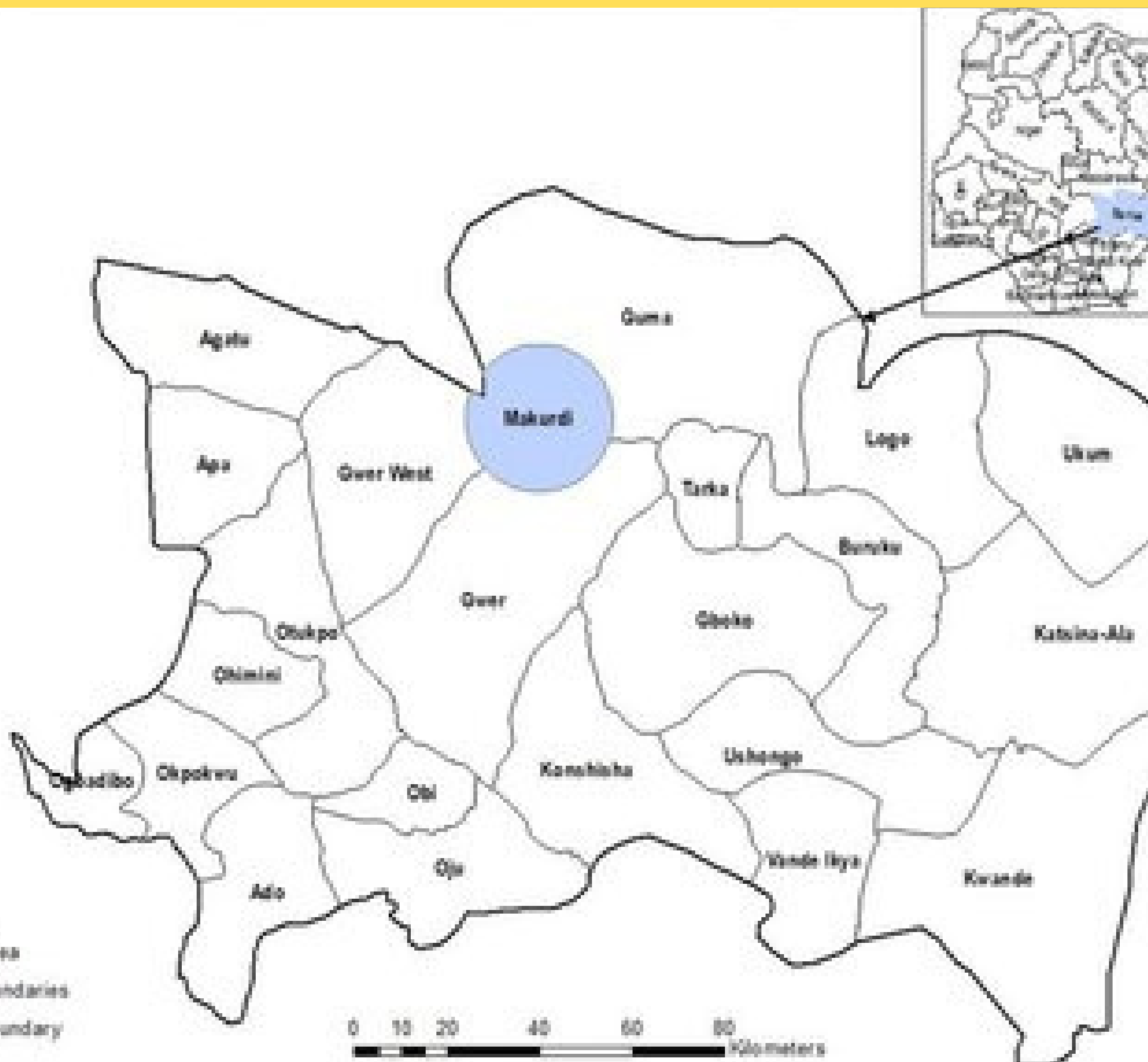


# WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING - NIGERIA



## ESCALATING RURAL VIOLENCE IN BENUE STATE: ADDRESSING THE APRIL 2025 KILLINGS AND ENHANCING COMMUNITY SECURITY



# POLICY BRIEF

April 2025

**NIGERIA**  
Benue State



## Executive Summary

Between 4 and 22 April 2025, Benue State witnessed a significant escalation in rural violence, resulting in at least 87 fatalities and the displacement of more than 15,000 residents across several Local Government Areas (LGAs). The violence—driven by farmer-herder conflicts, unresolved land disputes, and weak governance structures; also led to the destruction of properties and disruption of livelihoods in LGAs of Otukpo, Gwer West, Kwande, Logo, Guma, and Ukum.

