



BENUE STATE COMMISSION FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION (BSCPR)

Strategic Plan 2026-2030





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PREFACE

Benue State's journey to peace is undeniably challenging; however, it is a journey that the Benue State Commission for Peace and Reconciliation (BSCP), together with communities and partners, is determined to undertake. This Strategic Plan 2026-2030 sets out a clear vision for a harmonious Benue and outlines practical steps for achieving this ambition. It emphasises prevention over reaction, collaboration over siloed efforts, and inclusion over exclusion. It also addresses the hard truth that peacebuilding requires not only goodwill but also strong institutions, resources, and sustained commitment.

By focussing on early warning and rapid response systems, the strategy aims to save lives by stopping violence before it spirals. By investing in dialogue and reconciliation efforts, it seeks to transform social relationships among groups and lay grievances to rest through justice and healing. By empowering youth, women, men, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), it strives to transform groups often perceived as victims or perpetrators into champions of peace, thereby addressing the root causes of conflict. Moreover, by strengthening BSCP and weaving a tight network of stakeholders, it ensures that peace efforts are coordinated, interdependent, credible, and sustainable.

Successful implementation of this plan means that by 2030, there would be a significant reduction in incidence of violence and enhanced stability and resilience in Benue State. Communities that were once at odds will have established forums to coexist and



cooperate; children will go to school without fear, farmers will plant again on secure land, markets will bustle with trade, and families will return to reclaimed homes. Perhaps most importantly, the people of Benue will increasingly take ownership of peace, with local structures resolving conflicts proactively such that the spectre of large-scale violence recedes.

BSCPR recognises that achieving these outcomes will not be easy and will not be the work of the Commission alone. It will require the unyielding support of and partnership with the State government, security agencies, civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international development partners, alongside the active engagement of communities, traditional and religious institutions, women, men, PWDs, and youth. The Commission, through this plan, commits to serving as a faithful catalyst and coordinator for these collective efforts.

As we move into implementation, the Commission will remain adaptive by embracing continuous learning and adaptation as the local context evolves. Even though new challenges may arise, we will face them with the same unity of purpose that shaped the development of this plan. By the end of 2030, we aspire not only to have met our specific targets but build a foundation for a lasting peace architecture in Benue State – one that can weather future storms and be a legacy for future generations.

With resolve, unity, and God's grace, a more peaceful, stable, and resilient Benue is possible. The BSCPR invites all stakeholders to join hands in this endeavour. Let us turn the words of this strategic plan into action and the aspirations of our people into reality. Together, we will make Benue a beacon of peace and reconciliation.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Benue State Commission for Peace and Reconciliation (BSCPR) express their profound appreciation to all institutions, stakeholders, and partners whose technical, financial, and strategic contributions enabled the development of this Strategic Plan.

The Commission recognises the leadership of our distinguished Royal Fathers and the Benue Traditional Council for their support and guidance. Their enduring advocacy for dialogue, unity, and reconciliation continues to lend moral authority, cultural legitimacy, and strategic direction to peacebuilding efforts across Benue State.

We particularly acknowledge the invaluable support of the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRiNG) Programme funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom, alongside the Caritas Nigeria Conglomerate and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Their technical expertise, collective and sustained partnership, and commitment to inclusive peacebuilding were instrumental in facilitating the consultative processes and shaping the strategic priorities articulated in this Plan.

In addition, we appreciate the team of consultants and technical experts whose facilitation skills, analytical rigor, and evidence-based contributions ensured that this Strategic Plan is forward-looking, contextually grounded, and implementable. The Commission acknowledges the constructive engagement of civil society organisations, security agencies, religious institutions, development partners, and all stakeholders who participated in consultations, validation workshops, and technical review sessions. This Strategic Plan is a product of a collective effort that is anchored on inclusivity, partnership, and shared responsibility, reflecting a unified commitment to advancing social cohesion, sustainable peace, development, and resilience in Benue State.

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for Peace and Reconciliation

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACRONYM	FULL MEANING
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution (methods of resolving disputes without litigation)
BSCPR	Benue State Commission for Peace and Reconciliation
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria (umbrella body for Christian churches)
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CNA	Capacity Needs Assessment (institutional capacity evaluation)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EWER	Early Warning and Early Response (conflict surveillance and quick response mechanism)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (United Kingdom government department)
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GIS	Geographic Information Systems (mapping technology)
HQ	Headquarters
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission (Nigeria's election management body)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCR	Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution
JNI	Jama'atu Nasril Islam (Islamic Council, umbrella for Muslim groups)
LGA	Local Government Area (third tier of government)
LGPC	Local Government Peace Committee (local peacebuilding committee mandated by BSCPR law)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA	Ministry, Department, and Agency (of government)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation (often referring to non-profit development or civic groups)
NLTP	National Livestock Transformation Plan (federal programme addressing farmer-herder conflicts)

NSCDC	Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (paramilitary security agency)
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPWS	Operation Whirl Stroke
PESTLE	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental (analysis framework)
PWDs	Persons With Disabilities
QIPs	Quick Impact Projects
SEMA	State Emergency Management Agency (Benue's disaster relief agency)
SMS	Short Message Service (mobile phone text messaging)
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Anti-Open Grazing Law (2017)	A Benue State law titled the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (2017) bans open grazing of livestock to reduce farmer–herder conflicts. It mandates ranching and prescribes penalties for violators. Effective enforcement of this law remains a key conflict mitigation measure.
Benue Peace Fund	A dedicated fund established by the BSCPR Law (2022) to finance peace initiatives. It is intended to pool government budget allocations, donor contributions, and other resources to support conflict resolution and reconciliation projects in Benue.
“Conflict Sensitivity” / “Do No Harm”	An approach requiring that interventions are designed with awareness of local conflict dynamics so as not to exacerbate tensions. Practitioners continually assess how their activities affect inter-group relations and adjust to avoid unintended negative impacts. The mantra “Do No Harm” emphasises preventing aid or projects from fuelling conflict.
Early Warning and Early Response (EWER)	The process of monitoring indicators and signals of rising tension or impending violence to provide alerts. In this plan, early warning involves community-based reporting of conflicts or threats to a central BSCPR system so that prompt action can be taken. “Early Response” refers to the timely intervention (by security forces, mediators, etc.), once a warning is received, to prevent escalation.
Farmer–Herder Conflict	Conflict between crop farmers and nomadic cattle herders, often over land, water, and crop damage by livestock. Often aggravated by environmental pressures and migration, these disputes have frequently turned violent and are a primary driver of insecurity in the state.
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	People who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict or violence and remain within their country’s borders. IDPs live in camps or host communities.
Local Government Peace Committees (LGPCs)	Peace committees to be established at the LGA level, as outlined in the BSCPR Law (2022). These committees, comprised of community leaders, women, youth, and other stakeholders, are tasked with mediating local disputes, reporting early warning information, and fostering dialogue at the grassroots level. They act as extensions of BSCPR in each local area.

Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS)

A joint military operation launched in May 2018 by Nigeria's defence forces to "counter non-state armed groups" in Benue and neighbouring states. OPWS combined forces from the Army, Air Force, Navy, Police, and Department of State Services to carry out targeted raids and patrols in flashpoint areas (especially the Sankera axis) to restore security.

Peacebuilding

Comprehensive efforts to address the root causes of conflict and build lasting peace. This includes activities such as mediation, dialogue, reconciliation, peace education, and development interventions that address causes of violent conflicts. In this plan, peacebuilding is a shared responsibility involving communities, government, and partners working together to end violence and promote harmony.

Social Cohesion

The strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community. High social cohesion means people from different groups (ethnic, religious, etc.) trust each other, work together for the common good, and resolve disputes using non-violent means. Strengthening social cohesion – through inclusive dialogues, joint community projects, and reconciliation initiatives – is a core aim of this plan.

"Peace Architecture"

The institutional and community structures, processes, and networks through which conflict prevention and peacebuilding are coordinated. Benue's peace architecture includes the BSCPR, the Peace Fund, the network of Peace Committees at the local level, and early warning systems, as well as partnerships among government, security forces, traditional leaders, civil society, and communities. A robust peace architecture helps ensure conflicts are detected early and addressed collaboratively.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Benue State Commission for Peace and Reconciliation was established by the 2022 Benue State Peace and Reconciliation Law with the mandate to monitor, prevent, mediate, and resolve conflicts towards fostering peaceful co-existence in the state. The Strategic Plan 2026-2030 is the Commission's roadmap for fulfilling that mandate over the next five years. It was developed through an inclusive process involving broad consultations across all three senatorial zones, key stakeholder interviews, and a review of conflict data and policies. The plan aligns with Benue State's development and security frameworks to ensure clarity, focus, and impact. The guiding vision, mission, and goals of the Plan are as follows:

Vision: A peaceful, secure, and stable Benue State where communities coexist in harmony, conflicts are resolved through dialogue and justice, and development can thrive for all.

Mission: To coordinate and support state and community action that prevents violence, resolves disputes, and strengthens peace, ensuring early warning leads to early response through inclusive, locally informed peacebuilding.

Strategic Goals: To achieve this vision, the Plan defines four interrelated goals for 2026-2030, each with specific objectives and outcomes:

- **SG1: Conflict Prevention and Early Response:** Consolidate and strengthen robust early warning systems and rapid response mechanisms to prevent the eruption or escalation of violence. This includes community-based conflict monitoring in every local government

area (LGA), timely mediation of disputes, and a coordinated security/humanitarian response to emerging threats.

- **SG2: Dialogue, Mediation, and Reconciliation:** Resolve ongoing conflicts and historical grievances through inclusive dialogue and mediation efforts. BSCPR will facilitate peace dialogues between conflicting groups (e.g., farmers and herders, communities with boundary disputes, youth gangs, etc.), broker local peace agreements, and support reconciliation and healing in communities affected by violence.
- **SG3: Inclusion and Social Cohesion:** Empower youth and women as peacebuilders and address the social impacts of conflict on vulnerable groups. This focuses on engaging marginalised groups in peace processes, rebuilding trust among diverse communities, and supporting initiatives that reduce youth and women's vulnerability (such as trauma healing, livelihood support, and peace education).
- **EG1: Institutional Strengthening of BSCPR:** The Commission will build its internal capacity, funding, and partnerships (via a mandated Peace Fund and stakeholder collaboration) to effectively deliver on its strategic goals. Strengthening the Commission's institutional capacity is crucial to sustaining its peace efforts beyond 2030. A strong BSCPR will serve as the backbone of the state's peace architecture, coordinating all actors and ensuring continuity of efforts.

Key Strategies and Initiatives: The BSCPR will pursue a multifaceted strategy, including:

- **Early Warning and Early Response Systems:** Setting up an integrated, statewide conflict early warning network with trained community

monitors in each LGA which reports early warning signals and threats to a central BSCPR hub. This will be linked to a rapid response protocol – a Peace and Security Response Group that can mobilise security forces or mediators within hours of an alert. For example, if a monitor flags an impending farmer–herder clash, the system ensures that within 48 hours, mediators are on the ground or security units are deployed to defuse the situation. It is envisaged that by 2028, at least 70% of reported early warnings are met with a preventive action within 48 hours.

- **Peace Education and Public Outreach:** Launching peace clubs and peace education programmes in schools and communities, integrating peace and tolerance messages into school curricula (in collaboration with the Ministry of Education), and establishing Peace Clubs in secondary schools. State-wide media campaigns will be conducted via radio, TV, and social media to promote unity, counter hate speech and misinformation, and encourage a culture of peace. Periodic town hall meetings and inter-faith forums will be held to discuss peace and reconciliation openly.
- **Community-Based Peace Structures:** Strengthening functional Local Government Peace Committees in all 23 LGAs as declared by law. These committees, composed of traditional rulers, women leaders, youth representatives, religious figures, local government officials, and other stakeholders will meet regularly to mediate local disputes (e.g., land disagreements, chieftaincy tussles, etc.) and feed into the early warning system. By 2030, all LGPCs are expected to meet at least bi-monthly and resolve at least one conflict per quarter in their communities, contributing to a measurable reduction in violence at the local level.

- **Inclusive Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):** Building a roster of trained peace mediators, including BSCPR staff, community leaders, women, and youth representatives who can be deployed to mediate conflicts ranging from inter-village land disputes to larger crises (e.g., farmer–herder clashes). The Commission will coordinate with ADR mechanisms, such as community mediation panels and councils of elders, to handle disputes before they escalate. A target is set for BSCPR and its partners to intervene in at least 50 conflicts through mediation by 2030, with a success rate (defined as formal resolution or a peace agreement reached) above 70%. Furthermore, demand for mediation is expected to increase as more communities come to trust and prefer these mechanisms over violent retaliation or prolonged litigation.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Launching a Youth Peace Empowerment Programme that provides positive avenues for youth who are often both perpetrators and victims of violence. This will involve vocational training linked with peace education, small grants or stipends for youth-led peace projects, and the establishment of a corps of Youth Peace Ambassadors who champion non-violence in their communities. By 2027, the Plan envisages active Youth Peace Clubs in every LGA and over 5,000 youth engaged in BSCPR-supported peace programmes by 2030, contributing to a significant decline in youth involvement in violence (e.g., cult clashes).
- **Women’s Inclusion:** Establishing a Women Peacebuilders Network to train and support women in mediation, early warning (e.g., using short messaging service (SMS) to report incidents), and community leadership roles. Every peace structure (e.g., LGPCs, etc.) will aim for at least 30% female representation by 2026 (and 50% by 2030). Dedicated initiatives will address women’s specific needs from supporting gender-based violence (GBV) survivors to enabling women to lead community safety interventions. Over time, the normative shift expected is that women are routinely seen and respected as equal stakeholders in peace processes, breaking traditional barriers.
- **Addressing Root Causes of Conflict:** Recognising that sustainable peace requires tackling the underlying drivers of conflicts in Benue. Thus, the Commission will promote policies and projects that address these root causes. By championing initiatives aimed at addressing root causes such as land, hunger, youth unemployment, population displacement, social exclusion, and injustice, the Plan aims to break the cyclical nature of violence.
- **Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Peace Fund Grants:** Through the Benue Peace Fund, BSCPR will finance small QIPs that deliver tangible benefits to conflict-weary communities and symbolise the dividends of peace. These might include rehabilitating a communal water source in a conflict-affected village, rehabilitating hospitals and schools, rebuilding a market stall destroyed in violence, or installing streetlights in an IDP camp to improve security. Such projects will be implemented in partnership with relevant agencies and community groups. The Commission will develop transparent criteria for communities or local organisations to apply for small grants from the Peace Fund for initiatives aligned with the Strategic Plan (e.g., a women’s group organising a reconciliation meeting or a youth club holding a peace sports tournament). By empowering local actors with resources and ownership, these community-driven efforts will reinforce top-down interventions.

- **Security and Justice Sector Collaboration:** Partnering closely with all security agencies to improve protection for communities, given that peacebuilding and security go hand in hand. Co-chaired by BSCPR and security commanders, a State Peace and Security Forum will meet on a bi-monthly basis to review early warning reports and agree on joint responses. BSCPR will assist in training security personnel on conflict sensitivity and human rights (so that security operations do not breed new grievances). It will also advocate for accountability and justice, pressing for perpetrators of violence (including their sponsors) to be arrested and prosecuted – a loud demand from communities. The Commission will support initiatives such as mobile courts or special tribunals to handle cases arising from conflicts (e.g., kidnapping or mass violence) so that justice is not delayed. At the same time, BSCPR will promote reconciliation processes such as truth-telling forums and traditional forgiveness ceremonies, creating a balance where justice and healing go together. The aim is that there will be visible progress in rule of law (e.g., convictions of key instigators of violence) and reconciliation (e.g., former enemies visibly collaborating) by 2030.

Risk Factors and Mitigation: The plan acknowledges several risks that could impede implementation and outlines measures to mitigate them:

- **Persistent Insecurity:** Ongoing conflicts or the resurgence of violence in parts of the state may restrict BSCPR's access to certain areas and endanger staff or partners. To mitigate this, the Commission will adopt strong security protocols for its personnel (e.g., liaising with security forces before field missions, using local guides, and adhering to conflict-sensitive practices). It will also prioritise remote early warning tools

(e.g., SMS, phone hotlines) for areas that are dangerous to visit, ensuring coverage even when physical access is limited. In volatile zones, BSCPR will work through trusted community intermediaries (such as traditional rulers, religious leaders, or vigilante groups) to maintain presence. The establishment of local Peace Committees provides on-the-ground agents who can operate with less external visibility. Ultimately, improved security is both a goal and a prerequisite, hence the emphasis on rapid response and security partnerships.

- **Political Interference or Apathy:** The Commission's neutrality and effectiveness could be undermined if political actors attempt to use it for partisan agendas or, conversely, if the government fails to prioritise and support it. Mitigation measures include securing high-level buy-in through advocacy (e.g., regular briefings to the Governor and State Assembly on BSCPR's activities and impacts), incorporating political leaders of all parties into peace events (to build collective ownership), and maintaining transparency in all dealings to build trust. The Commission will develop clear role definitions and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with other agencies to avoid duplication. It will also demonstrate tangible reductions in violence and convince political leaders that investing in peace is worthwhile. The setting up of a Peace Fund with government funds will help secure political and financial buy-ins – the plan targets an allocation of at least 0.5% of the state budget by 2027, rising to 1% by 2030 for peace efforts.
- **Funding Constraints:** BSCPR faces under-funding with minimal state subventions and relies on ad hoc donor support. This plan addresses funding risks by mapping out a clear resource mobilisation strategy

(detailed in Section 6). Beyond advocacy for increased state funding, BSCPR will engage international partners (e.g., EU, FCDO, UN, USAID, etc.) for grants and local private sector for corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributions. To manage funds effectively, robust financial controls and project management systems will be instituted to build donor confidence. The Commission will phase activities in line with available resources, focussing on cost-effective interventions and leveraging partnerships and collaborations.

- **Conflict Sensitivity and “Do No Harm:”** There is a risk that well-intentioned interventions could unintentionally exacerbate tensions. For instance, aid delivered unevenly might create perceptions of bias; involving the wrong mediator could offend a party. To mitigate this, conflict sensitivity principles will guide all actions and thorough context analysis will precede

activities. Local stakeholders will be consulted on design and BSCPR will continuously monitor for any negative feedback or signs of resentment. The plan explicitly builds in checks, such as diverse representation on committees and equitable selection of beneficiaries across communities, to avoid favouritism. All staff and partners will be trained on the “Do No Harm” approach.

In summary, this plan provides a comprehensive, action-oriented blueprint for building peace in Benue State over the next five years. It leverages the legal mandate and unique coordinating role of BSCPR to bring together communities, government, security agencies, and partners in a collective effort to end violence and secure lasting peace. With committed implementation, adequate resourcing, and the continued engagement of all stakeholders, the vision of a peaceful and prosperous Benue by 2030 is attainable.



1. Introduction and Background

The Benue State Government enacted the BSCPR Law in September 2022, officially establishing the Commission.¹ The Commission's statutory objective is to promote peaceful and harmonious coexistence among all people in the state by monitoring, preventing and mitigating conflicts through dialogue and other peaceful mechanisms. The BSCPR derives its authority from this state law (in line with the 1999 Constitution) and is mandated to act as the focal institution for peacebuilding in Benue. Its responsibilities include facilitating reconciliation processes, establishing local peace committees, and managing a Peace Fund to support peace initiatives. The Commission was inaugurated on 26 May 2023, marking the beginning of a new institutional approach to conflict resolution in the state. Prior to BSCPR's creation, responses to conflicts in Benue were often ad hoc with no clear operating procedures and were usually reactive. This strategic plan seeks to change that by providing a structured, proactive roadmap.

1.1 Strategic Plan Development Process

The Strategic Plan 2026-2030 was developed to provide a clear roadmap for BSCPR's operations over the next five years. An inclusive and participatory process was adopted in formulating the plan, guided by principles of broad stakeholder

consultation, local ownership, transparency, and conflict sensitivity. The process involved:

- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Extensive field consultations were held across all three senatorial zones of Benue State. Community town hall meetings,

focus group discussions, and key informant interviews engaged a wide range of stakeholders including traditional rulers, community leaders, women's groups, youth representatives, religious leaders, local government officials, security personnel, civil society organisations, and displaced persons. These consultations allowed grassroots voices to identify conflict drivers and propose solutions, ensuring the strategy addresses real community needs.