Inquiries point to the use of military-grade weapons by suspected armed militias, which reveals systemic failures in security coordination, early warning, governance, and accountability. Community trust in government institutions continues to deteriorate due to delayed response, poor infrastructure, and a lack of justice for victims of previous attacks. Women and youth are particularly vulnerable due to limited economic opportunities and social support systems.



**To address these issues, the policy brief recommends:**

- Establishing rapid response security mechanisms.
- Reforming land governance with stakeholder input.
- Strengthening local peace infrastructure.
- Providing targeted support for displaced persons.
- Ensuring accountability through independent investigations and judicial action. Immediate and coordinated interventions are critical to preventing further violence, rebuilding community trust, and restoring stability in Benue State.

# Introduction and Context

Benue State, located in Nigeria's North-Central region, has long experienced intermittent violence rooted in farmer-herder conflicts, land disputes, and weak governance. In April 2025, a series of attacks in the state marked a significant escalation in rural violence. Between 4 and 22 April 2025, Benue State experienced a series of violent attacks across multiple LGAs, resulting in significant loss of life and property.

In Otukpo, a security guard and eleven others were killed in separate attacks, with over 50 houses burned in Otobi Community. In Gwer West, two separate incidents on 9 April claimed the lives of two men along Taraku-Naka and Adoka-Naka roads. Kwande LGA recorded the killing of three individuals, including two females, during an armed robbery in Anwase. Logo LGA witnessed multiple attacks, including the deaths of 27 people in Katsina-Ala and three fisherwomen in Tse Ijim. In Ukum LGA, a combined total of 40 people were killed in Chito, Gbagir, and Afia communities, with at least 25 others injured. Additionally, a clash over water use in Guma LGA left a Tiv farmer and a Fulani herder injured.



Source: Daily Post

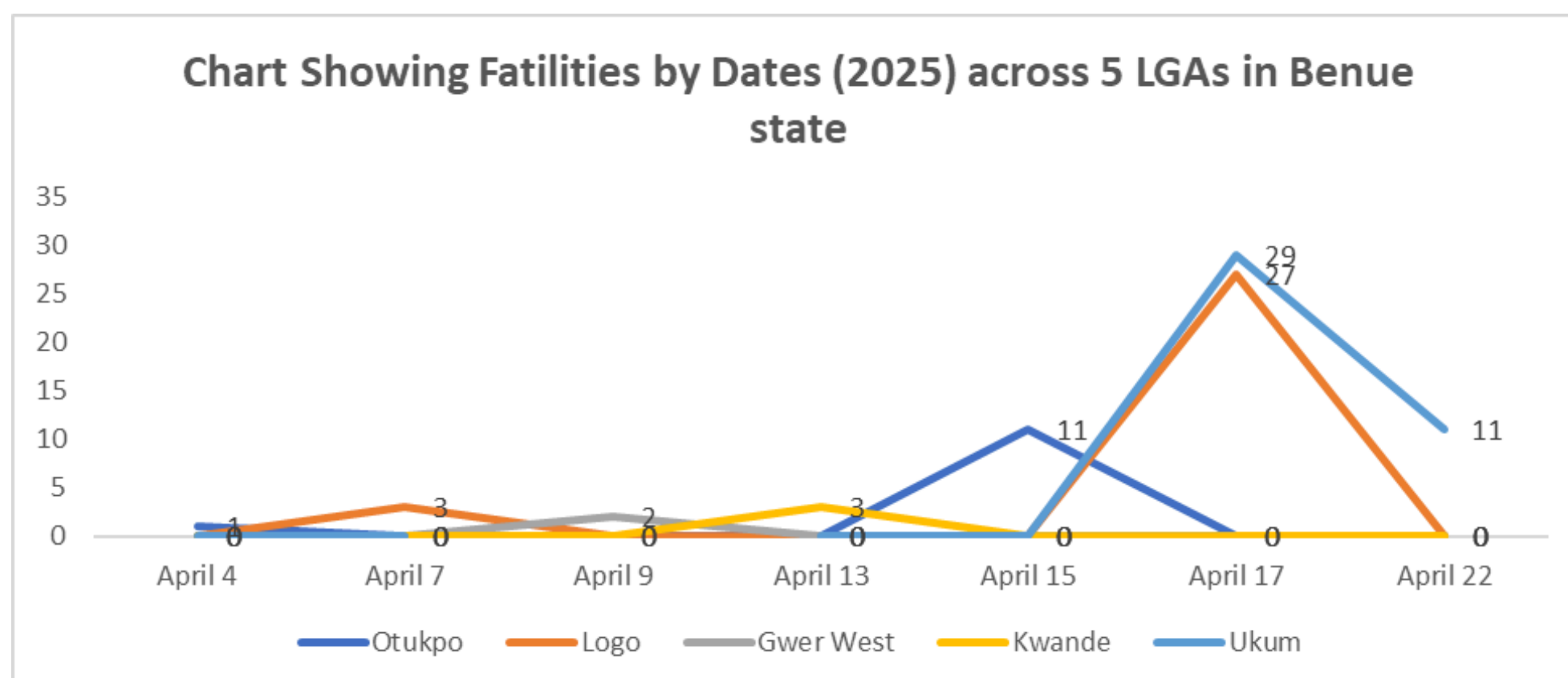
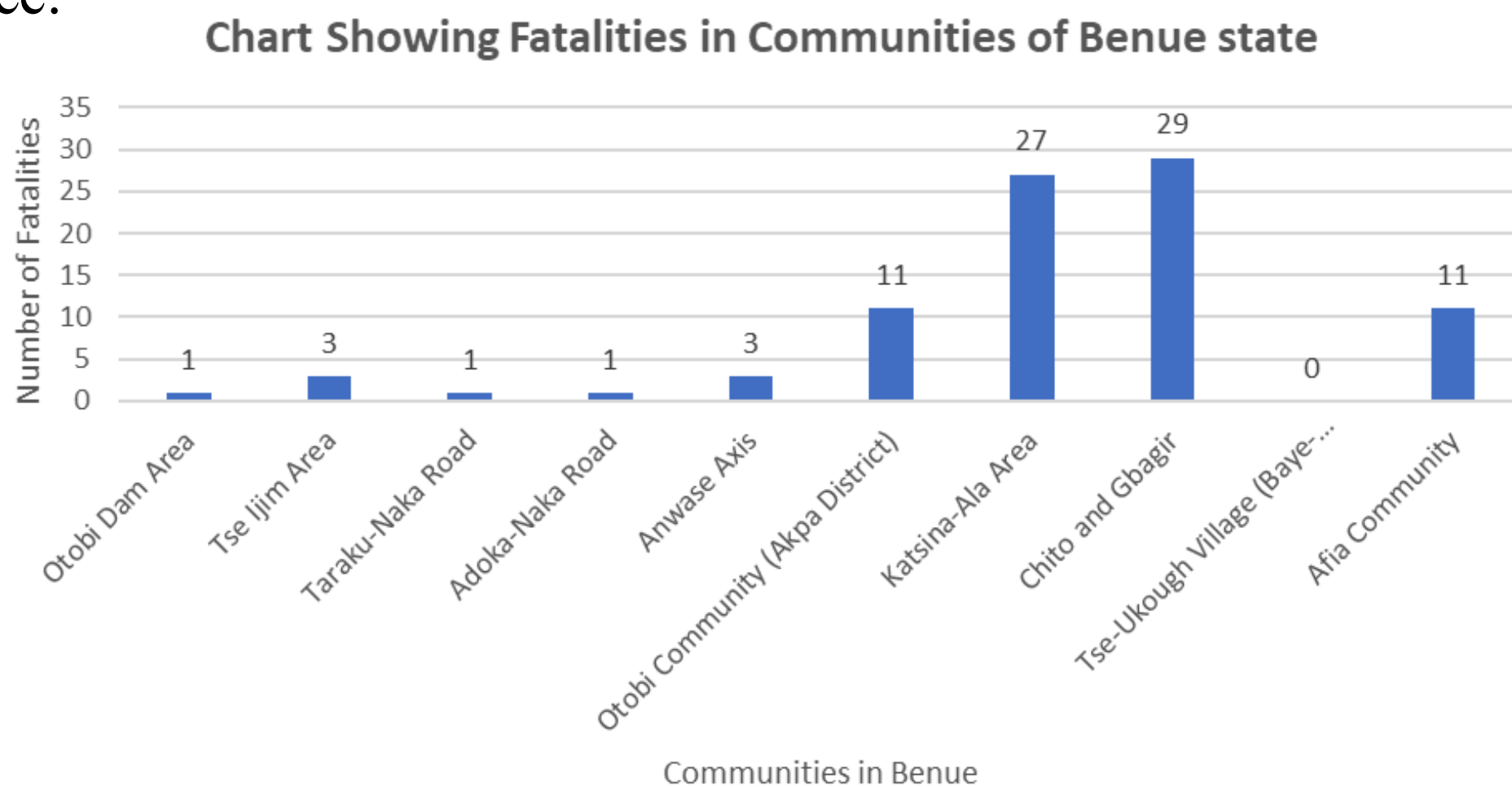
These incidents reflect a persistent security crisis involving suspected armed herders and ethnic militias, prompting ongoing security deployments across the affected areas.