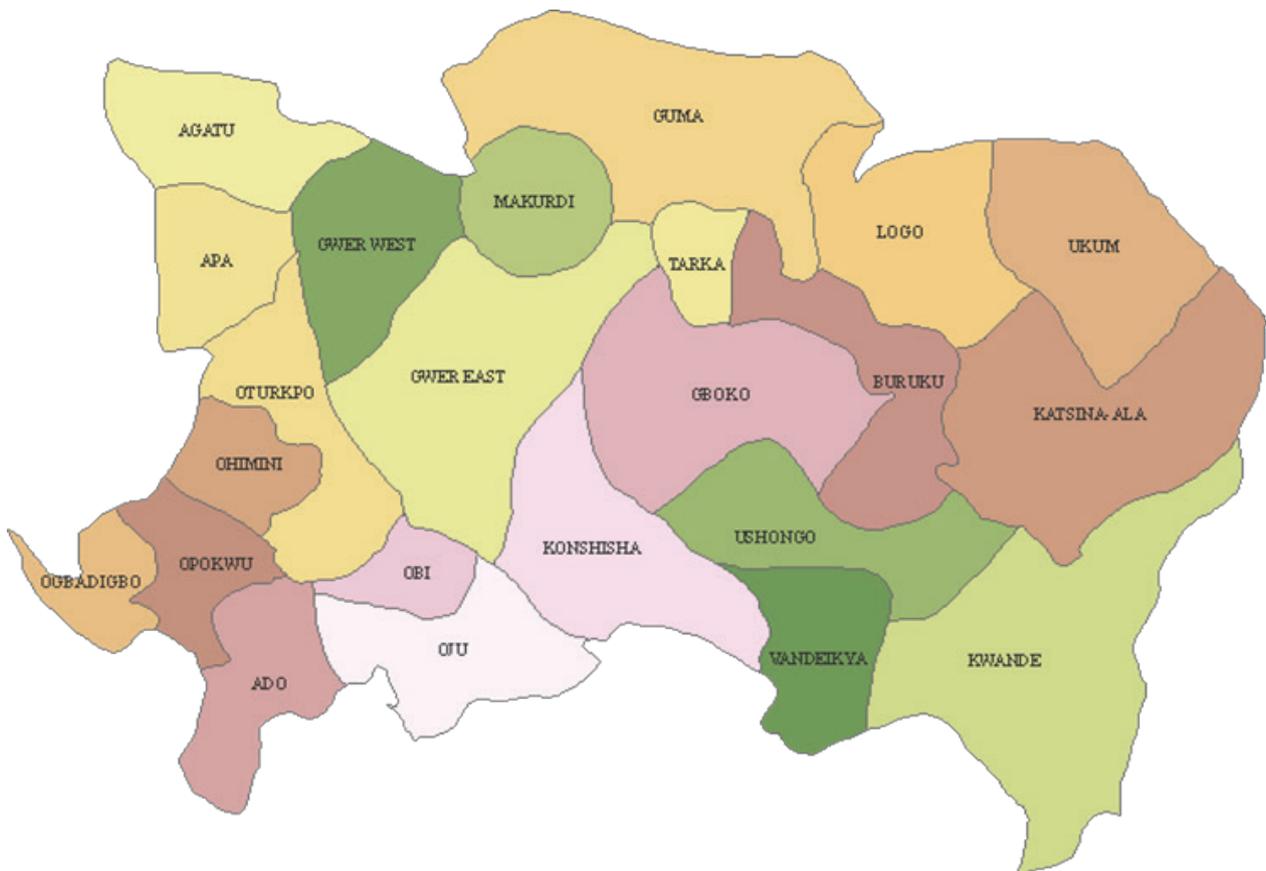
- **A Stakeholder Validation Workshop:** A validation workshop was convened in which representatives from government agencies, security forces, NGOs, academia, and community groups reviewed the draft strategic plan. They provided critical feedback and recommendations that have been incorporated into the Plan. This process helped refine the Plan's priorities, clarify BSCPR's role vis-à-vis other actors, and strengthen proposed interventions. Following this workshop, a detailed indicative workplan (Appendix C) and a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework (Appendix E) were developed to improve clarity, accountability, and support for the Plan's implementation.
- **Desk Research and Conflict Analysis:** The Commission conducted a systematic conflict analysis drawing on

existing reports, conflict incident data, and previous assessments (including a 2025 Conflict Needs Assessment). A stakeholder mapping was also carried out to understand the roles, interests, and influence of various actors in Benue's peace and conflict landscape. The planning team reviewed relevant policy documents – such as the Benue State Development Plan and the State Action Plan on IDPs – to align the Strategy with broader state priorities and humanitarian efforts. Comparative insights were also drawn from the experiences of other state peace commissions (e.g., the Kaduna State Peace Commission's Strategic Plan 2018-2022) to benchmark best practices.

The outcome of this process is a strategic plan grounded in lived realities and stakeholder expectations. The document is organised into sections, beginning with an analysis of the conflict context and BSCPR's institutional capacity, followed by a strategic framework (including its vision, mission, and guiding principles), strategic goals and objectives, and detailed strategies for implementation. Cross-cutting issues such as stakeholder engagement, conflict and gender sensitivity, resource mobilisation, and monitoring and evaluation are also addressed.

¹United Nations Development Programme (2022). Benue State Peace Commission Bill Signed into Law. Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/nigeria/press-releases/benue-state-peace-commission-bill-signed-law#:~:text=Makurdi%2C%2022%20September%20-%20The, rebuild%20the%20social%20fabric%20of>.

Map of Benue State and its 23 Local Government Areas²



²Ati Terkula's Blog (2015). Retrieved from: <https://atiterkula.wordpress.com/2015/07/02/see-list-of-benue-state-local-government-caretaker-committee-chairmen-and-secretaries-here/>.



2. Conflict Context and Situational Analysis

Benue State's conflicts are multifaceted and deeply rooted in competition over resources, ethnic tensions, and governance challenges. While the manifestations of violence vary across different areas, they form part of an interconnected conflict system affecting the entire state. Below is a summary of the conflict landscape and key drivers, followed by specific dynamics in each geo-political zone and the perspectives of communities living through these conflicts.

2.1 Statewide Conflict Landscape

Natural Resource Competition: Central to the conflicts in Benue State is the issue of competition over natural resources, especially land and water. The state's agrarian economy means land is a vital livelihood asset. Over the years, farmer–herder conflicts have intensified, especially in rural LGAs where predominantly farming communities clash with nomadic pastoralists over crop damage and access to grazing. Environmental pressures have led to changing patterns of seasonal

migration of pastoralists that no longer align with seasons for crop planting and harvest. The attendant destruction of crops has further heightened tensions and generated violence. Armed attacks on farming villages have been frequent and deadly, often triggering reprisal killings by local vigilantes. The cycles of violence among groups have led to abandoned farmlands, destroyed crops, and mass displacement of farming communities, thereby also threatening the state's food security.

Cross-Border Conflicts: Benue's borders with Nasarawa, Taraba, Kogi, Enugu, and Cross River are porous, allowing armed groups to move and operate with relative ease. Communities in border areas (e.g., Guma LGA bordering Nasarawa or parts of Kwande bordering Taraba) report incursions by external fighters or bandits who launch attacks and retreat across state lines. Weak coordination of inter-state early warning and response mechanisms impact efforts to pre-empt or contain cross-border threats. However, there are emerging opportunities to improve this situation through interstate collaboration, such as the joint peace agreement signed by the Benue, Nasarawa, and Taraba State governments in mid-2025 in which they committed to cooperate on security and peacebuilding along their shared boundaries.

Communal and Identity-based Tensions: Within Benue, there are longstanding indigene-settler issues and intra/inter-ethnic rivalries that occasionally flare up into open conflict. There are inter- and intra-group disputes over land boundaries and chieftaincy titles that have led to violence. Historical disputes between communities are often linked to land ownership, political representation, and perceived marginalisation and exclusion. Political actors have been known to exploit these cleavages for their gains.

Urban Violence and Criminality: In the more urbanised parts of Benue, notably Makurdi and other towns such as Gboko and Otukpo, there is a rise in cultism and gang violence among youth, which is fuelled by unemployment and criminal opportunism and politically-sponsored thuggery, where politicians arm or hire gang members (often motorcycle taxi-Okada-riders or street youth) to intimidate opponents. There is also a surge in kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery. Cult groups in cities engage in deadly turf battles; their activities, including drug trafficking and cybercrimes, add a layer of insecurity distinct from rural conflicts and contribute to overall instability.

Proliferation of Small Arms and Weak Law Enforcement: Across the State, the easy availability of small arms and light weapons exacerbates violence. Communities recount that even minor disputes can turn lethal because guns are in circulation. Coupled with this is a perceived weakness in law enforcement, police, and security forces, which are often under-resourced, slow to respond, or mistrusted by locals. In some flashpoint areas, there are allegations of security personnel being complicit in violence, which further erodes public confidence. In areas such as Sankera (Logo, Katsina-Ala, Ukum LGAs), a history of insurgency by local warlords led to the collapse of formal governance for a time. A vacuum in authority persists, with traditional leadership weakened and youth vigilantes sometimes taking justice into their own hands, engaging in extortion or retaliation themselves occasionally. The weak presence of accountable state security in many rural communities has led to the proliferation of vigilante groups and self-defence militias. While they fill a gap, they also pose risks if not adequately trained and coordinated with official security structures.

Social Impacts and Humanitarian Crisis: The human toll of conflict in Benue is immense. Over 1.5 million people are estimated to have been displaced internally over the years due to attacks and communal violence,³ with many residing in IDP camps or with host families in safer areas. Displacement has undermined social bonds as communities become scattered. The disruption of farming, closure of schools in hard-hit districts, and destruction of markets have deepened poverty and suffering. A "lost generation" of youth is emerging among children and teenagers who have missed out on education and known little besides conflict. Women disproportionately bear the brunt: many have been widowed and left as sole providers, have experienced sexual violence or the threat of it, and often have minimal say in community decisions about peace due to cultural norms. Youth have been

targeted for recruitment by armed groups or political thugs. Trauma and psychosocial stress are widespread; communities report high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, depression, and cycles of revenge thinking. All these social impacts underscore that conflict in Benue is not solely a security problem but a deep social crisis that requires holistic peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery efforts to address.

Despite these challenges, there are resilience factors: traditional conflict resolution practices, religious institutions, and other localised conflict resolution mechanisms sometimes facilitate reconciliation. Moreover, a strong communal spirit often sees neighbours helping one another rebuild after attacks. These endogenous resources form a critical foundation that the BSCPR can build upon.

2.2 Zonal Conflict Dynamics

Although conflicts in Benue are interlinked, each senatorial zone has distinct patterns and issues. This strategy recognises these differences in order to tailor interventions appropriately. Below is a brief overview of each zone:

- **Zone A (Benue North-East)** – Made up of Ukum, Katsina-Ala, Logo, Kwande, Ushongo, Vandeikya, and Konshisha LGAs, this zone has been the epicentre of farmer–herder violence and militia activity. The conflicts are characterised by high-intensity rural violence, armed militia presence, and a dire humanitarian situation. The zone also experienced the ravages of the “Gana” militia insurgency. Even after the militia leader’s demise, remnants and bandit groups remain a threat in the Sankera axis. The border areas (e.g., Kwande) also see ethnic conflicts

spill-over, such as the Tiv-Jukun clashes over land and boundary demarcation. Entire villages have been displaced in Logo and Katsina-Ala, with thousands sheltering in IDP camps. The economy was devastated by violence. The zone’s traditional authority structures were undermined during the conflict with militias, creating a leadership vacuum that criminals have exploited.

- **Zone B (Benue North-West/Central)** – Made up of Guma, Makurdi, Gboko, Gwer West, Gwer East, Buruku, and Tarka LGAs, this zone includes the state capital, Makurdi, and exhibits both rural and urban conflict dynamics. Guma and Gwer West, located along the border with Nasarawa, are flashpoints of the farmer–herder crisis and of armed militia attacks. Villages including Yelwata have suffered recurring massacres and massive displacement. In contrast, more urban LGAs such as Makurdi and Gboko face issues of cultism, gang violence, and political thuggery. Cult groups have proliferated in towns, engaging in street fights and criminal acts. Motorcycle riders, also called ‘Okada,’ have been infiltrated by criminal elements and rival factions of armed groups which are sometimes backed by politicians. In this zone, political interference worsens security. For example, arrested gang leaders often evade justice due to “godfather” influence and community members report intimidation when they resist these powerful interests. Zone B also hosts many displaced persons in IDP camps and host communities.
- **Zone C (Benue South)** – Made up of Otukpo, Agatu, Apa, Ohimini, Oju, Obi, Ado Okpokwu, and Ogbadibo LGAs, this zone is ethnically diverse and faces a tapestry of conflicts. In Agatu and Apa,

³Rita Iorbo, Sanjeev P. Sahni, Tithi Bhatnagar, and Dick Taverishima Andzenge (2024). Social Inclusion and Justice for the Internally Displaced by the Herdsmen-Farmers Conflict in Benue State, Nigeria. Retrieved from: <https://cmsny.org/publications/jmhs-iorbo-sahni-bhatnagar-andzenge-050524/#::~:~:text=Herdsmen,personal%20property%20and%20community%20infrastructure.>

communities have experienced farmer–herder clashes and sporadic attacks. The trauma lingers, engendering distrust between local farmers and nomadic pastoralists. In other parts of Zone C, inter-communal disputes over land and chieftaincy titles occasionally spark violence. Kidnapping for ransom has become rampant along Zone C’s roads and towns. Also, cultism and gang violence afflict Otukpo and its

environs, mirroring the urban issues of Zone B. Another troubling trend is the rise of ritual killings and cybercrimes involving some youth, pointing to a moral and social breakdown in certain areas. Culturally, women in Zone C are often excluded from peace dialogues as some traditions bar women from sitting with men in conflict resolution forums, which means women’s voices and needs can be overlooked.

2.3 BSCPR Institutional Assessment

An assessment of BSCPR’s current capacity was conducted to understand the Commission’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). This assessment identifies areas where the agency’s strengths lie and areas where internal improvements are necessary. It outlines the internal and external factors that the strategy must consider in enhancing the Commission’s institutional capacity to enable it to deliver its mandate. Below is a summary:

STRENGTHS

1. Clear legal mandate and legitimacy as the state's recognised peacebuilding institution under the BSCPR Law (2022).
2. Enabling legal provisions for Local Government Peace Committees and a Peace Fund, which can expand local peace infrastructure when fully operationalised.
3. Policy alignment with state development and security priorities, allowing BSCPR's work to be framed as contributing directly to broader government goals.
4. Goodwill and technical expertise of Board members and partners, including respected community figures and peace practitioners whose influence can be leveraged as governance structures are fully activated.
5. Emerging convening power, demonstrated through initial stakeholder dialogues and increasing name recognition within the state.
6. Foundational commitment to inclusion, with deliberate efforts during the strategic planning process to engage women, youth, and other key stakeholder groups.

WEAKNESSES

1. Weak institutional capacity, including inadequate human and financial resources to execute the mandate of the Commission.
2. Absence of a clearly defined organisational structure/organogram and limited internal systems for core functions (e.g., conflict monitoring, mediation deployment, monitoring and evaluation).
3. Inadequate institutional resources, including office space, vehicles for field work, information technology equipment and operational funding to sustain regular activities.
4. Peace Fund has not yet been capitalised, government subventions have been minimal, and reliance on ad hoc donor support has resulted in piecemeal programming.
5. Instances of delayed or unpaid staff entitlements, contributing to staff demoralisation and risks of turnover.
6. Lack of comprehensive internal policies (e.g., HR manuals, Standard Operating Procedures, Codes of Conduct) and incomplete activation of governance structures, which together constrain institutional credibility and predictability.
7. Perception among some stakeholders that BSCPR is inactive or has an unclear operational presence, leading to occasional bypassing of the Commission and duplication of peace efforts in the state.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. A favourable political environment with a state administration (elected in 2023) committed to peace and security and alignment with Pillar I of the State Development Plan.
2. Prospects for stronger state support, including regular budget allocations, activation and capitalisation of the Peace Fund, and appointment of a full complement of Board members and key staff.
3. Enabling national and regional policy frameworks and programmes (e.g., National Livestock Transformation Plan, inter-state joint security and peace initiatives) that can be leveraged to address cross-border and farmer–herder dynamics.
4. Strong interest from donors and international NGOs in contributing to stabilising the Middle Belt/North Central region, creating opportunities for technical assistance, capacity development, and programme funding.
5. Availability of experienced international and national NGOs already active in Benue as potential partners for joint programming and capacity development.
6. High community readiness for peace: consultations indicate that communities are fatigued by conflict and local actors including women and youth are eager to engage in peace initiatives when supported.
7. Potential to mobilise community-based volunteer networks (peace monitors, peace clubs, local mediators) as a low-cost "peace workforce" that extends the Commission's reach.
8. Rapid advances in affordable technology (mobile networks, WhatsApp platforms, GIS tools) that can be used to build a cost-effective early warning and information system before a large physical presence is established across the state.

THREATS

1. Persistent insecurity and active conflict in parts of the state, which can restrict safe access by BSCPR staff and partners to volatile LGAs and create personal security risks for peace agents.
2. Potential for political interference, where individuals or interests attempt to instrumentalise the Commission for partisan purposes, undermining its neutrality and credibility.
3. Reduced political will leading to low prioritisation of BSCPR, which could translate into weak budgetary support, limited authority, and a largely symbolic institution.
4. Vulnerability associated with over-reliance on short-term, project-based donor funding; shifts in international priorities or the end of grants could leave critical programmes without continuity.
5. Broader socio-economic pressures, including inflation, youth unemployment, and deepening poverty, which can exacerbate grievances and make communities more susceptible to mobilisation for violence.
6. Exposure to external shocks such as pandemics, climate-related disasters, or major fiscal crises, which may divert government attention and resources away from peacebuilding and towards emergency response or austerity measures.

The SWOT analysis underscores the need for BSCPR to address its internal weaknesses through capacity-building, institutional development, and proactive resource mobilisation. At the same time, it should capitalise on existing goodwill and partnerships by leveraging political commitment, community readiness, and donor interest to commence its activities. The threats identified can be mitigated through strategies such as strong advocacy at the highest levels of state leadership, building security considerations into programme design and establishing clear collaboration arrangements with other agencies to minimise conflicts of mandate. The strategic framework and interventions laid out in the next sections directly respond to these insights, outlining how the BSCPR can effectively coordinate a multi-actor peace architecture in Benue State.

2.4 Analysis of the Operating Environment

To ensure this strategic plan is grounded in contextual realities of the operational environment, a political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental (PESTLE) analysis was conducted, examining the factors affecting peace and security in Benue. Key highlights include:

- **Political:** The political context in Benue is a mix of opportunities and latent tensions. On one hand, politics remains heavily influenced by identity and patronage. While the 2023 elections were relatively peaceful in Benue, they revealed ethno-regional polarisation in voting patterns. The risk of political actors mobilising

ethnic groups or youth militias for electoral gain remains, especially as the 2027 general elections and 2029 local elections approach. On the other hand, the current administration has made commitments publicly to improve security and has included peacebuilding in state policy documents. There is also growing inter-state collaboration with neighbouring states, such as Nasarawa and Taraba, to address cross-border insecurity.

- **Economic:** Traditionally based on agriculture, Benue's economy has been disrupted by conflict. Many farmers cannot safely cultivate their fields, which has reduced agricultural output and income. Latest data suggests that youth unemployment stands at 8.6%, creating a large pool of idle youth susceptible to recruitment by armed groups or involvement in crime due to desperation.⁴ Inflation and rising living costs, linked in part to instability and wider national trends, are increasing hardships and could inflame grievances further. The economic lens makes clear that any peace strategy must integrate livelihoods and development initiatives, or it risks being undermined by the "push factors" of poverty. There are positive economic factors to harness meanwhile as the private sector has a vested interest in peace. Market traders, transport unions, farmers' cooperatives, and businesses all suffer losses from conflict-induced disruptions. Moreover, if peace is achieved, Benue's abundant agricultural lands and rising agro-processing potential as well as its nascent mining activities, could significantly boost the economy,

⁴The National Bureau of Statistics reports that youth unemployment in Benue State has been a significant concern, with the unemployment rate among youth aged 15-24 years at 8.6% in Q3 2023. This rate reflects a slight increase from Q2 2023. The unemployment rate in urban areas was 6.0% in Q3 2023, indicating a slight increase from Q2 2023. The informal employment rate was 92.3% in Q3 2023, showing a slight increase from Q2 2023. The percentage of youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET Rate) was 13.7% in Q3 2023. These statistics highlight the ongoing challenges of youth unemployment in Benue State and the need for targeted interventions to address the issue. Retrieved from: <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241455>.

creating a virtuous cycle in which peace and prosperity reinforce one other.