Local authorities have confirmed the use of military-grade weapons and noted the difficulty in accessing affected areas due to poor infrastructure and ongoing insecurity. Community leaders accused the government of inaction, citing delayed responses from security forces and a lack of accountability for past attacks.

# Analysis of Violence in Benue State

The violence in April 2025 illustrates systemic security and governance failures in rural areas of Benue state. Despite multiple peace efforts by state and non-state actors, violence continues due to several intersecting factors:

- **Land Conflicts and Grazing Disputes:** grazing pathways have been encroached upon expansion of agricultural activities. The absence of a grazing program and clear land ownership regulations exacerbates tensions between farmers and nomadic herders.
- **Security Lapses:** Local and state security mechanisms lack capacity and coordination. Delays in response times, inadequate intelligence sharing, and limited security presence in rural areas allow attackers to operate with impunity.
- **Justice and Accountability:** Few perpetrators of previous attacks have faced prosecution. The absence of justice erodes community trust in governmental institutions and encourages retaliatory violence.
- **Displacement and Humanitarian Impact:** Continuous attacks have displaced thousands, leading to increased pressure on IDP camps and host communities. Shelter, food, healthcare, and education are severely affected.
- **Youth and Women Vulnerability:** High unemployment and absence of social infrastructure have made young people and women susceptible to mobilization by armed groups.



## 1 Human Casualties

At least 87 people were confirmed dead as at 23rd April 2025, with dozens wounded and many unaccounted for.

1



## 2 Displacement

More than 15,000 residents have been displaced from Otukpo, Gwer West, Logo, Guma, Kwande, and Ukum LGAs. IDP camps are overstretched and under-resourced.

2

## 3 Property Destruction

Multiple communities were destroyed, disrupting agricultural livelihoods as planting season begins.

3

## 4 Social Fragmentation

The attacks have further heightened mistrust between ethnic communities and fractured the fabric of social cohesion between farmers and herders which threatens coexistence and development efforts.

4



## POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Establish Rapid Response Mechanisms:

- Strengthen local security outfits in collaboration with national agencies.
- Deploy surveillance tools and community alert systems to prevent delayed responses.

### Land Governance Reform:

- Implement land audits and enforce transparent land allocation processes.
- Review and enforce the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) with community input.



### Strengthen Local Peace Infrastructure

- Institutionalize community peace committees involving traditional leaders, women, and youth.
- Provide mediation training and conflict resolution platforms for stakeholders.

### Support for Victims and Rebuilding

- Scale up humanitarian assistance including shelter, health, and psychosocial care.
- Rebuild affected infrastructure and provide incentives for return and reintegration of displaced persons.

### Accountability and Justice Mechanisms

- Create independent panels to investigate attacks and document violations.
- Publicize names of alleged perpetrators and prosecute them through transparent judicial processes.

## About Us

WANEP Nigeria operations are structured along the geopolitical constellation of Nigeria and targets grassroots ownership of peacebuilding initiatives through its member organisations in the thirty-six (36) states of Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Its operational framework was designed along the visions of the regional network operating in West Africa, Chad and Cameroun with ultimate goal of building sustainable peace for growth and development in the region.



## Contact Us



+234-7041895020  
+234-9043056676



Lagos Address:

27 Adeniji Street, Adeniji Estate off WEMPCO Road, Ogba, Ikeja Lagos State



Abuja Address- House 6, A Close Eagleville Estate, Mabushi Abuja.



[wanep-nigeria@wanep.org](mailto:wanep-nigeria@wanep.org)



[www.wanepnigeria.org](http://www.wanepnigeria.org)