- **Social:** Protracted conflicts have weakened the social fabric of Benue. There is widespread internal population displacement as many communities now host IDPs, leading to increased competition for already scarce natural and social resources, such as land, water, and education. These competitions can escalate into local tensions between groups if not adequately managed. Social cleavage also exists along ethnoreligious lines.⁵ These cleavages risk being exploited through extremist narratives or political manipulation to inflame identity-based conflicts. Also, some social norms in many communities marginalise women and youth from decision-making, which has implications for peacebuilding – excluding these groups means ignoring voices that are critical for lasting peace. Benue has strong traditions of community solidarity and mutual aid. For instance, after attacks, villagers often come together to rebuild homes, markets, churches, and/or mosques, and frequently provide relief to victims irrespective of denomination. Moreover, cultural institutions still command respect from indigenes, which can be harnessed to facilitate reconciliation. Another pressing social factor is the psychological impact of conflict. Trauma is pervasive across many communities in Benue because of the varying conflict experiences of different individuals. Unaddressed trauma can perpetuate cycles of violence, as hurt and anger pass to the next generation. Similarly, the youth bulge means that roughly half of Benue's population is under 30 which presents a positive and negative social resource: this large youth cohort could either drive peace, if positively engaged, educated, and employed, or fuel further instability, if left unemployed, traumatised, and susceptible to militant ideologies or crime.
- **Technology:** Technology penetration in Benue is moderate but growing. Mobile phone usage is common even in rural areas. Early warning systems can leverage technology-empowered platforms to aid data-driven conflict analysis, early response to triggers, and efforts to counter misinformation and inflammatory content. The media landscape faces some changes in information management and dissemination, especially when professional journalism standards are sometimes weak and partisan interests influence reporting. The Commission will play a crucial role in leveraging technology in developing peace messages and promoting conflict-sensitive communication across the state.
- **Legal:** Benue has progressive humanitarian- and development-related laws and policies that provide a robust legal framework for tackling different conflict issues. While there could be some variance between peacebuilding-related policy frameworks at the state and federal levels, the BSCPR will play a significant role in navigating policy gaps, while prioritising its local peace efforts in ways that do not undermine higher-level policy shifts. Instead, it will pursue complementarity, ensuring that peacebuilding efforts at the state level contribute significantly to national-level peacebuilding. Moreover, part of BSCPR's advocacy role will be to push for legal follow-through to address conflict-related crimes in the appropriate quarters, while also strengthening its engagements with community justice mechanisms that complement the formal justice system.
- **Environmental:** Environmental factors and climate change significantly influence conflict relationships in Benue State. Irregular rainfall and occasional droughts in the far north reduce grazing in the Sahel zones and thus drive more herders into Benue

in search of pasture, heightening farmer–herder competition.⁶ Conversely, Benue has suffered flooding in recent years, which has displaced several thousands, destroyed crops, and risked igniting disputes as communities compete over higher ground and relief resources. Other environmental pressures affecting Benue State include deforestation and soil erosion in some areas, which diminish arable land and can lead to micro-conflicts between farmers over fertile plots.⁷ This plan recognises that conflict sensitivity must extend to environmental and resource management, supporting initiatives such as early climate warning, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable water management in ways that bring communities together rather than apart.

⁵Amnesty International (2025). Nigeria: Violence and Widespread Displacement Leave Benue Facing a Humanitarian Disaster. Retrieved from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/07/nigeria-violence-and-widespread-displacement-leave-benue-facing-a-humanitarian-disaster/>.

⁶Ojemire B. Daniel (2021). Climate Change and Farmers-Herders Conflict in Nigeria. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2021/11/climate-change-farmers-herders-conflict-nigeria/>.

⁷Okechukwu George Eke, Jan Moudry, et al. (2025). Climate-Driven Conflicts in Nigeria: Farmers' Strategies for Coping with Herders' Incursion on Crop Lands. *Sustainability*, 17(24). Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su172411316>.



3. Strategic Framework

This section outlines the core elements of the strategic plan: the vision and mission that guide BSCPR, the principles and values underpinning its work, and the theory of change that links the Commission’s interventions to the desired peace outcomes. Together, these provide the foundation upon which strategic goals and actions are built.

3.1 Vision, Mission, and Core Values

Vision: A peaceful, secure, and stable Benue State where communities coexist in harmony, conflicts are resolved through dialogue and justice, and development can thrive for all.

Mission: To coordinate and support state and community action that prevents violence, resolves disputes, and strengthens peace, ensuring early warning leads to early response through inclusive, locally informed peacebuilding.

Core Values and Guiding Principles: In executing its mission, BSCPR will be guided by a set of core values and operating principles that inform its strategies and activities:

- **Conflict Sensitivity and “Do No Harm:”** BSCPR will mainstream conflict sensitivity in all its interventions by continually analysing the local context to avoid exacerbating tensions and maximise impacts. This “Do No Harm” ethos means the Commission will carefully consider how each programme affects inter-group

relations, remaining impartial and mitigating any negative side effects.

- **Inclusivity and Local Ownership:** Peace can only be sustained when it is owned by the people; thus, inclusivity is paramount. BSCPR will actively involve women, youth, traditional and religious leaders, PWDs, and other marginalised groups in decision-making and programme implementation. The motto “nothing about us without us” will be a hallmark of BSCPR’s activities, ensuring that all groups take leadership roles in community peacebuilding actions. By empowering local actors and drawing on traditional conflict resolution practices, the Commission ensures interventions resonate culturally and have local buy-in.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** The Commission will conduct its operations with openness and be accountable to both government and the public. This entails regularly sharing information about plans, activities, and results by publishing periodic progress reports, holding stakeholder forums, and inviting community feedback on its performance. Internally, BSCPR will uphold high standards of financial accountability and ethical conduct, recognising that trust is vital for a peace institution. Additionally, the principle of accountability extends to peace processes facilitated by BSCPR; the Commission will encourage parties in mediation to honour their commitments and will follow up on agreements to ensure they are implemented, thus building confidence in peace processes.
- **Impartiality and Fairness:** BSCPR will act as a neutral arbiter in conflicts, treating all parties with respect and without favouritism. The Commission’s credibility depends on being seen as an honest broker rather than aligned with any side. Staff and partners will receive training in unbiased mediation

techniques. In practice, this means that in every intervention, BSCPR’s approach will be to facilitate dialogue towards mutually acceptable solutions, rather than impose or side with one narrative. Fairness also implies that the Commission will incorporate principles of justice in peace agreements so that outcomes are seen as legitimate by those affected.

- **Collaboration and Partnership:** Recognising that peacebuilding is a shared responsibility, BSCPR will work in close partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including security agencies, government ministries and departments, local governments, civil society organisations, international development partners, traditional institutions, religious groups, the private sector, and the media. The Commission’s philosophy is that complex conflict problems require coordinated, multi-actor solutions as no single entity can address them alone. BSCPR will therefore serve as a convener and connector, seeking synergies rather than duplicating efforts. The Commission will ensure partners are aligned and information is shared, thus creating a unified “peace architecture” for the state.
- **Respect for Human Rights and Rule of Law:** All BSCPR activities will uphold human rights principles and the rule of law. This means advocating for the protection of life and property, supporting the rights of women, children, and other marginalised groups, and opposing impunity. Peace initiatives will not come at the expense of justice. BSCPR will encourage approaches such as restorative justice and link victims to legal systems to achieve redress.

3.2 Theory of Change

BSCPR’s strategy is underpinned by a Theory of Change that articulates how the

Commission's interventions will lead to the desired impact of a more peaceful, stable, and resilient Benue. In brief, the theory of change is:

IF the Benue State Commission for Peace and Reconciliation is adequately staffed, funded, and empowered to coordinate peacebuilding across the state, and if it establishes functional early warning and early response systems that link communities, local governments, security agencies, and state authorities, and

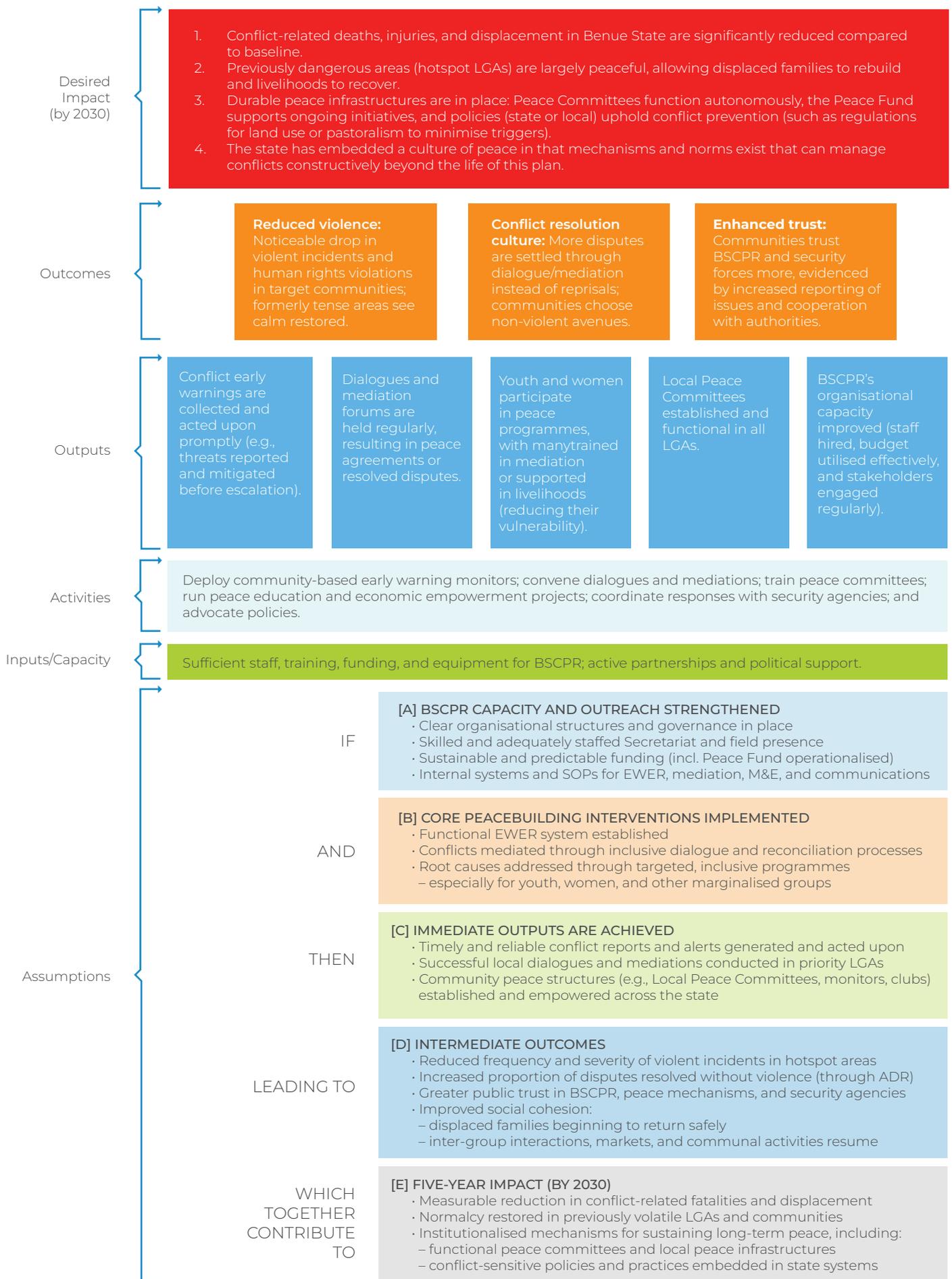
IF trained mediators, local government peace committees, traditional authorities, women, PWDs, and youth are supported to conduct inclusive dialogue and mediation, and if these processes are backed by credible follow-through from security and justice institutions, and

IF women, youth, displaced persons, and host communities are deliberately included in peace structures and benefit from joint peace and livelihood initiatives, and if peacebuilding is linked to tangible improvements such as QIPs, livelihood support, land-use mediation, and environmentally informed resource management, and

IF the Commission applies continuous monitoring, learning, and community feedback to adapt its interventions over time,

THEN, emerging tensions will be detected and addressed before they escalate into large-scale violence; disputes and grievances over land, grazing, and boundaries will increasingly be managed and resolved through negotiated settlements rather than violence; social trust will improve, competition over scarce resources will reduce, and there will be reduced incentives for violent group mobilisation; farmer-herder and communal clashes will decrease in frequency and intensity, displaced households will return or reintegrate safely, and everyday economic and social activities will resume in previously volatile areas.

AND over time, public confidence in state-led peace and reconciliation mechanisms will increase as incidents of conflict-related deaths and displacement will fall and durable local institutions for sustaining peace will take root across Benue State.



This Theory of Change will guide how the strategy is implemented and evaluated. It has been developed based on evidence from other contexts and what stakeholders in Benue have identified as necessary changes. By following this logical pathway, the Commission and its partners can remain focussed on the ultimate goal and periodically verify if the assumed linkages hold true or need adjusting.

3.3 Strategic Goals and Objectives (2026-2030)

To realise this vision and mission, and based on the conflict analysis and stakeholder input, three Strategic Goals (SG1, SG2, and SG3) have been set for the plan’s duration. Each goal is accompanied by specific objectives, which detail the concrete targets or changes BSCPR aims to achieve, and these will have measurable outcomes. The goals are interrelated and mutually reinforcing and all fall within the BSCPR’s legal mandate. An additional focus on institutional strengthening is treated as a cross-cutting enabling goal (EG1, discussed in Section 6).

SG1 Conflict Prevention and Early Response: Prevent the eruption and escalation of violent conflicts through robust early warning systems, timely mediation, and coordinated rapid response.

Objective 1.1	Establish a Functional Early Warning and Early Response System state-wide: By 2026-2027, create a network of community-based monitors in every LGA who report indicators of tensions or threats into a central hub at BSCPR headquarters (HQ).
Outcome Target	By 2028, at least 70% of reported early warning signals are met with a preventive or mitigating response within 48 hours.
Objective 1.2	Strengthen Community-Based Conflict Management Structures: Activate or form LGPCs in all 23 LGAs, as specified in the BSCPR law.
Outcome Target	By 2030, LGPCs in all LGAs meet monthly and have successfully mediated or intervened in at least one conflict per quarter in their communities, contributing to a reduction in violence at the local level.
Objective 1.3	Coordinate Rapid Response Mechanisms Among Key Actors: Develop and institutionalise protocols for a swift, joint response when conflicts loom or break out.
Outcome Target	By 2027, response time to incidents is reduced by six hours from receiving a major incident report.

SG2 Dialogue, Mediation, and Reconciliation: Resolve and manage ongoing conflicts and historical grievances through inclusive dialogue and reconciliation processes.

Objective 2.1	Facilitate Dialogue Platforms for Key Conflict Actors: Identify the major conflict fault lines in the state and organise structured dialogue processes for each. This includes both high-level dialogues and community-level peace dialogues that are professionally mediated and ensure adequate representation of all stakeholders, including women and youth from those communities.
Outcome Target	By 2028, at least 10 major dialogue processes are conducted in flashpoint areas, resulting in signed community peace accords or action plans, of which 80% of agreed actions are implemented and monitored by BSCPR and partners.

Objective 2.2 Expand Mediation and ADR Services: Build a roster of trained peace mediators that can be deployed rapidly to mediate conflicts and low-intensity disputes. Promote ADR mechanisms, restorative justice forums, and institutionalise mediation as the preferred first step in conflict resolution at the community and LGA levels.

Outcome Target By 2030, mediators supported by BSCPR have intervened in at least 50 conflicts across the state, with a resolution or formal agreement reached in a majority of cases.

Objective 2.3 Promote Healing and Reconciliation in Post-Conflict Communities: Implement programmes that address the trauma and grievances left by conflict to mend the social fabric.

Outcome Target By 2030, at least five communities that experienced severe violence undergo a reconciliation process supported by BSCPR, with tangible outcomes such as public apologies, inter-community events, or return of displaced groups.

SG3 Inclusive Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion: Empower youth and women as peacebuilders and mitigate the impacts of conflict on vulnerable groups to foster social cohesion.

Objective 3.1 Engage and Empower Youth in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention: Launch a Youth Peace Empowerment Programme that provides avenues for youth to participate in peace work and gain socio-economic benefits.

Outcome Targets By 2027, Youth Peace Clubs aligned with UNSCR 2250 on Youth Peace and Security will be active in all 23 LGAs; by 2030, at least 5,000 youth directly engaged in BSCPR-supported peace programmes to achieve positive shifts in attitudes.

Objective 3.2 Enhance the Role of Women in Peace and Security: Implement measures to ensure women are not just beneficiaries but leaders and drivers of peace efforts aligned with UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security. Ensure that every Local Government Peace Committee and other BSCPR structures have 30-50% women representation.

Outcome Targets By 2030, women hold at least 30% of leadership positions in community peace committees and BSCPR supported initiatives.

Objective 3.3 Address Conflict Impacts on Vulnerable Groups and Strengthen Social Cohesion: Develop programmes that specifically target groups who have been particularly vulnerable or marginalised by conflict, including IDPs, children and orphans, PWDs, and ethnic/religious minority groups.

Outcome Targets By 2030, at least 10,000 youth, women, IDPs, and PWDs are meaningfully empowered, mentored, and actively engaged as peacebuilders, and vulnerable groups experience reduced exposure to conflict-related harm, resulting in strengthened social cohesion, improved trust among community groups, and more inclusive and peaceful local governance systems.

EG1⁸ Institutional Capacity and Sustainability of BSCPR (cross-cutting): Strengthen the BSCPR's organisational capacity, governance, and resource base to effectively deliver on its mandate.

Objective EG.1	Build a Competent and Sufficient BSCPR Team: By 2026, establish a functional organisational structure for the Commission, hiring essential staff and providing comprehensive training and developing internal management systems to track results, gather evidence, optimise impact, and boost staff morale.
Outcome	By 2027, BSCPR has a full staff roster with clear roles; by 2030, staff retention and satisfaction are high, with the Commission recognised for its professionalism.
Objective EG.2	Activate Governance and Advisory Structures: Ensure the BSCPR Governing Board is functional, Technical Working Groups or Advisory Committees are established, and Zonal Peace Forums are chaired by BSCPR's zonal representatives.
Outcome	The Board and any advisory groups are actively guiding BSCPR, improving accountability and multi-sector input into the Commission's work.
Objective EG.3	Develop and Institutionalise Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Policies: By 2026-2027, produce a BSCPR Operations Manual covering administrative and financial procedures, human resource policies, and programmatic SOPs; standardise operations and clarify mandates vis-à-vis other agencies to ensure business continuity.
Outcomes	By 2027, BSCPR staff and partners report clarity in processes and responsibilities, with audits and/or reviews showing compliance with procedures; external actors experience consistent and reliable engagement with the Commission.

The institutional objectives are further detailed in Section 6 on Implementation and Resource Mobilisation.

⁸Labelled "EG1," this enabling goal is woven through the strategy and merits explicit mention.



4. Strategic Programmes and Key Initiatives

This section details the major programmes and initiatives BSCPR will implement to meet the objectives under each strategic goal. It covers both interventions that apply across Benue and tailored approaches for specific zones and conflict types within the state.

4.1 Statewide Initiatives

Certain interventions will be delivered across the state as they address common needs and leverage BSCPR's central coordination role:

- **Early Warning System Deployment:** BSCPR will establish a State Conflict Early Warning and Response Centre at its headquarters in Makurdi. This centre will receive reports from a network of trained Community Peace Monitors in each LGA. Standard tools (such as incident report forms, SMS/WhatsApp group channels, toll-free hotlines, and potentially a dedicated mobile app) will be used. The Commission will partner with existing early warning projects to facilitate integrated efforts. Regular analytical bulletins will be produced which highlight conflict trends and emerging hotspots and will be shared

with government and security agencies to prompt preventive action. A State Early Response Team, comprised of BSCPR and key security/humanitarian focal persons, will meet whenever high-risk alerts come in to agree on response steps. This system will be publicised so that citizens know how to report issues safely.

- **Peace Education and Public Outreach:** A coordinated peace education campaign will run throughout 2026-2030. In partnership with the Ministry of Education, this campaign will include integrating peace and tolerance messages into school curricula, training teachers on peace education, and supporting the establishment of Peace Clubs in schools. BSCPR will use media programmes, radio talk shows, TV panel discussions, and drama skits in multiple languages to

promote messages of unity, non-violent conflict resolution, and countering hate speech or misinformation with the public. Outreach will also involve town-hall meetings in communities to discuss the culture of peace, as well as leveraging religious gatherings where faith leaders can preach forgiveness and co-existence. The campaign will be continuous but might peak around sensitive periods, such as before elections or after any major incidents to discourage retaliation.

- **Capacity-Building in Mediation and Dialogue:** BSCPR will conduct training workshops to improve the capacity of a cohort of identified mediators and dialogue facilitators across the state. The selection will target members of Local Peace Committees, community leaders, women and youth leaders, and BSCPR staff. By 2027, the aim is to have at least 2-3 trained mediators per LGA who lead the resolution of local disputes. Additionally, BSCPR staff will receive specialised training facilitated by national institutes or international partners to enhance their contributions to peacebuilding. This investment in human capital is essential for making interventions effective across state and community levels.
- **Strengthening Local Peace Structures:** As mandated, Local Government Peace Committees will be established or revitalised in every LGA. BSCPR will develop Terms of Reference for these committees (ensuring alignment with the BSCPR law) to guide the selection of members and their activities to support local peacebuilding efforts and actions. An initial orientation workshop will be conducted for each LGPC, and periodic refresher training sessions or exchange visits will be organised. BSCPR will also work with local governments to provide office spaces at LGA headquarters to deepen the committees' legitimacy and facilitate their integration into the local governance structures. In effect, the LGPCs will act as BSCPR's focal points at the grassroots level.

- **Benue Peace Fund and QIPs:** Once operational, the Peace Fund will be used to finance peacebuilding projects by local actors. BSCPR will develop guidelines for communities or organisations to apply for small grants from the Fund to support initiatives that align with its strategic goals. By disbursing small grants, the Commission stimulates local peace innovation and ownership. Additionally, BSCPR will identify QIPs that can serve as peace dividends in conflict prone areas to improve peace, security, collaboration, and social cohesion.
- **Policy Advocacy and Reform:** At the state level, BSCPR will engage in advocacy to create or adjust policies that can mitigate conflict triggers. For example, the Commission will work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on the Benue Livestock Management Plan to ensure the sustainable implementation of ranching, grazing reserves, or management of transhumance corridors and livestock routes in ways that are conflict-sensitive and systems-aware while also advocating for a state framework on transitional justice or victim compensation in communities that have suffered attacks. BSCPR will also collaborate with relevant public institutions to identify entry-points for integrating peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity into local development plans and push for full enforcement of laws that protect peace.

These statewide initiatives lay the groundwork for peace by creating systems, awareness, and structures that cover all of Benue. However, given the varied nature of conflicts in different regions, BSCPR will also adopt zonal strategies to focus efforts where they are most needed in context-specific ways. Below, we outline plans for each zone, followed by plans addressing cross-cutting conflict types.

4.2 Tailored Strategies by Zone (Short-term, Medium-term, and Long-term)

Building on the conflict analysis for Zones A, B, and C (Section 2.2), BSCPR will pursue zone-specific strategies. While the overarching goals remain consistent, the emphasis of and concentration of certain activities will vary so as to align with local realities.

Zone A: Benue North-East (Sankera Axis and Environs)	
Conflict Profile: Predominantly rural, with severe farmer–herder violence, the presence of armed militias/bandits, and some inter-communal disputes, displacement, and destruction of livelihoods.	
Short-term (2026-2027)	<p>Focus on stabilisation and immediate security improvements. Deploy peace monitors in all ward areas, especially those that were former militia strongholds, to enhance early warning coverage.</p> <p>Collaborate with the ongoing military operation by providing a peacebuilding dimension of facilitating dialogues, community reintegration, and support to psychosocial treatment, following the disarmament of former militia members.</p> <p>Coordinate with humanitarian agencies to deliver relief and trauma counselling to the most affected communities to stabilise them and prevent further displacement.</p> <p>Engage unemployed youth in community rehabilitation peace dividends projects through cash-for-work initiatives, such as rebuilding destroyed markets, repairing feeder roads, or cleaning up villages, which will create short-term employment and a positive sense of purpose.</p> <p>Initiate inter-group dialogues by bringing together communities to address local grievances before the next farming season, in turn preventing small disputes from being exploited by external attackers.</p>

<p>Medium-term (2028)</p>	<p>Strengthen community early warning and response capacity to detect and report threats.</p> <p>Help formalise and train existing EWER systems stakeholders in threat detection and reporting, including by strengthening linkages between these systems and informal and formal security actors and establishing hotlines reporting and accessing responses.</p> <p>In partnership with responsible ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), support the state's agricultural recovery, including through strengthening climate-related EWER systems.</p> <p>In partnership with responsible MDAs, support stakeholder engagement and facilitate conflict-sensitive implementation of reforms in the livestock sector aimed at enhancing productivity and preventing farmer-herder conflicts.</p> <p>In areas prone to communal clashes, partner with the State Boundary Commission on stakeholder engagement and conflict-sensitive demarcation of contentious boundaries (and mediate agreements on resource sharing).</p> <p>Establish a "Sankera Peace Resource Centre" in Katsina-Ala town by 2028, a hub where training workshops, peace meetings, and information resources are organised to embed peace efforts in the local fabric and serve as a visible symbol of peace in this historically troubled area.</p>
<p>Long-term (2029-2030)</p>	<p>Aim for full recovery and sustained peace.</p> <p>The revival of farming and markets without fear will be a key indicator; by 2030, markets such as the Zaki-Biam Yam Market, which was affected by violence, should be thriving again.</p> <p>BSCPR will measure this in collaboration with relevant MDAs (e.g., monitor market attendance and trade volume as a sign of normalcy).</p> <p>Ideally, any remaining militant elements by this time have either been disarmed or co-opted into peaceful roles. For instance, former militia youth might form agricultural cooperatives or be officially recruited into community policing units, turning them from spoilers into protectors.</p> <p>The Local Peace Committees in Zone A should be fully empowered to resolve local disputes routinely, with BSCPR playing more of a monitoring and backup role rather than undertaking direct intervention.</p> <p>By 2030, Zone A should transition from a conflict hotbed to a case study in successful reintegration and community resilience, with peace dividends (such as improved roads, reopened schools, and restored land use) reinforcing stability.</p>

Zone B: Benue North-West/Central (Makurdi-Gboko Axis and Border LGAs)

Conflict Profile: A mix of border farmer–herder conflicts (Guma, Gwer West), urban crime/cultism, and political violence (Makurdi, Gboko), in addition to pockets of kidnapping and banditry in rural areas. Hosts many IDPs in and around the state capital.

Short-term (2026-2027)

Prioritise the most volatile areas and immediate threats.

In the border LGAs of Guma and Gwer West, BSCPR will advocate for increased security deployment (more police patrols, possibly military presence) to protect returning farmers.

Simultaneously, begin cross-border reconciliation efforts between border communities of Benue and neighbouring Nasarawa communities reviving previous peace accords and/or setting-up interim dialogues, even if informal, to quell violence cycles and reprisals.

Ensure the use of conflict-sensitive approaches to address the humanitarian crisis in Zone B. BSCPR will collaborate with relief agencies to improve conditions in IDP camps around Makurdi/Guma, mainly facilitating dialogues with host communities to foster collaboration and improve access to essential services and governance.

Conduct periodic advocacy to the Benue State Police Command to implement collaborative policing initiatives with other security actors and local communities to curb urban violence in Makurdi and Gboko. Collaborate with educational institutions such as Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University in Makurdi and NGOs implementing peacebuilding and education programmes to establish anti-cultism campaigns, re-orienting youth towards peaceful and productive livelihoods.

Organise social engagements for youth, such as sports, music, arts, and drama activities, carrying peace themes to channel youth’s energies positively.

Advocacy to the State House of Assembly and Local Government Chairpersons to commit to peaceful and non-violent politics. BSCPR will facilitate a “Peace Accord” for politicians ahead of the 2027 General elections.

Lead mediation of urban disputes that can escalate into urban violence through the exploitation of grievance by political actors. For instance, BSCPR will mediate the dispute between a faction of the commercial motorcycle union, the police, and the state government.

<p>Medium-term (2028)</p>	<p>Institutionalise cross-border collaboration on peace and security; facilitate the establishment of a framework for resolving Benue-Nasarawa-Taraba border conflicts.</p> <p>For cultism and gang violence, aim for measurable reductions by 2028. BSCPR will advocate to the state government and solicit donor support to create more vocational training centres in Makurdi and Gboko, which will provide at-risk youth with skills and alternatives. Engage the private sector to be part of the solution by encouraging companies (e.g., construction firms, agro-businesses) to provide apprenticeships or employment to youth from BSCPR’s peace programmes.</p> <p>Facilitate ongoing conflict analysis and mapping of security threats in the lead up, during, and after the 2027 General Elections in Nigeria to inform the design of peace campaigns to mitigate all forms of electoral violence. Collaborate with the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), humanitarian actors, and other relevant state agencies and development partners to advocate for increased government support to IDPs and host-communities. This collaboration will ensure conflict sensitivity in delivering recovery support, including investing in housing, education, or healthcare in host communities, which will alleviate tensions between host communities and IDPs and pave the way for the integration of IDPs whose livelihoods and communities were destroyed.</p>
<p>Long-term (2029-2030)</p>	<p>Consolidate gains so that by 2030, Zone B is safer and more stable. Significant reduction of farmer–herder clashes and resource-based competition in border areas by implementing sustained, collaborative platforms, security patrols, stringent enforcement of grazing rules, and community agreements on resource governance and management. Public campaigns against urban gang violence have become sustained among citizens. BSCPR’s interventions would ideally have produced a cadre of ex-cult youth who become peace advocates, helping to amplify positive messages that keep their peers away from crime.</p> <p>Establish peace clubs and peer counselling in secondary and tertiary institutions. BSCPR aims to institutionalise “Peace Desks,” implementing through similar structures that already exist such as the permanent Campus Peace Club at BSU and peace desks in LGA Council offices. Such infrastructure for peace should be built to outlive this strategic plan. If BSCPR’s advocacy is successful, Benue’s political culture might shift towards issue-based competition with violence largely repudiated. Success in this domain would be reflected in peaceful conduct of the 2027 and 2029 elections and structures such as the multi-party liaison committee continuing to meet regularly on peace matters.</p>

Zone C: Benue South (Heartland and Border Areas)

Conflict Profile: Communal disputes (inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic), some spillover of farmer–herder conflict (especially in Agatu/Apa), pervasive kidnapping and criminality, cultism in Otukpo, and underlying religious tensions in a few mixed communities. Women’s exclusion and youth delinquency are particular issues.

Short-term (2026-2027)

Prioritise areas with recent violence and urgent threats:

Agatu and Apa LGAs are a priority due to historical experiences with conflict and violence. BSCPR will work to revive the Agatu Peace Accord or develop a new pact if needed, involving not only local communities but state authorities and possibly the federal government or international mediators, given the cross-border (and even cross-national) dimensions of herder migrations affecting Agatu.

In areas with inter-communal tensions, BSCPR will map all active chieftaincy or boundary disputes and engage in dialogue and mediation efforts aimed at resolving disputes.

For the kidnapping surge, cultism, and ritual crimes, BSCPR will implement quick actions by helping formalise and train existing EWER systems stakeholders in threat detection and reporting, strengthening linkages between these systems and informal and formal security actors, and establishing hotlines reporting and accessing responses.

BSCPR will provide training to vigilantes on citizens’ arrest and information sharing, to avoid vigilantism turning into mob justice. It will also launch an anonymous tip line with rewards for information that foils kidnappings or leads to rescue of victims. This can encourage community members to speak out against criminal gangs.

Simultaneously, BSCPR will partner with relevant MDAs and civil society organisations (CSOs) to raise public awareness about activities such as ritual killings, cybercrimes, cattle rustling, and more.

<p>Medium-term (2028)</p>	<p>Build structures that foster inter-ethnic harmony and justice.</p> <p>Implement initiatives that foster peaceful and harmonious co-existence in border communities with perennial conflicts. This will include initiating joint development projects such as a community market, a bridge, or a borehole that benefit entire communities. The idea is to create shared interests and positive interaction, thus incentivising co-existence.</p> <p>Work on formal mechanisms for land and boundary adjudication. By 2028, in partnership with the Ministry of Lands and Survey, aim to have piloted the documentation of customary land boundaries or issuance of communal land titles in at least a few contentious areas of Zone C. This can reduce future disputes by clearly defining ownership and usage rights (with community buy-in).</p> <p>Work closely with the State Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters to encourage the establishment of a Peace Sub-Committee to address chieftaincy disputes by traditional rulers.</p> <p>Work closely with relevant MDAs and community groups to ensure coordinated responses to kidnappings by 2028. BSCPR will adopt an advocacy and partnership approach with relevant MDAs, and judicial actors in particular, to build local capacities and focus on addressing and ensuring accountability for crimes.</p>
<p>Long-term (2029-2030)</p>	<p>By 2030, strive to significantly diminish the main conflict issues in Zone C. Ideally, communal clashes should be rare or non-existent because key disputes have been resolved or have effective conflict resolution channels. Inter-group relations should have improved because of sustained dialogues and cultural exchange.</p> <p>Significant reduction of farmer–herder clashes and resource-based competition in border areas by implementing sustained collaborative platforms, security patrols, stringent enforcement of grazing rules, and community agreements on resource governance and management.</p> <p>Improved safety and security due to effective and operational partnerships and EWER systems that culminate in the reduction of kidnapping incidents. Improved recognition of social and cultural diversity among communities, including resolving local disputes peacefully, maintaining law and order through a community-security alliance, and shifting the zone’s reputation from a “troubled region” to a “resilient, harmonious society” within Benue.</p>

4.3 Cross-Cutting Initiatives by Conflict Typology

In addition to geographically tailored strategies, some interventions are designed around specific conflict types that cut across multiple zones. These thematic initiatives ensure focussed attention on the most pervasive conflict drivers statewide. The table below summarises the conflict-specific strategies, corresponding initiatives, and expected outcomes by 2030 for the major conflict typologies affecting Benue:

Conflict Type	Strategic Initiatives	Indicative Outcomes by 2030
Farmer–Herder Conflict (resource-based conflict between crop farmers and nomadic pastoralists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support stakeholder engagement and sensitisation on the Benue Livestock Management Plan: In partnership with relevant MDAs, promote fair and consistent implementation of the Open Grazing Prohibition Law by engaging pastoralist communities on compliant practices (e.g., ranching, designated routes, etc.). - Seasonal Migration Dialogues: Before every dry season, convene meetings between farming community leaders and herder representatives (including Miyetti Allah and neighbouring state herders) to agree on movement corridors, grazing areas (if any), and ground rules to prevent clashes. - Climate-Smart Early Warning: Integrate climate data (e.g., drought forecasts in the North) into early warning, anticipate influxes of herders, and prepare preventive measures (such as pre-positioning security or fodder supplies to reduce competition). - Alternative Livelihoods: Introduce programmes for rural youth to reduce over-dependence on farming/grazing (e.g., agro-processing, dry-season gardening away from conflict zones, and vocational training) so that not all young men feel their only option is to fight for land or join militias. - Livestock Tracking: Work with veterinary services to register herders and tag cattle in Benue and create a database for accountability (so that if destruction happens, there is a way to trace the animals/owners). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant decrease in violent farmer–herder incidents. By 2030, annual reports of deadly clashes have reduced by >70% from the 2025 baseline (monitored via security reports). - Structured grazing management in place. E.g., at least two ranches are operational; agreed corridors mapped in three zones; no-go farming areas respected. - Improved farmer–herder relations. Seasonal dialogues continue regularly; at least five local peace accords on resource-sharing upheld (80% of commitments met). - Shift towards settled livestock practices. Measured by the increase in number of herders using ranches or designated areas (state records). - Accountability for violations. System in place to identify and sanction herders who destroy crops or farmers who attack cattle, reducing retaliatory cycles. <p>Overall: By 2030, farmer–herder conflict is no longer the dominant security issue in Benue, as evidenced by very few new displacements or fatalities from such clashes and the public perception that the issue is being managed (per surveys).</p>

<p>Land and Boundary Disputes (often between communities or LGAs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Boundary Agreements: In partnership with responsible MDAs, facilitate negotiations between disputing communities, leading to jointly mapped and formally recognised boundary lines. Use surveyors from the State Boundary Commission to demarcate once an agreement is reached and secure government recognition. - ADR for Land Conflicts: Promote mediation or local arbitration as a first step whenever a boundary or land ownership conflict emerges; work with courts to refer suitable cases to BSCPR mediators instead of litigation. - IDP Land Reintegration: Ensure returning IDPs reclaim land or are allocated alternatives to prevent secondary conflicts. BSCPR will mediate if returnees find their land occupied and negotiate solutions (e.g., compensation by the government or land swaps) so that returns do not spark disputes. - Land Policy Input: Advocate for land titling initiatives in rural areas and the inclusion of conflict sensitivity in land use planning (so that new government land allocations consider local claims). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Major land disputes resolved. By 2030, 50% of identified major inter-community land disputes active as of 2025 are peacefully resolved (through agreements or clear demarcation) E.g., at least five longstanding boundary feuds are settled. - Institutionalised ADR for land. Customary and formal systems work together (e.g., courts refer cases); the Boundary Commission involves BSCPR early. - Secure IDP returns regarding land. All BSCPR-facilitated return sites see an elimination of violent incidents over land between returnees and hosts (target 0% conflict incidence in those processes). - Perception of fairness. Surveys indicate communities feel they have mechanisms to handle land issues without violence (target >75% positive response). <p>Overall: Land disputes are far less a trigger for violence by 2030; people largely use dialogue or legal channels and respect outcomes, breaking the cycle of revenge over land.</p>
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<p>Cultism and Youth Gang Violence (urban and peri-urban gang conflicts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth Peace Ambassador Programme: Identify influential ex-cultists or youth leaders and give them intensive peace leadership training (possibly abroad or via a national programme). Upon return, have them lead peer-to-peer outreach, visiting schools and hot-spot neighbourhoods to speak against cultism, mentor younger peers, and mediate local youth conflicts. - School-based Early Intervention: Strengthen guidance counselling in schools by training counsellors/teachers to spot early signs of cult recruitment or violent behaviour and intervene (with referrals to NGOs for rehab if needed); consider incorporating anti-cult content in curricula. - Youth Exit Pathways: Advocate for a state-led amnesty or rehabilitation scheme for cultists (e.g., youth who voluntarily renounce cult membership within a specified timeframe gain access to vocational opportunities and immunity from prosecution for minor past offenses, while those who persist would face stricter law enforcement measures). This would constitute a balanced 'carrot-and-stick' approach to encourage defection from cult groups. - Community Engagement: Set up local youth peace committees in urban centres (Makurdi, Gboko, Otukpo), involving former and current rival gang members under facilitation to break barriers and coordinate peace activities, such as sports events. - Enforcement Support: Work with police to improve intelligence on cult activities (i.e., through community informants, technology surveillance) and ensure prompt action against identified criminal acts. Also ensure arrested cultists are prosecuted (to demonstrate the consequences). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharp decline in cult violence. By 2030, cult-related violent incidents in urban areas are reduced by ≥80% (according to police data). E.g., Makurdi, Gboko report near zero cult clashes. - Social rejection of cults. Youth surveys show that the majority (>70%) disapprove of cultism (versus <30% in 2025). Cult membership no longer seen as "cool." - Successful reintegration. At least 100 ex-cult members are engaged as Peace Ambassadors or have secured steady jobs due to the programme, with the emergence of some as community youth leaders promoting peace. - Institutional changes. Schools have active anti-cult clubs and counselling; the state considers passing a policy offering rehabilitation for those who quit gangs (and tougher sentences for those who do not). <p>Overall: By 2030, cultism shifts from a widespread subculture to an isolated fringe; major cult groups are dismantled, many former members are leading positive lives, and communities feeling safer (as determined by surveys in which residents report feeling secure, letting children return to school, etc.).</p>
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<p>Kidnapping and Banditry (criminal violence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counter-Kidnapping Strategy: Collaborate with security agencies to develop a comprehensive plan. Key elements include improving intelligence gathering (community informant networks focussing on spotting strangers or suspicious movements with BSCPR and police managing tip lines and protecting sources); deploying technology, such as drone surveillance in known hideouts (advocate with government and military); and conducting public awareness on precautions and quick reporting. - Victim Support: Ensure victim support is part of the strategy by proposing allocations under the Peace Fund to provide small grants or assistance to victims of violence (including kidnap survivors, families of those killed). Even modest financial help or trauma counselling can help with rebuilding and can signal state care, preventing cycles of vengeance or communal anger. - Police-Community Dialogues: Facilitate regular dialogues between communities and police to rebuild trust and address allegations of collusion or inaction. Community members can voice concerns, police can explain efforts, and both can plan collaboration (such as community watch schemes). This aims to create a united front against banditry. - Legal Advocacy: Work with the judiciary for speedy trial of bandits or kidnappers; consider pushing for special courts (as noted) or, at a minimum, monitoring of such cases to ensure they are not dropped. - Rehabilitation of Routes: Advocate repairing poor roads and improving lighting on highways (with government), as infrastructure improvements can reduce ambush spots and increase security presence. BSCPR to highlight this link in State Security Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant reduction in kidnappings. By 2030, monthly kidnapping cases plummet (target: near zero in previously high-incident areas). (E.g., highways once notoriously high risk (i.e., Kaduna-Otukpo) become largely safe). - High case resolution rate. Most kidnapping cases see victims rescued and perpetrators arrested (e.g., police stats improving). - Stronger deterrence. Conviction rates for those arrested is high (due to better investigations and faster trials) and send the message that crime does not pay. - Victim support system is operational. By 2028, a Victim Support Fund is established, and by 2030, hundreds of victims and their families receive aid (via counselling or grants). Their rehabilitation reduces secondary trauma or inclination for revenge. - Improved police-community relations. Communities actively cooperate with police (increase in tips foiling crimes); surveys show trust in police up significantly from baseline. <p>Overall: By 2030, kidnapping and banditry are no longer rampant threats - they become rare, thoroughly condemned by local communities, and swiftly addressed when attempted. People feel secure traveling and living daily life (a key measure of peace dividends).</p>
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<p>Political and Electoral Violence (clashes around elections, politically instigated unrest)</p>	<p>- Election Peace Accords: As was carried out in 2019 and 2023 at the national level, facilitate state-level Peace Accords before the 2027 local and 2029 general elections. All candidates and party leaders in Benue pledge commitments to non-violence, issue-based campaigns, and acceptance of results or legal petitions instead of violence. Hold these public events with media attention.</p> <p>- Election Early Warning: Leading up to and during elections, run an election monitoring and early warning system, integrated with BSCPR's main EWER and specifically tracking election-related incidents (e.g., hate speech at rallies, clashes at campaign events, intimidation) and sharing rapid alerts with the police and civil defence for preventive deployment. Possibly set up an Election Situation Room with CSOs.</p> <p>- Voter Education Campaigns: Partner with civil society (and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)) on messaging which discourages vote-selling or violence and encourages tolerance for outcomes. Use radio, drama, and town halls (e.g., slogans such as "Ballots, not bullets").</p> <p>- Mediation Hotlines: Have mediators on standby on election days and in the aftermath (e.g., if tension spikes in a community over rumoured fraud, BSCPR can quickly mediate between rival supporters to dispel misinformation or urge calm pending official results).</p> <p>- Post-Election Follow-up: After elections, convene meetings of winners and runners-up under BSCPR auspices to promote reconciliation and joint work (so losers feel included and winners pledge to govern fairly). Document any breaches of the peace accord to hold actors accountable publicly.</p>	<p>- Peaceful elections in 2027 and 2029. Target: no significant election-related violent incidents in Benue during these cycles (as per security/INEC reports), making them among the most peaceful elections the state has seen.</p> <p>- Culture shift in politics. Political rallies and campaigns in 2029 are notably free of hate speech or thuggery compared to the past (as monitored by content analysis).</p> <p>- Institutionalisation of peace norms. By 2030, every election includes a Peace Accord signing and compliance is expected; parties continue multi-party liaison committee meetings outside of election season to discuss any tensions.</p> <p>- Improved public confidence in democracy. Voter turnout might increase (if fear of violence was deterring voters before); surveys indicate people feel elections are safer and conflicts should be resolved legally.</p> <p>Overall: A major shift from the past in which elections often triggered crises. By 2030, Benue elections become routine civic exercises with disagreements handled through dialogue or the courts, rather than street fighting. This reflects a maturing democratic culture and is a key legacy of BSCPR's interventions.</p>
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5. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration Approach

Effective stakeholder engagement lies at the heart of this strategic plan. Given the number of actors in Benue's peace and conflict landscape, BSCPR will adopt an approach aimed at transforming the state into a coordinated peace ecosystem. Each category of stakeholders has a distinct role to play, and BSCPR will tailor its engagement strategy accordingly, as summarised below (a detailed stakeholder landscape and engagement matrix is outlined in Appendix D):

I. Traditional Rulers and Customary Institutions: This category includes the paramount leaders of all ethnic groups in the state, the council of chiefs, district heads, and clan heads.

Interests: They seek to preserve their authority, ensure community stability, and protect customary land arrangements and cultural norms.

Influence: Very high at the community level, where their authority carries significant weight, and moderate at the state level.

BSCPR Engagement: Traditional rulers will be treated as co-champions of peace. BSCPR will formally integrate them, including through co-chairing local peace structures (e.g., a paramount chief may co-chair an LGA Peace Committee), and involving them in mediations as respected arbiters. The Commission will provide capacity-building workshops for these leaders on modern mediation approaches and inclusive practices. To mitigate risks of bias or politicisation, BSCPR will establish clear MoUs and Terms of Reference with traditional councils regarding their roles in Peace

Committees and dialogue processes, emphasising neutrality and the primacy of community interest. Regular liaison meetings (e.g., quarterly) between BSCPR and leading traditional rulers will ensure information-sharing and the timely resolution of emerging issues.

II. Religious Leaders and Inter-Faith

Bodies: This category includes church leaders, imams, the Benue State chapters of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), as well as inter-faith peace platforms.

Interests: They prioritise the safety of their congregations, the preservation of moral authority, social cohesion, and freedom of worship.

Influence: High influence over public opinion and community norms, as many people place significant trust in religious guidance.

BSCPR Engagement: Religious leaders will serve as key messengers for peace. BSCPR will partner with them to promote messages of tolerance and reconciliation from the pulpit. They will also be engaged in reconciliation rituals where appropriate (e.g., joint prayers at peace events). An Inter-Faith Peace Forum may be established under the auspices of BSCPR to convene Christian and Muslim leaders to speak with a united voice against violence – particularly important in countering any sectarian framing of conflicts. Training in conflict-sensitive messaging will be offered, helping religious leaders to avoid language that could inadvertently inflame tensions and instead use their platforms to promote calm and unity. To safeguard their impartial role, BSCPR will ensure that religious figures are not seen as favouring one side by consistently engaging them through inclusive, inter-faith formats. Their involvement in initiatives such as peace education, trauma healing (including counselling of congregants), and early warning –

leveraging their grassroots networks – will also be encouraged.

III. Youth Groups and Networks: This category encompasses student unions, formal and informal youth associations, vigilante youth groups, and ex-gang members willing to engage constructively.

Interests: Young people seek security to pursue their lives, access to employment and educational opportunities, and meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes. Many are weary of being used as “foot soldiers” in conflicts.

Influence: Youth are highly influential as both potential spoilers and agents of peace. Often on the frontlines of violence, their engagement and buy-in can either escalate or stabilise community dynamics.

BSCPR Engagement: The Commission will mainstream youth participation across all its structures, ensuring that every Peace Committee and working group includes meaningful youth representation rather than token inclusion. BSCPR will establish dedicated youth platforms, such as a Youth Peace Advisory Council, that will meet periodically to provide input into the Commission's plans and serve as a feedback mechanism from young people. Capacity-building will be prioritised, with training provided in advocacy, mediation, early warning, and “peace entrepreneurship.” By treating young people as partners, BSCPR will leverage their networks – including social media and peer groups – to amplify peace messaging. Recognising their socio-economic vulnerability, initiatives such as the Youth Peace Ambassador programme and vocational training schemes will link youth engagement with tangible benefits, thereby sustaining commitment. The Commission will move beyond symbolic inclusion by actively empowering youth-led

initiatives – for example, through funding youth-proposed peace projects via the Peace Fund.

IV. Women's Groups and Networks: This category includes women leaders within communities, market women's associations, faith-based women's groups, female professionals, and women traditional leaders where they exist.

Interests: Women prioritise the safety of their families, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes, and support for their socio-economic roles.

Influence: Women hold significant influence within families and certain aspects of community life, although they are often underrepresented in formal leadership structures. Organised women's groups, however, have demonstrated considerable effectiveness in advocacy and grassroots mobilisation (e.g., organising protests against violence or providing humanitarian relief).

BSCPR Engagement: BSCPR will deliberately ensure women's meaningful participation across all peace structures. It will also create dedicated spaces for women to build solidarity and capacity – for instance, by establishing a Women Peacebuilders Forum linking women from all LGAs to share experiences and jointly advocate on peace and security issues. Women will receive training in mediation and early warning. The Commission will address practical constraints women face, such as scheduling meetings at accessible times and places, providing childcare during trainings, and working with male leaders to secure support for women's leadership roles. Over time, the aim is for women to be recognised not merely as beneficiaries of peace initiatives, but as active drivers of reconciliation – for example, women's

groups supporting the reintegration of former fighters, or mothers working across ethnic divides to promote peace.

V. Security and Law Enforcement

Agencies: This category comprises the Nigeria Police Force (at state command and divisional levels), Nigerian military units stationed in Benue, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, state-run security outfits (such as Community Volunteer Guards), and intelligence agencies.

Interests: Their mandate is to maintain law and order. They seek operational effectiveness, public cooperation, and the protection of institutional reputation, including maintaining public trust.

Influence: They wield very high influence due to their coercive power; their actions greatly shape conflict dynamics and public perceptions of safety and justice.

BSCPR Engagement: The Commission's strategy is to integrate security agencies into a joint conflict management framework. Through the planned State Peace and Security Forum (bi-monthly meetings) and related bodies, BSCPR will ensure that security actors participate in early warning discussions and jointly design responses informed by civilian input. The Commission will also facilitate joint training workshops involving both BSCPR staff and security personnel to foster mutual understanding. BSCPR will support the harmonisation of SOPs for conflict-sensitive operations in collaboration with security agencies – particularly in handling information from community informants to protect identities, and in establishing patrol protocols that reassure rather than intimidate populations. Establishing effective feedback loops will be essential. Communities often report delayed responses from security agencies, while security actors cite

insufficient information-sharing from communities. BSCPR will serve as a bridge to strengthen communication in both directions. By forging a trusting partnership, BSCPR and security agencies can deliver more timely, coordinated, and legitimate responses to conflict situations.

VI. Government Ministries and Agencies and Local Government:

This category includes relevant state ministries, such as those dedicated to Agriculture (farmer–herder issues), Lands and Survey (boundary issues), Justice, Women Affairs and Social Development, Youth and Sports, Education, Health (trauma healing), as well as the Benue SEMA. Local Government Councils and their officials are also crucial.

Interests: These bodies aim to deliver services and fulfil their sector mandates, maintain public order, and achieve development targets. They may fear conflicts undermining their projects or, conversely, may see the potential for their projects to mitigate conflict.

Influence: High in their respective domains as they control levers for resources, policy, and enforcement, although their effectiveness varies.

BSCPR Engagement: Coordination and clarity of roles are crucial. BSCPR will sign MoUs or coordination frameworks with key agencies to clarify collaboration. For instance, it will formalise arrangements with SEMA on humanitarian responses. BSCPR will handle the peacebuilding side, while SEMA will lead relief delivery, each informing the other. With the Boundary Commission, BSCPR will mediate community dialogues on boundary issues, while the Boundary Commission leads on conducting technical surveys. With the Ministry of Agriculture, BSCPR will convene dialogues between farmers and herders, and the Ministry will provide

inputs for ranches or alternative feeds, for instance. BSCPR will also rely on Local Government Chairpersons and traditional local authority synergies, such as by encouraging LG Chairpersons to actively support or lead Peace Committees and allocate a portion of their budget to peace activities. By ensuring government development schemes are conflict-sensitive by advising them on which communities prioritise for interventions to reduce tensions, BSCPR will inject conflict sensitivity and peace criteria into mainstream governance.

VII. Private Sector and Business

Community: This category includes large agribusiness firms and banks, small market trader associations, transport unions, and local chambers of commerce.

Interests: Businesses want a stable operating environment, protection from theft and extortion, and thriving markets. Some might have narrow interests, such as control of lucrative resources or routes, that risk fuelling conflicts if not well managed.

Influence: Economic power translates into moderate influence; they can fund or fuel conflict or be engines of peace, depending on the circumstances.

BSCPR Engagement: BSCPR seeks to turn the private sector into partners for peace. The Commission will engage them in dialogues about conflict-sensitive business practices, such as by discouraging them from paying bribes to militias for protection and fuels conflict and by demonstrating how the hiring of security services in coordination with official security actors can avoid creating parallel armed outfits. The Commission will also explore public-private partnerships for youth employment, encouraging major companies to sponsor vocational training centres or to support trainees from vulnerable

areas. In addition, the Benue Peace Fund will be a conduit for corporate social responsibility. BSCPR will approach banks, telecommunications companies, breweries, and other firms to contribute to the Peace Fund as a component of their CSR portfolio, possibly highlighting how peace will improve their business in the long run (a win-win). BSCPR might also involve business leaders in multi-stakeholder forums to plan local economic revitalisation in post-conflict communities, making them stakeholders in sustaining peace.

VIII. Media (Traditional and Social): This category includes local radio stations, newspapers, journalists, bloggers, and influential social media personalities in Benue.

Interests: Media seek viewership and readership and sometimes pursue sensational stories; responsible journalists aim for truth and positive impact, whereas some unscrupulous ones may spread rumours or biased narratives under pressure.

Influence: Very high in shaping public narratives as media can calm a situation or ignite it, depending on the nature and medium of reporting.

BSCPR Engagement: The Commission will cultivate a strong relationship with the media as allies in peace. It will hold regular press briefings to keep media partners informed with factual updates on conflicts and peace efforts. BSCPR will organise training workshops on conflict-sensitive journalism to build local media capacity for balanced reporting and information verification and management. Furthermore, BSCPR will co-create media content; for example, it will sponsor radio programmes that promote peace messages or partner with popular radio dramas to include peacebuilding storylines. In times of crisis, BSCPR will implement communication

mechanisms to quickly reach media editors to correct misinformation and provide them with evidence-based statements and reports to ensure accurate coverage. For social media, BSCPR will monitor trending peace- and conflict-related topics to influence the design of positive campaigns to counter inciting messages.

IX. Development Partners, Donors, and Academia: This category includes relevant international development partners, international and national NGOs, private philanthropists and foundations, as well as local universities and research institutes.

Interests: These actors bring technical expertise and funding and want to see impactful results aligned with their missions across the peace, humanitarian, and development sectors. They also value local ownership and sustainability.

Influence: They hold significant influence, especially through the financial resources they provide, their technical expertise, and the knowledge generated through research that informs programming and policy.

BSCPR Engagement: BSCPR will ensure that external support aligns with state priorities by clearly communicating its strategic plan and inviting partners to integrate their interventions within it, rather than implementing stand-alone projects. This approach avoids duplication and fragmentation of efforts, resources, and progress achieved. The Commission will formalise coordination by chairing a Peace and Conflict Working Group, where all international and local actors implementing interventions in the state will meet to discuss plans. With academia, BSCPR will pursue research partnerships to strengthen its evidence base and enhance the availability of up-to-date resources and knowledge products to guide planning,

programming, decision-making, and policymaking. By establishing clear partnership frameworks, BSCPR will ensure that external expertise strengthens local institutions rather than bypassing them. For example, good practice would include inviting partners to embed a technical adviser or liaison within BSCPR to facilitate internal knowledge transfer.

cultivate a network of peace stakeholders working in the same direction, with clearly defined roles and identified areas for complementarity. The Commission will effectively function as the backbone of a 'collective impact approach,' ensuring that stakeholders deliver their interventions collaboratively and in alignment with state priorities and the established institutional framework.

Through this multi-layered stakeholder engagement strategy, BSCPR aims to

NB: Refer to Appendix D for the Stakeholder Landscape and Engagement Table which details each stakeholder group's interests, influence, roles, risks, specific engagement strategies, and frequency of engagement.

⁹A collective impact approach emphasises coordinating efforts, maintaining communication, and ensuring everyone is accountable to the shared goal of peace in Benue State. The approach focusses on coordination over competition and alignment over fragmentation or duplication.



6. Implementation Arrangements and Resource Mobilisations

This section describes how the strategic plan will be translated into action through BSCPR's organisational set-up, management processes, and financing. It covers the structures and tools that will support implementation, as well as plans for mobilising the resources (human, financial, and material) required.

6.1 Organisational Structure and Management

Commission Governance: BSCPR is governed by a Board, as stipulated in the establishing law, which provides oversight and policy guidance. To strengthen the Commission's institutional capacity, all vacant Board positions will be filled by early 2026, ensuring representation from key sectors. The Board will meet quarterly to review progress against the strategic plan, approve major decisions – including annual workplans, budgets, and Peace

Fund allocations – and advise on strategic adjustments. To enhance accountability, BSCPR will invite observers from partner organisations (e.g., representatives from donors or relevant State Ministries) to Board meetings when appropriate and will produce minutes and communiqués after each meeting.

Management Team: Day-to-day implementation is led by the Director General (DG) of BSCPR, who serves as the chief executive. The DG will be supported by departmental heads or

programme managers corresponding to major functions. This management team will meet monthly – and informally more often – to coordinate activities, address challenges and ensure integration across different programme areas. The organogram (see Appendix F) delineates clear lines of responsibility, so staff know who leads each activity. As part of capacity-building, BSCPR will recruit additional skilled staff, potentially on secondment from partner organisations initially, to fill key roles and aid effective operationalisation of planned activities outlined in the strategic plan.

Zonal Coordination: BSCPR will either establish small Zonal Offices or appoint Zonal Coordinators for Zones A, B, and C. These coordinators will be senior staff from those regions and will reside in – or spend significant time within – their zones. They will convene monthly Zonal Peace Forums, informal gatherings of Peace Committee heads, local authorities, security representatives, and civil society members, to discuss local peace and security developments. Zonal Coordinators will report key points and support needs to the Commission’s headquarters. They will also have delegated authority to initiate rapid responses in emergencies. For example, in the event of a conflict outbreak, they can mobilise a mediation team or liaise directly with local police, while keeping headquarters informed. This decentralised approach ensures timely action and context-specific responsiveness.

Local Peace Infrastructure: At the LGA and community levels, LGPCs are central to implementing the Commission’s initiatives. By 2026, each LGPC will have a Chair (often a respected traditional or religious leader), a secretary (such as the LGA community development officer or a civil society representative), and various members (typically 10-15 people representing key groups). To formalise their status, BSCPR, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government, will issue letters of recognition to each committee and encourage LG chairpersons to gazette the committees as advisory bodies. BSCPR field

staff or zonal coordinators will attend LGPC meetings periodically to provide guidance and gather reports. Committees will submit brief monthly updates on incidents, activities, and needs to BSCPR via the Zonal Coordinator. In cases of serious conflict, LGPCs are mandated to convene emergency meetings and either mediate directly or request BSCPR mediation support. BSCPR will develop a simple toolkit for LGPCs, including reporting templates, mediation steps, and referral contacts, to standardise and simplify their work.

Standard Operating Procedures:

To ensure consistent and effective implementation, BSCPR will finalise internal SOPs by mid-2026. These will include:

- **Early Warning SOP:** detailing how community monitors collect data, verify reports, classify threat levels, and alert appropriate actors depending on severity.
- **Mediation and Rapid Response SOP:** outlining how mediation teams are formed and deployed, and how BSCPR coordinates with security actors during crises.
- **Communication SOP:** providing guidance on media engagement, clearance protocols for public statements, and use of social media.
- **Finance and Procurement SOP:** aligned with state financial regulations but tailored to BSCPR, to expedite procurement for urgent peace activities while maintaining transparency.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation SOP:** detailing how each project or activity is monitored, how data is collected and reported (linked to the M&E plan in Section 7).

All staff and key partners will be trained on these SOPs. They serve to institutionalise processes within the Commission, preserving institutional memory and reliability regardless of personnel changes.

Coordination Mechanisms: BSCPR will establish several coordination forums to regularly engage different stakeholders (some of which were mentioned earlier):

- **State-level Peace and Security Forum** (bi-monthly): Bringing together BSCPR, security chiefs, and key officials to discuss integrated responses.
- **EWER coordination meeting** (monthly): Including all stakeholders – community representatives, CSOs, and government actors working on early warning and response in the state.
- **Humanitarian-Peace Nexus meeting** (quarterly): Involving BSCPR, SEMA, and major NGOs/UN agencies to harmonise peacebuilding and relief/rehabilitation efforts, ensuring conflict sensitivity in peacebuilding and aid delivery.
- **Thematic Working Groups** (as needed): Convening relevant agencies and experts on specific themes to plan and review progress. BSCPR would chair or co-chair these groups, keeping them task-focussed and time-bound.
- **Internal Task Teams** within BSCPR (per strategic goal): For example, an Early Warning Task Team that meets frequently to oversee EWER rollout, or an Inclusion Task Team focussing on youth and women’s initiatives.

By establishing these layers of coordination, BSCPR will strengthen its role as a convening agency and ensure synergy and harmonisation among actors within the peacebuilding eco-system in Benue State.

6.2 Human Resource and Capacity Development

Staffing Plan: The plan anticipates BSCPR growing from a small core of staff to a more robust team over the five-year period. Key hires or deployments will include conflict analysts, field officers (for zones), communication and outreach specialists, training officers, a finance officer, and an M&E specialist. If government recruitment is slow, BSCPR will seek secondments from supportive agencies to embed technical

staff for up to a year or assign a retired police officer as a security liaison. The Commission will strive for cultural and gender diversity in hiring, ensuring that women and youth are well represented on the team. A conscious effort to recruit staff with local language skills for various communities will further enhance outreach.

Capacity-Building: Continuous learning is emphasised within the Commission. In addition to initial trainings, BSCPR will implement an annual training calendar covering both technical and managerial topics. Partnerships will be sought with national training institutions, such as the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) in Abuja, or international bodies such as UNITAR, to offer in-country courses or scholarships for staff to attend programmes elsewhere. Peer learning exchanges with other state peace commissions will be organised, allowing small BSCPR delegations to visit counterparts to learn from their structures and programmes, and vice versa. This approach not only builds skills but also fosters relationships for future collaboration. Mentorship will also be explored; for example, pairing each new community peace officer with an experienced mentor during their first year will be a key capacity-building strategy.

Motivation and Retention: Recognising past challenges with staff morale, BSCPR will prioritise improving working conditions to retain talent. This will include advocating for regular payment of salaries and allowances, providing health insurance – or at least medical aid – for staff, and instituting recognition programmes and awards. Work-life balance will be encouraged and emphasised as part of the work culture. The Commission will also ensure staff safety by providing security briefings; escorts may be provided during field visits to high-risk areas, and psychological support will be offered following traumatic events.

Logistics and Infrastructure: Implementation requires mobility and

presence. BSCPR will allocate part of its budget – or seek donor support – to procure operational vehicles for field travel, as well as motorbikes for monitors in hard-to-reach villages and bicycles or transport stipends to support Peace Committees within the communities. The headquarters in Makurdi will be equipped with the necessary tools, including computer sets, reliable internet, and meeting facilities for dialogues, trainings, and other meetings. In establishing any zonal offices, BSCPR will ensure there is a modest and functional workspace to serve as a local coordination point. Over time, the Commission will advocate for a purpose-built “Peace House” in Makurdi, capable of hosting its offices and a conference hall, and serving as a neutral venue for mediations and relevant meetings, thereby reducing the costs of operationalising various initiatives.

6.3 Resource Mobilisation and Funding Strategy

Successful execution of the strategic plan hinges on adequate funding. BSCPR’s approach to resource mobilisation is two-pronged: securing strong government funding and diversifying external support.

State Government Funding: The primary source of sustainable funding is the Benue State Government. BSCPR will engage the Governor, State Assembly, and Ministry of Finance early to make the case for increased budgetary allocation. Specifically, activation of the Benue Peace Fund is a top priority. By law, the Peace Fund can receive budgetary allocations, donations, and grants.

BSCPR will propose a model whereby a certain percentage of the state’s security vote, or a fixed annual amount, is dedicated to the Peace Fund. The Commission will also encourage the State Assembly to legislate or formally endorse a funding mechanism that protects BSCPR’s budget from year-to-year fluctuations. The Commission will present a costed implementation plan, including detailed budget lines for key programmes and administrative costs to justify the requested

funds. These funding options emphasise that investing in peace is cost-effective, as preventing conflict saves resources that would otherwise be spent on crisis response and reconstruction.

Donor and International Grants: In parallel, BSCPR will actively seek grants from international partners. A Resource Mobilisation Plan will be developed, mapping potential donors to specific strategic priorities. BSCPR will appoint a Donor Liaison Officer responsible for developing proposals and maintaining donor relationships. Wherever possible, proposals will align with donors’ strategic interests while remaining within the scope and priorities of BSCPR’s plan. Joint proposals with NGOs may also be pursued, whereby BSCPR provides local leadership while the NGO manages grant administration, where appropriate. The Commission will participate in donor coordination meetings and present its needs transparently to mobilise resources. BSCPR aims to secure at least ₦500 million (or the equivalent in USD) in external funding over the five-year period of this strategic plan.

Private Sector and CSR: BSCPR will also tap into corporate social responsibility resources from private sector actors, particularly large enterprises. This engagement will include directly approaching banks, telecommunications companies, and manufacturing firms operating in Benue to contribute to peace initiatives. BSCPR may offer branding opportunities for specific projects to attract sponsorship. It will also explore partnerships with business associations – for example, encouraging members of the Chamber of Commerce to contribute a small percentage of profits towards peacebuilding, with pooled contributions funding priority projects. Although private sector contributions may not match government or donor funding levels, they will enhance community ownership and can support smaller-scale community projects that may fall outside donor priorities.

Efficient and Accountable Use of Funds:

To maintain donor and government confidence, BSCPR will implement robust financial management systems. The Commission will maintain transparent accounting procedures, with quarterly financial reports and annual audited accounts made publicly available. The Commission will also invite oversight from relevant bodies, including permitting the Benue State House of Assembly Committee on Peace and Security to review Peace Fund expenditures annually. In addition, BSCPR will track cost-effectiveness indicators – such as expenditure per mediation case or per beneficiary – to continuously improve value for money.

No Detailed Budget in Plan: This document does not include a line-item budget; however, BSCPR has developed a separate indicative multi-year budget. That budget aligns with the strategic goals, breaking down costs for personnel, operations, and programme activities on a year-by-year basis. It serves as a guide for fundraising targets and will be adjusted as funding realities evolve. The Commission will practise adaptive management by scaling activities up or down in line with available resources while communicating its financial position transparently.

6.4 Ensuring Role Clarity and Synergy (Avoiding Duplication)

A critical implementation consideration is avoiding overlap with other agencies and ensuring that BSCPR remains focussed on its core mandate of coordination, prevention, and mediation. The Commission will take the following steps to maintain clarity:

- **MoUs:** As referenced, BSCPR will sign MoUs with agencies such as the Boundary Commission, SEMA, etc. Each MoU will clearly outline the division of labour.
- **Joint Programming:** Rather than running separate programmes in areas where mandates could clash, BSCPR will pursue joint programmes

with relevant government agencies and institutions. For instance, if there is a plan for a Truth and Reconciliation process in a community – which may fall under the purview of the Ministry of Justice and the Human Rights Commission – BSCPR will partner with both agencies to implement the initiative, rather than launching a parallel process. In this way, overlapping mandates become cooperation.

- **Regular Coordination Meetings with Related Agencies:** Bilateral meetings between BSCPR and agencies such as the Police, SEMA, and the Boundary Commission will be held (in addition to broader forums). In these meetings, upcoming activities will be discussed to avoid duplication and promote coordination and complementarity. For example, if BSCPR becomes aware of the Boundary Commission's plans to facilitate community engagement in a certain area to resolve a boundary dispute, BSCPR can adjust its own mediation schedule to complement the activity (or even join it, where appropriate).
- **Clarity in Public Communication:** BSCPR's public messages will reinforce its specific role within collaborative efforts. For instance, whenever the Commission engages in a partnership, it will identify the lead agency responsible for that sector. Similarly, if communities request support outside BSCPR's mandate (such as road construction), BSCPR will refer the request to the appropriate agency rather than committing to deliver it directly. This approach will manage expectations and position BSCPR appropriately as a facilitator and coordinator, rather than a substitute for line ministries or security actors.
- **Monitoring for Gaps and Overlaps:** The BSCPR M&E team will also monitor for duplication or neglect. If an issue arises, BSCPR can identify it through its community networks and convene a rapid coordination meeting to address it.

The overall objective of clarifying roles is to ensure that BSCPR becomes a bridge among diverse institutions: bridging security and civilians, government and communities, and development and peace efforts. In doing so, it ensures that each

stakeholder operates within its area of strength, while BSCPR fills gaps that others are not addressing. This complementarity will maximise the collective impact of all peace and security initiatives in the state.



7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (Meal)

Monitoring and evaluation are integral to this strategic plan to ensure that BSCPR's interventions are effective and to enable continuous learning and adaptation. A MEAL system will be implemented with the following components:

7.1 Monitoring Framework

BSCPR has developed a Results Framework (see Appendix E) that outlines key indicators at the output, outcome, and impact levels for each strategic goal and objective. Highlights of the monitoring approach include:

- Baseline and Target Setting:** In early 2026, BSCPR will establish baseline values for all outcome indicators. For example, this may include baseline conflict incidence rates (using 2025 data, such as the number of violent incidents, fatalities, IDPs, etc.), baseline trust levels (via a survey asking communities about trust in BSCPR

or security actors), and the baseline number of functioning local peace structures. Based on these baselines, realistic but ambitious targets for 2028 (mid-term) and 2030 (endline) will be set. For instance: "Reducing annual conflict-related fatalities by 50% by 2030" or "Increase the percentage of conflicts mediated (versus fought out) from baseline X% to Y% by 2030." Targets for outputs (such as the number of people trained or committees formed) will be set annually to guide implementation momentum.

- **Data Collection and Management:** BSCPR's M&E Officer will design tools for routine data collection. This will leverage the early warning system for certain indicators (such as the number of warnings responded to, which can be logged in the EWER database). Peace Committee reports will provide data on local mediations conducted and disputes resolved. Attendance registers and evaluation forms from training sessions will capture data on the number of participants trained and immediate feedback. BSCPR may partner with a university or NGO to conduct annual perception surveys to capture qualitative outcomes (such as community perceptions of safety, trust in institutions, and attitudes of youth). All data will be aggregated in a central MEAL database. Modern tools, such as mobile data collection (using ODK or Kobo Toolbox) for field surveys and GIS mapping for incident tracking, will be employed to enhance accuracy and timeliness.
 - **Output Monitoring:** Outputs will be closely tracked to ensure activities are implemented as planned. Indicators include: “# of early warning reports received and acted upon,” “# of community dialogues facilitated,” “# of local peace committees operational,” “# of people (disaggregated by women and youth) trained in mediation/peacebuilding,” “Amount of funds raised for the Peace Fund,” etc. These results will be reported quarterly. For accountability, BSCPR will also monitor input indicators such as the budget utilisation rate, ensuring that funds are spent on intended activities.
 - **Outcome Monitoring:** Outcomes are higher-level changes to which BSCPR contributes, measured semi-annually or annually. Outcome indicators include:
 - ◆ Conflict incidence metrics: e.g., frequency of violent incidents in hotspot areas (from security reports or early warning data) and severity (casualties, displacement figures).
 - ◆ Mediation success rate: e.g., the proportion of mediated conflicts that do not recur within six months.
 - ◆ Community trust and satisfaction: e.g., via surveys measuring the percentage of stakeholders who perceive BSCPR as effective in coordinating peace responses (with a target of achieving a majority by 2030).
 - ◆ Social cohesion indicators: e.g., number of IDPs returned, number of inter-community activities held without incident, and qualitative evidence of improved relations.
 - ◆ Youth and women’s empowerment signals: e.g., increases in youth employment in target communities (using proxies such as the number of youth engaged in programmes who subsequently secure employment or livelihoods opportunities) and women’s participation in peace processes (e.g., the number of women-led initiatives).
- These outcomes require careful attribution analysis. BSCPR will use methods such as before-and-after comparisons in communities where it intervenes versus those where it has not yet intervened (to identify differences), as well as gather testimonies that link observed changes to specific interventions.
- **Impact Evaluation:** The ultimate impact is a peaceful Benue with reduced violence and sustained structures for conflict resolution. This is inherently multi-causal; however, by 2030, BSCPR plans to conduct an independent endline evaluation to assess the extent to which the high-level goals were achieved. Impact indicators such as conflict fatality rates (per year, per 100,000 population), displacement figures, and the existence of functioning peace infrastructures beyond the Commission (such as community mechanisms continuing

to operate independently) will be considered. The evaluation will also qualitatively examine whether a culture of dialogue and non-violence has taken root.

7.2 Reporting and Review Mechanisms

Routine Reporting: BSCPR will produce quarterly progress reports that include both narrative and quantitative updates on each strategic goal. These will highlight activities completed, outputs delivered, any variances from plan, and initial outcomes observed. A traffic-light system may be used to flag objectives that are lagging (red) versus those on track (green), prompting management attention. These reports will be shared with the Board and key stakeholders, including funders, to ensure transparency.

Annual Reviews: At the end of each year (starting in 2026), BSCPR will facilitate an Annual Strategic Review workshop. This will involve BSCPR staff, Board members, and selected external stakeholders to review the year's results against targets. Successes will be celebrated and challenges analysed. The annual review will generate recommendations to adjust the Yearly Operational Plan for the subsequent year. For example, if certain approaches are not yielding results, they may be revised or resources reallocated. BSCPR will document these lessons in an Annual Report that is made public, enhancing accountability.

Mid-Term Evaluation (2028): At the midway point, BSCPR will commission a mid-term evaluation (either a self-evaluation with external validation, or an independent evaluation if resources permit). This evaluation will more rigorously assess outcomes achieved by 2028, determine whether the strategy remains relevant to the evolving context, and examine the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation. It will specifically assess whether the assumptions in the Theory of Change still hold. Findings from this assessment will inform revisions to

the strategy for the remaining two years. If necessary, objectives may be adjusted or additional interventions introduced to address emerging issues.

Adaptive Management: BSCPR will practise adaptive management, meaning it will not rigidly adhere to a plan that is not working. The M&E system is designed to provide feedback loops. For instance, if monitoring shows that one approach (e.g., town hall dialogues) is not drawing sufficient participation from parties to disputes, BSCPR will investigate the reasons and test alternative methods rather than persisting with an ineffective approach. Similarly, if new conflict trends emerge, BSCPR will adapt its activities accordingly. In essence, the strategy document will serve as a living guide rather than a fixed blueprint. M&E data will inform adaptations implemented by the Commission.

Community Feedback and Accountability: Part of BSCPR's M&E is ensuring that the communities we serve have a voice in evaluating our work. Through forums such as the Peace Committees and community dialogues, BSCPR will solicit feedback. The Commission will establish a simple grievance/feedback mechanism, such as a suggestion box at BSCPR offices or a phone line, where people can anonymously comment on BSCPR's activities or staff conduct. These feedback channels will be treated seriously; recurring suggestions or complaints will be discussed at management meetings and addressed. This approach ensures accountability not just to donors or to government, but also downward to citizens.

7.3 Learning and Knowledge Management

BSCPR aims to become a learning organisation that applies best practices and also contributes to broader knowledge on peacebuilding. Key aspects of this approach include:

- **Periodic Learning Sessions:** Internally, BSCPR will hold bi-annual learning sessions where staff and volunteers reflect on what is working or not. Different zones will share experiences to influence cross-pollination of ideas and adaptations. External experts or other states' commission staff might be invited to some of the sessions to provide fresh perspectives.
- **Case Studies:** BSCPR will document case studies of significant interventions. For example, if a community reconciliation in Agatu proves successful, a short case study will be developed capturing the context, the mediation process, decisions reached, and key outcomes. These case studies will help in training new staff and other stakeholders, advocating for support, and replication of successful mediation models in other communities and states.
- **Knowledge Products:** By the end of the strategy, BSCPR will compile a "Peacebuilding in Benue: Lessons Learned 2026-2030" report or toolkit. Additionally, shorter briefing papers will be produced annually on thematic issues. These resources will not only help BSCPR to refine its approaches but also position it as a thought leader locally.
- **Exchange and Advocacy:** BSCPR will share its progress and lessons in national and regional forums during its participation in peace and security conferences, contributing to national policy dialogues and knowledge within the community of practice. Showcasing Benue's model will attract more support for the Commission's peacebuilding work and also draw in new ideas from elsewhere.

Finally, the M&E system will track risk factors identified. For example, if the risk of political interference was noted, M&E will monitor incidents and document them as part of assumptions to guide programming and decision-making. Implementing a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning system will ensure that this plan remains on track and achieves real impact. It provides evidence to celebrate successes, course-correct failures, and continuously justify the trust and resources invested in BSCPR. Through transparent reporting and inclusive learning, BSCPR will maintain credibility and momentum through 2026-2030 and lay the groundwork for even more effective peace efforts beyond this plan's timeframe.

Appendix A: Relevant Policy Frameworks, Reports, and Literature

Framework	Focus and Relevance	Key Literature Insights
<p>Benue State Peace and Commission Law (2022)</p>	<p>Establishes the Commission, its mandate for conflict monitoring, mediation, and the creation of Local Government Peace Committees and a Peace Fund.</p>	<p>Serves as the legal foundation for the strategic plan. Its provisions enable local structures, early warning systems, and formal peace financing.</p>
<p>Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (2017)</p>	<p>Bans open grazing in Benue and provides for ranching.</p>	<p>A recent study shows that opposition to the law reignited farmer–herder violence and recommends providing loans or support for herders to establish ranches. The BSCPR plan therefore includes interventions for ranching support and dialogue.</p>
<p>Benue State Development Plan (2025-2034)</p>	<p>Outlines socio-economic priorities such as agriculture, youth employment, and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Violence disrupts agriculture and commerce; peacebuilding is thus framed as a prerequisite for development.</p>
<p>Benue State (and National) Security Strategies/Architecture</p>	<p>The State works with federal security agencies under frameworks such as the National Security Strategy (2019) and state-level security operations (e.g., Operation Whirl Stroke). While not a written “policy” for peace, the security architecture is a context the BSCPR must align with.</p>	<p>Complementarity with Security Operations: The BSCPR plan complements kinetic security efforts by providing a soft approach (through dialogue, early warning). It aligns with the National Security Strategy’s pillar “enhancing human security and peacebuilding” (if referenced) by institutionalising early warning systems and community engagement which are globally recognised best practices.</p> <p>State Laws on Security: The Plan respects the Open Grazing Prohibition Law (2017) (Benue’s ranching law) by including advocacy for ranching implementation to reduce farmer–herder conflict (enforcing state policy through peacebuilding). It also works within the legal framework of vigilante and volunteer guards (ensuring community guards are formalised and trained rather than remaining extrajudicial).</p> <p>Joint Structures: The strategy establishes forums (Peace and Security Forum) that directly link with the existing security command structure, aligning civilian peace efforts with official security strategy. This ensures BSCPR does not duplicate or contradict security measures but rather augments them.</p>

Benue State Action Plan on Internal Displacement (2025-2034)	Guides return and resettlement of IDPs.	With over 1.5 million people displaced since 2018, durable solutions require combining security guarantees, livelihoods restoration, and reconciliation efforts.
National Livestock Transformation Plan (2019-2028)	Federal programme promoting ranching, improved livestock practices, and farmer-herder cooperation.	Provides a framework for integrating ranching support into Benue's peace strategy.
Nigeria's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-WPS)	Calls for women's participation and protection in peace processes.	The BSCPR plan adopts a minimum of 30% representation for women in peace committees and supports gender-sensitive programming.
Academic/ NGO Literature on Middle-Belt Conflicts	Studies emphasise drivers such as resource competition, ethnic polarisation, impunity, and weak state presence, and propose inclusive dialogue, early warning networks, and livelihood support as effective interventions.	Key lessons: Address root causes (land, grazing rights), empower youth/women, combine justice with reconciliation, and ensure local ownership.

Appendix B: Risk Assessment

Risk	Likelihood	Potential Impact	Mitigation Strategies
Recurrent violence and insecurity	High	Disrupts field activities, endangers staff, hampers early warning.	Coordinate closely with security forces; implement robust safety protocols; use community intermediaries when field access is unsafe; maintain emergency response fund.
Political interference or apathy	Medium	Could politicise the Commission or underfund programmes.	Ensure multi-party representation on the Board; maintain transparency; continually brief the Governor and Assembly; build public and donor support to sustain funding.
Funding shortfalls	Medium	May curtail critical activities and jeopardise peace gains.	Diversify funding sources (i.e., state budget, donors, private sector); prioritise high-impact interventions; ramp up Peace Fund contributions; phase activities to match resources.
Staff turnover or capacity gaps	Medium	Reduces institutional memory and delays programme delivery.	Invest in training and career development; offer competitive remuneration; build a roster of mediators and volunteers for back-up capacity.
Community mistrust or lack of participation	Medium	Limits effectiveness of dialogue and early warning systems.	Intensify outreach and feedback mechanisms; demonstrate quick wins; ensure inclusion of all stakeholder groups (e.g., women, youth, minorities); engage trusted traditional and religious leaders.
External shocks (e.g., pandemics, floods)	Low – Medium	Diverts resources and attention; may exacerbate tensions in densely populated areas.	Integrate peacebuilding into disaster response planning; design flexible workplans; collaborate with humanitarian agencies to ensure conflict sensitivity during crises.

Appendix C: Indicative Multi-Annual Work Plan and Resource Framework (USD)

Key Activities (2026-2030)	Key Indicators	Budget Estimate (USD M)	Explanation	Baseline (2025)	Target (2030)
Strategic Goal 1: Conflict Prevention and Early Response					
Outcome 1:					
Establish and expand a community-based early warning and early response system across all LGAs (monitor recruitment/training; hotline and digital reporting).	Number of alerts generated; Percentage of alerts acted upon within 48 hours;	2026: 0.5	Initial set-up: recruit EWER monitors, train staff, purchase ICT equipment and vehicles.	Alerts seldom tracked; <20% acted upon.	≥70% of alerts responded to within 48 hours; functional peace committees in all 23 LGAs.
Formalise rapid response teams with security agencies and humanitarian partners.	Number of operational Peace Committees.				
Build and equip Local Government Peace Committees.					
		2027: 0.6	Extend monitoring to all wards; run simulation drills; operationalise hotline.		
		2028: 0.7	Integrate climate data, GIS mapping, and cross-border coordination; maintain community liaison.		
		2029-30: 0.6	Institutionalise early warning with local authorities; maintain rapid response fund.		

<p>Strategic Goal 2: Dialogue, Mediation, and Reconciliation</p>					
<p>Map conflict hotspots and stakeholders.</p> <p>Convene inclusive dialogues (farmer-herder, inter-ethnic, youth gangs).</p> <p>Train mediators from communities, CSOs, and BSCPR staff.</p> <p>Facilitate truth-telling forums, community reconciliation ceremonies, and traditional compensation agreements.</p>	<p>Number of dialogues convened;</p> <p>Number of agreements reached and implemented;</p> <p>Reduction in violent incidents in mediated areas.</p>	<p>2026: 0.4</p>	<p>Stakeholder mapping and first round of dialogues; start mediator training.</p>	<p>Few dialogues; high violence rates.</p>	<p>≥10 major dialogue processes, 80% implementation of agreements; ≥60% decline in violent incidents.</p>
		<p>2027: 0.8</p>	<p>Conduct major dialogues across zones; set up follow-up committees; launch mediation hotline.</p>		
		<p>2028: 0.8</p>	<p>Support implementation of peace accords; scale reconciliation programmes and psychosocial counselling.</p>		
		<p>2029-30: 0.5</p>	<p>Institutionalise local dispute resolution panels; integrate ex-combatant reintegration.</p>		
<p>Strategic Goal 3: Inclusion and Social Cohesion</p>					

<p>Establish youth and women peace clubs, volunteer networks, and entrepreneurial training.</p> <p>Implement targeted livelihood grants or micro-credit schemes.</p> <p>Support safe return/integration of IDPs and build social cohesion through joint community projects (e.g., markets, wells, and schools).</p> <p>Integrate peace education into curricula and run public campaigns against hate speech and cultism.</p>	<p>Percentage of women and youth represented in peace structures;</p> <p>Number of IDPs voluntarily resettled;</p> <p>Social cohesion index (trust surveys, inter-group events).</p>	<p>2026: 0.3</p>	<p>Launch pilot youth/women programmes; create peace clubs; deliver initial livelihood grants.</p>	<p>Women/youth often excluded; 1.5 million displaced; low trust.</p>	<p>Women and youth each ≥30% representation; major reduction in IDP numbers; improved trust metrics.</p>
		<p>2027: 0.5</p>	<p>Expand vocational training and economic schemes; support IDP returns; hold inter-community festivals.</p>		
		<p>2028: 0.5</p>	<p>Mainstream peace education across schools; scale microfinance; monitor inclusion targets.</p>		
		<p>2029-30: 0.4</p>	<p>Consolidate programmes; measure social cohesion; sustain youth/women leadership structures.</p>		
<p>Enabling Goal 1: Institutional Strengthening</p>					

<p>Recruit and retain qualified staff; develop an organogram and standard operating procedures.</p> <p>Activate the Peace Fund with government and donor contributions.</p> <p>Provide continuous training (e.g., M&E, mediation, conflict sensitivity, accounting).</p> <p>Strengthen governance (through Board meetings, audits).</p>	<p>Number of staff positions filled;</p> <p>Number of SOPs adopted;</p> <p>Peace Fund resources mobilised;</p> <p>Timeliness and quality of audits/evaluations.</p>	<p>2026: 0.4</p>	<p>Finish staffing and core training; procure offices, vehicles, and MIS software.</p>	<p>Skeleton staff; no SOPs; Peace Fund not funded.</p>	<p>All key positions filled; SOPs operational; Peace Fund fully funded; regular audits and evaluations completed.</p>
		<p>2027: 0.3</p>	<p>Resource the Peace Fund; implement SOPs; host quarterly Board and stakeholder forums.</p>		
		<p>2028: 0.3</p>	<p>Conduct mid-term evaluation; upgrade MIS; refine policies.</p>		
		<p>2029-30: 0.3</p>	<p>Prepare end-term evaluation; advocate for sustained state funding; transition donor projects to government budgets.</p>		

NB: Budgets are approximate and assume a modest programme scale – actual figures may vary. This framework provides a baseline for donor proposals and state budgeting.

Appendix D: Stakeholder Landscape and Engagement Table

Overview: Effective peacebuilding in Benue requires the inclusion and coordination of a broad range of stakeholders. Table B1 maps the key stakeholders relevant to BSCPR's mandate – including government bodies, traditional and religious authorities, civil society groups, international partners, youth and women's organisations – describing their relevance, current involvement in peace efforts, and expected roles in implementing the Strategic Plan. This comprehensive stakeholder landscape will guide BSCPR's engagement strategy to ensure “all hands on deck” for peace.

NB: BSCPR's philosophy is partnership centric as no single entity can resolve conflicts alone. Hence, the Commission will serve as a convener linking government, security, communities, and other stakeholders.

Table B1: Key Stakeholders in Benue Peacebuilding and Their Roles

Stakeholder Group	Relevance and Influence	Current Involvement in Peace Efforts	Expected Role in Strategic Plan Implementation
Benue State Government (Governor's Office and Executive Council)	Ultimate policymaking authority at state level; controls state budget and security coordination at state level; high influence over public institutions and political will.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Established BSCPR via law and provides initial funding. . - Chairs the State Security Council; issues directives on security operations. - Has supported ad hoc peace dialogues and humanitarian relief for IDPs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Champion the Plan: Provide political backing and legitimacy for BSCPR initiatives. - Resource Allocation: Finance the Peace Fund and ensure annual budgetary support for BSCPR. - Policy Alignment: Integrate peacebuilding goals into state development programmes and uphold laws (e.g., ranching, anti-open grazing) that reduce conflicts.
Local Government Authorities (23 LGA Chairpersons and Councils)	Grassroots governance closest to communities; can mobilise local resources and convene stakeholders at LGA level; influence varies by area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some LGAs have Local Peace Committees (often initiated by NGOs or the state) involving LG officials. - LGA leaders address minor disputes and coordinate security vigilante groups. - Provide support to IDP camps in their areas (basic services, land for resettlement). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Plan Implementation: Chair or support LGCs in each LGA, working with BSCPR field staff. - Early Warning and Response: Feed local conflict reports to BSCPR; help deploy quick responses (e.g., convening community dialogues, alerting police) when tensions rise. - Resource Mobilisation: Allocate small funds or in-kind support for community peace activities (e.g., venues, local logistics).

<p>Security Agencies (Police, Army, Civil Defence Corps, State-run Volunteer Guards)</p>	<p>Critical for maintaining law and order; possess enforcement power; police and military have presence across zones; actions greatly affect conflict dynamics (can mitigate or escalate tensions).</p>	<p>- Police: Respond to criminal violence and communal clashes, though capacity is stretched. - Military (Op. Whirl Stroke): Deployed to fight banditry/herdsmen in troubled areas (esp. Zones A/B). - Civil Defence and Vigilante Corps: Guard communities, protect farms; some coordination with police. - They participate in the State Security Forum and ad hoc joint operations.</p>	<p>- Information Sharing and Joint Response: Participate in a State Peace and Security Forum with BSCPR to review early warnings and plan coordinated responses. - Rapid Response: Co-chair rapid response task forces with BSCPR for imminent conflicts (police/military provide security muscle, BSCPR provides mediation entry points). - Training and Reform: Under the Plan, security personnel will receive training on human rights and conflict-sensitive approaches; improved collaboration to build community trust in law enforcement.</p>
<p>Traditional Rulers (e.g., Tor Tiv, Och'Idoma, Clan Chiefs, District Heads)</p>	<p>Custodians of customary law and cultural authority; highly respected in communities; their word can legitimise peace efforts; often arbiters in local disputes.</p>	<p>- Many serve as Patrons or Chairpersons of Peace Committees at community/LGA levels. - Mediate land disputes, family conflicts via customary courts. - Mobilise youth for community defence or to maintain order via palace directives. - Have participated in reconciliation ceremonies and peace advocacy (e.g., inter-tribal peace meetings).</p>	<p>- Mediation and Advocacy: Continue to play lead roles in dialogue forums (e.g., convene community peace meetings, use their influence to persuade conflicting parties to negotiate). - Early Warning: Act as key informants to BSCPR on emerging tensions in their domains. - Promotion of Tolerance: Champion messages of unity across ethnic lines, counter inflammatory narratives within their communities. - Institutional Support: Advise the BSCPR Board (traditional institutions will have representation on the Board and working groups).</p>
<p>Religious Leaders and Institutions (Christian Association of Nigeria, JNI (Islamic body), Church pastors, Imams)</p>	<p>Command moral authority and large followings; churches and mosques are community hubs; can appeal for peace and forgiveness, shape public opinion on conflicts.</p>	<p>- Often facilitate inter-faith prayers and peace rallies in times of crisis. - Some clergy (e.g., bishops, imams) have mediated local conflicts and assisted with relief for victims. - Faith-based organisations (e.g., Justice and Peace commissions in churches) run peace education, trauma healing, and charity for IDPs. - Generally, promote messages of tolerance, though a few instances of inflammatory sermons have been noted.</p>	<p>- Peace Messaging: Use pulpits and religious events to preach peace, reconciliation, and restraint to the public. - Conflict Mediation: Partner with BSCPR to mediate conflicts where appropriate (especially in disputes with religious or ethnic undertones). Joint Christian-Muslim peace committees can be formed in mixed communities. - Healing and Counselling: Provide trauma counselling, encourage forgiveness, and support reintegration of ex-combatants consistent with faith teachings. - Dissemination: Help distribute simplified versions of the Strategy to congregations, ensuring grassroots buy-in.</p>

<p>Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) (Local NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), academia, and peace committees not included in BSCPR)</p>	<p>Facilitate community-driven peace initiatives and advocacy; often have specialised expertise (e.g., human rights, gender, livelihoods); independent voice holding government accountable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active NGOs in Benue (e.g., Peace Advancement Network, Jireh Doo Foundation) work on conflict resolution, IDP support, livelihood projects. - Some CSOs have convened dialogues between farmers/herders or trained mediators. - Women's groups and youth clubs (considered CSOs) are running peace education in schools and skills training for youth. - The academic community (e.g., Benue State University) provides conflict analysis and has forums on peace/security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme Partners: Implement aspects of the strategic plan via grants or MoUs (e.g., run peace education, vocational training for youth, legal aid for conflict victims, etc.) - Community Mobilisation: Use their networks to mobilise grassroots participation in BSCPR initiatives (e.g., town halls, training workshops). - Advocacy and Accountability: Monitor and report on the Plan's progress from a citizen perspective, ensuring transparency. Advocate for policy changes (e.g., disarmament, land reforms) complementary to the strategy. - Technical Expertise: Provide research support, offer mediation expertise, and serve on advisory panels for BSCPR (some CSO leaders may be coopted as technical advisers).
<p>International NGOs and Development Partners (e.g., UN agencies - UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF; Donors - USAID, EU; INGOs - Mercy Corps, Search for Common Ground)</p>	<p>Source of technical assistance, funding, and comparative best practices; can pilot innovative peacebuilding models; influence through funding leverage and international spotlight on issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNDP and partners supported the establishment of BSCPR (technical advice on the law and plan) - INGOs have run projects in Benue (e.g., Mercy Corps' past peacebuilding in Middle Belt; UNHCR on IDP resettlement, IOM on transitional justice). - Provide humanitarian relief (food, healthcare) in IDP camps and support post-conflict recovery (livelihoods, reconstruction) in affected communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding the Plan: Contribute to the Benue Peace Fund and fund specific programmes (e.g., early warning system set-up, trauma healing centres). - Capacity-Building: Offer training and secondment opportunities for BSCPR staff (in M&E, mediation, etc.). - Technical Support: Help develop tools (conflict tracking software, M&E systems) and share best practices from other post-conflict settings. - Advocacy: Use diplomatic channels to raise attention to Benue's peace efforts, helping attract resources and sustain political will. - Joint Implementation: Collaborate on field projects, such as UNHCR and BSCPR working on IDP return programmes or partnering with Mercy Corps on a youth peace entrepreneurship scheme.

<p>Youth Groups and Networks (e.g., Benue Youth Forum, student unions, vigilante youth groups)</p>	<p>Youth (under 35) form a large segment of the population and are often both perpetrators and victims of violence; their engagement is critical for lasting peace; organised youth can drive community initiatives or, if idle, be recruited by spoilers.</p>	<p>- Youth vigilantes are active in many communities, providing local security (sometimes armed with rudimentary weapons, with varying degrees of oversight). - Youth councils and clubs occasionally organise peace rallies or sports for peace events (often with NGO support). - Student unions in tertiary institutions have done outreach on cultism and drug abuse. - However, many youth remain unemployed and some are involved in cults, gangs, or political thuggery due to lack of opportunities.</p>	<p>- Peacebuilders and Beneficiaries: Be the primary participants in BSCPR's Youth Peace Empowerment Programme (providing skills training, jobs, and civic engagement opportunities as outlined in SG3). - Champions of Change: Youth leaders will be involved in community peace committees and early warning networks as observers or reporters. They can leverage peer influence to steer other youth away from violence. - Outreach and Volunteering: Help disseminate peace messages via social media, drama, music, and sports and serve as volunteer peace educators in schools and villages. - Accountability Agents: Youth groups can monitor local government and security agencies, calling out abuses or failures, and thereby promoting accountability which young people often vocally demand.</p>
<p>Women's Associations (e.g., Federation of Women Lawyers - FIDA, market women's unions, widows' groups, faith-based women's fellowships)</p>	<p>Women bear a significant brunt of conflict (as widows, IDPs, survivors of GBV) but are underrepresented in formal peace processes; organised women's groups have social capital and insight into community needs; empowering women leads to more inclusive peace.</p>	<p>- Some women's groups provide support to victims of violence (counselling, livelihood support). - FIDA (female lawyers) offer legal aid to women affected by conflict and advocate for justice in gender-based violence cases. - Women often informally mediate family or community disputes, though rarely given official roles in traditional settings. - During consultations, women highlighted the lack of voice in peace dialogues and have formed coalitions to push for inclusion.</p>	<p>- Inclusion in Decision-Making: Ensure at least 30% representation of women in all peace committees and BSCPR forums, per the strategy's inclusion goal. Women leaders will co-chair or hold key positions in community dialogues to bring women's perspectives. - Women as Peace Mediators: Train and deploy women mediators to handle disputes (especially those involving women/youth issues). - Outreach to Women: Use women's networks (market gatherings, church fellowship meetings) to communicate peace education, early warning information (since women often have community intel but need safe channels to report). - Economic Empowerment: Implement targeted projects for women (e.g., micro-grants, skills training for war widows, etc.) as part of peace dividends, with women's groups managing these initiatives to ensure they reach the intended beneficiaries.</p>

<p>Media (Local Radio Stations, Correspondents for National Media, Social Media influencers)</p>	<p>Shapes public narrative and awareness; radio is particularly influential in rural Benue (local language programming); media can escalate conflicts through inflammatory reporting or help calm tensions with balanced journalism; social media rapidly amplifies news (and rumours) among youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benue has several radio stations (e.g., Radio Benue, Joy FM) that cover conflict news and occasionally host peace programming. - Journalists have exposed attacks and government responses, sometimes at personal risk. - Instances of biased reporting or hate speech in local language radio have occurred, which can inflame situations. - Social media (Facebook, WhatsApp) is used by youth to share news; unfortunately, also used to spread rumours. Some influencers and bloggers promote peace messages, while others may propagate divisive content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information Dissemination: Media will partner with BSCPR to broadcast early warning alerts (e.g., safety advisories) and peace education content. Regular radio programmes on peace, call-in shows, and drama skits about unity will be sponsored under the Plan. - Public Accountability: The press will be invited to BSCPR events and to report on implementation progress, serving as a transparency mechanism. BSCPR will hold press briefings to keep the public informed, countering misinformation. - Training: BSCPR will facilitate training for journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting to ensure reportage does not fuel tensions. - Community Feedback: Media (especially interactive radio) will serve as a channel for community members to voice concerns or suggestions related to peace and security, which BSCPR can then address (a form of two-way engagement).
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NB: The above list is not exhaustive. Other stakeholders include academia (to provide research and policy input), the judiciary (to prosecute perpetrators and handle the justice components of peace agreements), and the private sector (to promote economic stability through investment and support conflict-sensitive business practices). BSCPR's stakeholder engagement will remain flexible, bringing in any relevant party as needed. In all cases, the Commission's role is to coordinate and enhance the efforts of these actors, avoiding duplication and ensuring a unified approach to peace.

Appendix E: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

M&E Framework Summary: The Strategic Plan is underpinned by a robust M&E framework to ensure accountability, learning, and adaptive management. BSCPR has developed a Results Framework defining clear indicators at output, outcome, and impact levels for each strategic goal and objective. The M&E approach combines quantitative data tracking with qualitative assessments, enabling BSCPR to measure progress towards peace and adjust strategies in response to evidence.

Theory of Change Recap: If BSCPR strengthens its own capacity and outreach (by building structures, skilled staff, and sustainable funding) and effectively implements early warning, mediation, and inclusion programmes (preventing conflicts, resolving disputes, and addressing root causes with youth and women's engagement), then it will achieve immediate outputs (e.g., timely conflict reports acted upon, successful local dialogues, and empowered community peace structures). These outputs will lead to outcomes such as reduced frequency and severity of violent incidents, more conflicts resolved peacefully, greater inter-group trust, and improved social cohesion (e.g., displaced families returning, communities interacting again). Together, these outcomes contribute to the five-year impact of a measurably more peaceful Benue State with fewer conflict-related fatalities and displacements, restored normalcy in volatile areas, and institutionalised mechanisms for sustaining peace beyond 2030. Assumptions include political will remains, partners cooperate, no new major external conflict drivers emerge, and more.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): The following are examples of KPIs that BSCPR will track (with baselines established in early 2026 and mid-term targets set for 2028 and end-term targets set for 2030):

- **Output KPIs:**
 - ◆ Early warning responsiveness: # of early warning reports received and acted upon (quarterly count, aiming for increasing percentage addressed).
 - ◆ Local dialogue activity: # of community dialogues or mediations facilitated by BSCPR or Peace Committees (tracked quarterly).
 - ◆ Peace infrastructure: # of local peace committees operational (target: 23).
 - ◆ Capacity-building: # of people trained in peacebuilding (disaggregated by women/youth, including monitors, mediators, and others).
 - ◆ Advocacy and funding: amount of funds raised for Peace Fund (annual Naira amount from state budget or donors).
- **Outcome KPIs:**
 - ◆ Conflict incidence: frequency of violent incidents in hotspot areas (e.g., incidents per quarter in each LGA) and severity (casualties, IDPs).
 - ◆ Conflict resolution rate: percentage of identified conflicts that are resolved through dialogue/mediation vs. those escalating to violence.
 - ◆ Mediation success: % of mediated conflicts that did not recur within six months.
 - ◆ Trust and perception: survey-based indicators such as % of community members who perceive BSCPR as effective or trust security agencies.
 - ◆ Social cohesion: number of IDPs

who returned home (or % decrease in IDP population), or number of inter-communal activities held without incident.

■ **Impact KPIs:**

- ◆ Conflict fatality rate (annual deaths from conflict per 100,000 population - aim to cut significantly by 2030).
- ◆ Displacement figures (total IDPs in the state - aim for reduction via resettlement solutions).
- ◆ Longevity of peace structures: by 2030, local peace committees and networks function independently, indicating sustainable peace infrastructure.
- ◆ Qualitative impact: evidence of a “culture of dialogue” perhaps measured by case studies of communities that resisted violence through mediation.

Baseline data: BSCPR will conduct baseline surveys and compile 2025 conflict data at plan outset. Examples include baseline violent incidents per year, trust levels via surveys, and number of functioning peace committees.

Data Sources and Collection: BSCPR's M&E Officer will design data collection tools and manage a central MEAL database. Key data sources include:

- **Early Warning System Data:** All community incident reports and responses are logged digitally, providing real-time data on threats and response times.
- **Peace Committee Reports:** Each LG Peace Committee will submit monthly reports on local incidents, mediations held, and outcomes. Standard templates will ensure consistent data (e.g., number of disputes resolved, emerging tensions).

■ **Training and Activity Records:**

Participant attendance sheets, training evaluations, and activity reports will document outputs such as people trained and dialogues conducted.

- **Surveys and Assessments:** BSCPR may partner with a local university or research NGO to conduct annual or biennial perception surveys gauging community feelings of safety, trust in institutions, and attitudes (for outcomes that require survey data). Mobile data collection tools (ODK/Kobo) and GIS mapping of incidents will be used for efficiency and accuracy.

- **External Data:** Security agencies' incident statistics, humanitarian data (IDP figures from SEMA/UN), and media reports will be triangulated to validate BSCPR's own data.

All data will be stored in a secure database enabling analysis by conflict type, location, demographics, etc. Data quality assurance (such as spot checks and verification calls to communities) will be conducted to ensure reliability.

Roles and Responsibilities: BSCPR will dedicate an M&E Officer (or unit) to coordinate all monitoring activities. This officer will:

- Develop M&E templates and guidelines for BSCPR staff and partners.
- Train Peace Committee secretaries and BSCPR field coordinators on reporting requirements.
- Aggregate and analyse data monthly, flagging any concerns or trends to management.
- Lead the baseline study, mid-term evaluation, and final evaluation processes (managing external evaluators if hired).

BSCPR programme staff also have roles: each departmental head will track indicators relevant to their programmes

(e.g., the Early Warning Coordinator monitors early warning statistics, the Dialogue Coordinator tracks number of dialogues, etc.) and feed information to the M&E Officer. Zonal Coordinators will supervise data coming from LGAs in their zone. Externally, partners (such as NGOs running BSCPR-funded projects) will be required to report on agreed indicators. The BSCPR Board's M&E Committee (if formed) or the Board will receive and review M&E reports to provide oversight.

Reporting Schedule: A rigorous reporting and review schedule will facilitate continuous learning:

- **Monthly Internal Reviews:** The BSCPR management team will hold brief monthly check-ins to review key metrics (e.g., early warnings, activities done) and address any implementation bottlenecks quickly.
- **Quarterly Progress Reports:** Every quarter, an M&E summary report will be produced detailing activities completed, outputs delivered vs. planned, and any emerging outcomes. A simple traffic-light system may be used to indicate objectives which are on-track (green) or lagging (red). These reports will be circulated to the Board and key stakeholders for transparency.
- **Annual Reviews:** At the end of each year (2026, 2027, 2028, and 2029), BSCPR will convene an Annual Strategic Review Workshop. Staff, Board members, government, and civil society partners will examine the year's results against targets. They will celebrate successes and candidly discuss shortfalls. Each review will yield recommendations (documented in an Annual Report) to adjust the implementation plan for the subsequent year. The Annual Report will be published (e.g., made available online or at a public forum) to support public accountability.
- **Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) in 2028:**

As the plan reaches its midpoint, BSCPR will commission a more in-depth evaluation. This could be an independent evaluation or a participatory self-evaluation with external validation. The MTE will assess outcome-level progress (e.g., Have conflict incidents reduced? Are communities reporting improved safety?), relevance of strategies (given any new developments), and operational efficiency. It will also test the assumptions in the theory of change, such as: Is early warning leading to timely response or are youth programmes indeed reducing youth involvement in violence? Findings from the MTE will inform a strategic pivot if needed, with objectives either revised or new interventions introduced for the remaining two years. The mid-term review process will double as a chance to re-energise stakeholders and secure renewed commitments for 2029-2030.

- **Final Evaluation in 2030:** At the end of 2030, an independent endline evaluation will be carried out. This will measure to what extent the plan's overall goals were achieved, examining impact indicators such as a reduction in conflict fatalities, community resilience measures, and the durability of peace infrastructure. It will also capture lessons learned and best practices to inform future peace efforts in Benue and elsewhere. The final evaluation's findings will be shared with all stakeholders and will mark the formal closure of the Strategic Plan 2026-2030 (and as such feed into planning for the next phase post-2030).

Learning and Adaptive Management:

BSCPR is committed to using M&E not just for accountability but for learning and adapting strategies in real time. The Commission will practice adaptive management, meaning that if monitoring shows certain approaches are not working, BSCPR will adjust course rather than stick to a failing method. For example, if community town hall dialogues are poorly

attended, BSCPR might shift to smaller focus group dialogues or one-on-one mediation shuttles as alternatives. If new conflict trends emerge (e.g., a rise in cyberhate among youth), the strategy will be updated to address these. Regular reflection meetings (quarterly and annually) will explicitly include a “What’s not working and why?” agenda. BSCPR will also facilitate learning exchanges, including with other state peace commissions or national bodies, to incorporate lessons from comparative national and global experiences.

Finally, an emphasis on accountability loops will ensure learning reaches the community level. BSCPR will share findings back with communities (e.g., “We heard your feedback, here’s what we’re changing.”) This participatory M&E approach closes the feedback circle, building public trust in BSCPR as a responsive institution.

Appendix F: Organisational Structure and Institutional Set-Up

Overview: This section presents the organisational structure of BSCPR and its institutional set-up for implementing this strategic plan. A well-defined organogram ensures clarity in roles, accountability, and efficient communication lines within the Commission. The BSCPR's proposed structure includes a governing board, a management and programme team at headquarters, field coordination mechanisms, and support functions (administration, finance, M&E, and communications). Below is a description of each component of the organogram and how they inter-relate:

- **Governing Board:** The BSCPR is overseen by a multi-stakeholder Governing Board as stipulated by the founding law. The Board provides strategic guidance, approves key decisions (i.e., annual plans, budgets), and ensures accountability. By early 2026, all vacant Board positions will be filled to include representatives of security agencies, civil society, traditional institutions, and women and youth groups, among others. The Board meets quarterly to review progress and make policy recommendations. This high-level body anchors BSCPR's legitimacy and connects the Commission to broader stakeholder interests. The Board is led by a chairperson, such as a respected figure appointed by the Governor, while the BSCPR Director General serves as Secretary to the Board.
- **Management Team (headquartered in Makurdi):** The day-to-day operations are led by BSCPR's Director General (DG) who functions as the Chief Executive Officer of the Commission. The DG heads the Management Team, comprised of departmental heads or programme managers corresponding to BSCPR's major functions:
 - ◆ **Head of Early Warning and Response:** Oversees conflict

monitoring systems, leads community early warning network, and coordinates rapid response efforts.

- ◆ **Head of Mediation and Peacebuilding Programmes:** Leads dialogue initiatives, mediation deployments, and reconciliation projects and manages the roster of mediators.
- ◆ **Head of Administration and Finance:** Handles internal administration, human resources, logistics, and financial management, ensuring the Commission's operations run smoothly and accountably.
- ◆ **Head of Monitoring and Evaluation:** Responsible for tracking results, reporting, and ensuring learning feeds back into programming.
- ◆ **Additionally, as capacity grows, sub-units or roles pertaining to Training, Communications, and other relevant functions, will be included.** For example, a Communications Officer could manage outreach and media relations and a Legal Adviser or Policy Officer could handle policy advocacy and legal compliance.

The HQ serves as the central coordinating hub for all BSCPR activities. It houses the early warning analysis centre and main offices for programme planning and it allows for interface with state-level partners including ministries and donors. The management team meets regularly to ensure integration across different programmatic areas (e.g., linking early warning information to mediation actions). Clear lines of responsibility are delineated in the organogram so that each objective in the Plan has a designated lead within the team.

- **Field Coordination and Zonal and Local Presence:** To decentralise operations and maintain close contact with communities, BSCPR will establish field representation through:
 - ◆ **Zonal Coordinators (for Zones A, B, and C):** Senior BSCPR officers will be assigned to each senatorial zone to act as the Commission’s eyes and ears on the ground. They will ideally hail from the respective zones (for acceptability) and spend most of their time in the field. Their role is to liaise daily with local stakeholders, gather conflict updates, support the activities of Local Peace Committees, and initiate quick responses to emerging issues within their zone. They will convene monthly Zonal Peace Forums - informal gatherings of Peace Committee chairs, local officials, security reps, etc., in the zone - to discuss local peace and security developments. Zonal Coordinators have delegated authority to act in emergencies (e.g., mobilise a mediator or alert local police immediately when conflict breaks out) while keeping HQ informed.
 - ◆ **Local Government Peace Committees:** While not BSCPR staff, these committees form a critical part of the institutional set-up in each LGA. Each LGPC typically has a chair (often a traditional or religious leader), a secretary (e.g., an LGA official or civil society representative), and 10-15 members representing various stakeholder groups. They implement many community-level activities such as convening dialogues, mediating local quarrels, leading peace education at the grassroots level, and functioning as BSCPR’s “eyes and ears” in villages. BSCPR’s field staff (whether Zonal Coordinators or other officers) will support and attend LGPC meetings to provide guidance and support reporting. LGPCs can be visualised in the organogram as connected to Zonal Coordinators, who in turn connect them to HQ. This tier ensures last-mile coverage and local ownership of peace efforts.
- **Support Functions:** These support units are essential to enabling programmatic efforts:
 - ◆ **Administration and Finance Unit:** Manages finance (i.e., budgeting, accounting, Peace Fund disbursement), procurement, and general administration (including facility management and transport). Ensures compliance with government financial regulations and donor requirements, safeguarding BSCPR’s transparency and accountability across the board.
 - ◆ **Monitoring and Evaluation Unit:** Led by the M&E Officer, the Unit is responsible for data collection, analysis, reporting (i.e., quarterly and annual reports), and facilitating evaluations; institutionalises learning and adaptive management practices.
 - ◆ **Communications and Outreach Unit:** This emerging function will handle public communication, media relations, and strategic messaging. A Communications Officer will develop communication strategies, manage BSCPR’s presence on radio/TV and social media, and ensure information flows to stakeholders and the public. This unit will also produce peace education materials and success stories to foster public support.
 - ◆ **Training and Capacity-Building Unit:** Even if not a standalone unit, the team would benefit from a dedicated staff or focal point to coordinate training programmes for BSCPR staff, Peace Committee members, volunteers, and others. The function works closely with programme heads to identify capacity needs and organise workshops, often in partnership with NGOs or training institutes.

- **Institutional Relationships:** BSCPR's organogram also interfaces with several external structures:
 - ◆ The Commission reports to the state government (such as through the Governor's Office or a supervising Ministry, such as Peace and Security or Special Duties). For instance, the DG may provide periodic briefs to the State Executive Council on significant developments.
 - ◆ BSCPR will also maintain institutional links with federal bodies (if any) – e.g., the planned National Peace Commission (if established) or the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) in Abuja – for technical support and alignment with national peace policies.
 - ◆ Partnerships with security forces are institutionalised through bodies such as the State Peace and Security Forum, which BSCPR convenes with senior security leadership. While not part of BSCPR's internal organogram, these forums are vital coordination mechanisms connecting BSCPR to security hierarchies.
 - ◆ Collaborations with ministries (Local Government, Women Affairs, Youth, Agriculture, etc.) are established via focal persons or joint working groups to integrate the Plan with development and humanitarian initiatives.

This structure is designed to balance strong central coordination with local

presence. Lines of communication run both downwards (from Board to DG to field) and upwards (from community issues reported by LGPCs to zones to HQ). Lateral linkages (e.g., between departments or between zones) are encouraged through regular coordination meetings – for example, Zonal Coordinators sharing experiences so that innovations in one zone (such as a successful vigilante engagement in Zone A) inform approaches in another zone (Zone C).

Institutional Development: Strengthening this organogram is an explicit objective of the Plan (see EG1). By 2026, BSCPR aims to have this structure fully staffed and functional. By 2030, the goal is a mature institution recognised for professionalism, with clear roles and efficient processes. An indicator of success will be that BSCPR can operate smoothly with minimal ad hoc arrangements – i.e. everyone knows who is responsible for what, and information flows effectively from community alert to Board decision.

In conclusion, BSCPR's institutional set-up, with its multi-tiered organogram, is deliberately inclusive and robust: inclusive, by incorporating diverse stakeholders at Board and community levels; and robust, by establishing dedicated units and a field presence to cover the full spectrum of conflict prevention, resolution, and reconciliation tasks. This structure will serve as the backbone for implementing the Strategy and adapting to any challenges along the way.

Appendix G: Public Communication and Dissemination Plan

Overview: A robust communication strategy is essential to the success of the BSCPR Strategic Plan. Public communication and dissemination ensure that stakeholders at all levels – from government officials to rural communities – are aware of the Plan’s objectives, activities, and progress. Effective communication builds transparency, manages expectations, garners public support, and encourages community participation in peace efforts. Appendix G outlines how BSCPR will communicate its Strategic Plan and peace initiatives to various audiences, the channels and tools to be used, the timeline for key outreach activities, and the key delivery functions.

Communication Objectives:

- ◆ Awareness: Ensure that the public and key stakeholders know about the BSCPR, its mandate, and the contents of the Strategic Plan (i.e., the vision for peace in Benue).
- ◆ Engagement: Encourage communities to actively engage with peace initiatives (e.g., reporting to early warning systems, attending dialogues, supporting agreements).
- ◆ Transparency and Trust: Keep stakeholders informed of progress and challenges in implementation, thereby building trust in the process and institution.
- ◆ Behaviour Change: Use communications to promote a culture of peace, counter hate speech, dispel rumours, and propagate messages of unity and reconciliation.

Key Audiences:

- ◆ **Local Communities:** Including

conflict-affected populations, rural villagers, IDPs, youth groups, and women in markets largely reached by local languages and informal channels.

- ◆ **Traditional and Religious Leaders:** Gatekeepers of community opinion need to be informed and involved so they can cascade messages.
- ◆ **Government and Security Officials:** Keep them updated to maintain political and operational support (and ensure that BSCPR’s work is visible to decision-makers).
- ◆ **Civil Society and Partners:** NGOs, CBOs, and international partners to coordinate efforts and spotlight BSCPR achievements.
- ◆ **Wider Nigerian Public (and Diaspora):** Attract broader support and potentially deter external spoilers by publicising peace gains.

Communication Channels and Strategies:

- Mass Media Engagement:
 - ◆ Radio Programmes: Launch a weekly “Peace Hour” on Radio Benue and community radio stations, featuring discussions, call-ins from different communities, and mediation success stories. Radio has broad reach in Benue, including rural areas and in local dialects. Leverage popular formats (e.g., drama skits, storytelling) to embed peace messaging and information about BSCPR services subtly.
 - ◆ Television and Print: Use state TV (i.e., BSTV) and newspapers to broadcast key events (e.g., the Strategic Plan launch, major peace accord

signings) and press releases. Feature human interest stories in local press (e.g., how a conflict was averted due to early warning to illustrate impact).

- ◆ Media Training: Conduct workshops for journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting so that media becomes an ally in peace (rather than spreading inflammatory news).
 - ◆ Regular Press Briefings: A BSCPR Communications Officer will hold press briefings quarterly to share updates (perhaps aligned with the quarterly progress reports). This ensures consistent media coverage and transparency.
- Community Outreach and Dialogue:
 - ◆ Town Hall Meetings: Organise town hall forums in each LGA (at least annually) where BSCPR representatives – such as the Zonal Coordinator and Peace Committee member – explain the Strategic Plan in simple terms, report on local peace activities, and solicit community feedback. These forums promote local buy-in and serve as two-way communication channels.
 - ◆ Community Theatres and Festivals: Integrate peace messages into local cultural events. For example, work with drama groups to perform peace-themed plays in markets or during village festivals, illustrating the merits of reconciliation. Music and dance events for peace (such as a “Peace Carnival”) could draw youth and foster unity.
 - ◆ Printed Materials: Develop straightforward pamphlets or flyers in major local languages (e.g., Tiv, Idoma, Iggede, and English) summarising the Plan’s key points and BSCPR services (e.g., hotline, etc.). Distribute these at community meetings, places of worship, schools,
 - Digital and Social Media:
 - ◆ Social Media Platforms: Maintain an active presence on Facebook and Twitter (which are widely used in Nigeria) to share updates, photos of activities, and peace messages. Use local language hashtags for local reach. Encourage youth engagement through interactive content (e.g., quizzes on peace trivia, highlighting youth peace champions).
 - ◆ WhatsApp Groups: Given the prevalence of WhatsApp, set up broadcast lists or groups for clusters of key stakeholders (e.g., Peace Committee members statewide, media partners, the public to receive peace alerts). BSCPR can use these to quickly disseminate conflict advisories (i.ee, “rumour control” messages to counter misinformation during crises) and share success stories. WhatsApp can also receive early warning tips from community members if managed well.
 - ◆ Website: Develop a simple website or webpage under the BSCPR state site for where documents (such as the Strategic Plan, reports)

and government offices. Use infographics for those with limited literacy. Also, create posters with messages such as “Report Early – Prevent Conflict” and with BSCPR contact information to display in public places.

- ◆ Traditional Communicators: Collaborate with town criers, community announcers, and traditional institutions to disseminate information in rural areas which are not reached with modern media. For instance, a local chief’s announcer can inform people when a peace committee is formed.

are published. Include contact information and perhaps an online form for submitting conflict reports or volunteering. The site serves as a reference point for those seeking details and lends credibility, particularly for international audiences.

- ◆ SMS Alerts: In partnership with mobile networks, consider an SMS blast system for important peace messages or early warning alerts targeted to people in specific localities. Also, a short code (e.g., text “PEACE” to 12345) could be advertised for people to subscribe to updates or to report incidents (depending on telecom collaboration and associated costs).

Outreach through Partners:

- ◆ Religious Institutions: Request churches and mosques to include peace announcements in their services (e.g., “BSCP is working in our community on X, please support them” or “We urge congregants to shun violence and report conflicts to the Peace Committee.”) Specific Sundays could be designated as ‘Peace Sunday’ with sermon notes and other materials provided.
- ◆ Schools and Universities: Work with the Ministry of Education to introduce peace clubs (as planned) and hold “peace education assemblies.” Encourage universities (i.e., Benue State University and others) to host peace talks or debates and disseminate BSCP internships or volunteer opportunities to students (engaging the next generation and also amplifying via campus networks).

Timeline of Major Activities:

- **Q1 2026 Plan Launch and Awareness Drive:** Strategic Plan official launch event with press coverage. Issue a press release and hold radio/TV interviews

in which BSCP leadership introduce the plan (e.g., the DG or Board Chair appears on a popular morning show). Distribute Plan Summary Brochures across all LGAs. Establish social media accounts and kick off with introductory posts about BSCP’s vision.

- **Mid-2026 Grassroots Introduction:** Zonal town halls in each senatorial district introducing BSCP field coordinators and peace committees to communities. Start the weekly radio Peace Hour by mid-year. Media training for journalists on peace reporting in partnership with Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Benue chapter.
- **Late 2026 Feedback and Testimonies:** Collect and publish a few early success stories or quotes from beneficiaries (e.g., “Thanks to BSCP, our community resolved a five-year dispute.”) Use these in various materials to demonstrate impact (such as in a short video shared on social media).
- **2027-2028 Regular Engagement and Campaigns:** Maintain routine communications, including quarterly press briefings, an annual press conference linked to the Annual Strategic Review to share results, radio shows, and community theatre tours. Possibly launch a specific campaign each year: 2027 “Youth for Peace” campaign (featuring youth ambassadors, sports events); 2028 “Women as Peacemakers” campaign (media spotlight on women mediators). Coordinate these with international days (e.g., International Peace Day on September 21) with state events.
- **Mid-2028 Public Consultation on Mid-Term Evaluation:** Share mid-term findings with the public in a simplified form (such as via a town hall or radio discussion on “Is Benue more peaceful now? What next?”) This manages expectations and renews commitment by showing transparency about what is working or what is not.

- **2029-2030 Sustaining Momentum and Closure:** Continue community engagement and prepare communities for sustaining peace structures. In 2030, plan a high-profile event to mark the end of the Strategic Plan highlighting successes, recognising partners, and honouring community peace heroes. Use this event to advocate for continued support (such as by announcing the next five-year strategy, if planned). Also, share the final evaluation findings widely in 2030, so that citizens see the results of their collective efforts in data and stories.

Responsible Teams:

- **Communications Officer:** This dedicated function, to be hired by BSCPR in early 2026, will coordinate all communication activities. They will develop detailed communication plans, handle media relations, manage social media, and produce content.
- **Director General and Board Chair:** Primary spokespeople for official statements and high-level advocacy communications. Board members can also serve as peace ambassadors in their constituencies, conveying key messages.
- **Zonal Coordinators and Peace Committee Chairs:** These individuals will be the face of BSCPR at the community level. They are responsible for local dissemination, organising town halls, ensuring materials reach villages and feeding local concerns back to the communications team for follow-up.
- **Partner Liaisons:** BSCPR will identify champions among partners (e.g., a religious leader or popular youth influencer on the Board) to leverage their platforms. For instance, a well-respected traditional ruler on the Board can issue joint appeals for peace in the media, which carries weight.
- **State Ministry of Information and Orientation:** BSCPR will collaborate with this ministry to utilise state-owned media channels and to

ensure messages are consistent with government communication protocols. The Ministry's information officers in LGAs can support rural communications.

- **Civil Society Outreach Partners:** NGOs with community theatre troupes or media projects (such as Search for Common Ground, if present) can partners in producing peace messaging content, given their expertise.

Key Messages to Emphasise:

- **"Peace is Everyone's Responsibility:"** encouraging public involvement (such as by reporting to early warnings systems, participating in dialogues).
- **"BSCPR - Your Partner for Peace:"** establishing the brand of BSCPR as a trustworthy, neutral helper in conflicts (explain its mandate and successes to date to create goodwill).
- **Testimonials and humanising stories:** such as a farmer and herder shaking hands after mediation as imagery symbolising hope.
- **Regular reassurance that conflict prevention is working:** highlight any reduction in violence or resolved disputes to strengthen the belief that change is happening (as people often need to see positive examples given years of trauma).

Two-Way Communication and Feedback:

This plan emphasises listening as much as broadcasting. Mechanisms such as suggestion boxes at BSCPR offices, toll-free feedback lines, and feedback sessions integrated into town halls will allow the public to voice concerns. The Communications Officer will maintain a log of public feedback and ensure it is reported to management. This responsive approach (e.g., if communities complain they never get updates after reporting issues, BSCPR will start sending them follow-up information) will enhance credibility and refine communication methods.



