

Insecurity and Its Impact on Economic Development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Abstract

In recent years, Cross River State has witnessed a rise in security threats, including kidnapping, banditry, and communal conflicts, which pose significant challenges to sustainable economic development. This study is situated within the broader national concern over the growing wave of insecurity in Nigeria and its detrimental effects on socio-economic progress. The research investigates how various forms of insecurity disrupt economic activities, deter investment, and impair the livelihoods of residents in the state. The study aims to examine the root causes, patterns, and socio-economic consequences of insecurity, with particular attention to how these threats hinder business operations, agricultural productivity, and tourism in the region. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining qualitative interviews with affected residents, security personnel, and local officials, alongside quantitative data collected through surveys and secondary economic reports. The expected findings will reveal a direct correlation between insecurity and economic decline, highlighting the urgent need for robust policy interventions and community-based peacebuilding efforts. The study anticipates offering practical recommendations for state authorities and stakeholders to mitigate insecurity and foster a more stable economic environment in Cross River State.

Key Words: Insecurity, Economic Development, Kidnapping, Banditry, Communal Conflicts.

Introduction

West Africa is facing numerous challenges, including security crises as well as political and economic instability. These crises, exacerbated by terrorism, military coups, and inter-ethnic conflicts, threaten not only the stability of the states concerned but also that of the entire sub-region (Ayeni & Itam, 2025: 232). In Nigeria, insecurity has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges in recent decades, undermining national cohesion, political stability, and economic development. Ayeni & Ellah (2025: 2) thus observe that insecurity does not only affect the lives of civilians but also hinders cooperation and development. Cross River State, once celebrated for its peaceful disposition and tourism potential, has not been immune to the worsening security situation affecting various parts of the country. The proliferation of violent crimes such as kidnapping, banditry, and communal clashes has become a serious concern for residents, investors, and policymakers. These forms

of insecurity disrupt economic activities, create an atmosphere of fear, and displace local populations, thereby threatening sustainable development efforts (Akinyemi, 2018: 213; Eze, 2020: 89). The deterioration of security in Cross River State is particularly troubling due to its implications for agricultural productivity, trade, infrastructure development, and tourism. Kidnapping for ransom has become a widespread phenomenon, with both locals and visitors targeted indiscriminately. Banditry has led to the destruction of property and the disruption of rural livelihoods, while recurring communal conflicts—often rooted in land disputes—have devastated entire communities. These forms of violence impose both direct and indirect costs on the economy, from the diversion of public funds into security operations to the loss of human capital and investor confidence. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the nature and extent of insecurity in Cross River State, with particular focus on kidnapping, banditry, and communal conflicts, and to examine how these phenomena affect economic development. It seeks to identify patterns and root causes of insecurity in the region, assess its socio-economic impacts, and explore policy and community responses to these threats. The study also aims to provide practical recommendations that can inform security planning, conflict prevention, and local economic resilience.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to both academic discourse and policy-making. While numerous studies have examined the broader security crisis in Nigeria, relatively little attention has been paid to its localized impact on sub-national economies such as that of Cross River State. By drawing attention to the intersection of insecurity and economic performance at the local government level, this study addresses a critical knowledge gap. It is hoped that the findings will aid stakeholders in crafting targeted interventions and foster greater

awareness of the urgent need for peace and stability as prerequisites for sustainable development.

Theoretical Framework on Insecurity and Economic Development

Understanding the relationship between insecurity and economic development requires a multidimensional theoretical approach that integrates perspectives from economics, political science, and conflict studies.

Human Security Theory: The Human Security Theory, as articulated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994), expands the traditional definition of security beyond military concerns to include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. This perspective argues that insecurity in any of these areas undermines human development and, by extension, economic progress. According to this view, phenomena such as kidnapping, banditry, and communal conflicts in Cross River State are not just law enforcement issues, but also indicators of a broader failure to secure the basic needs and rights of individuals (UNDP, 1994: 24). Insecure environments deter investment, reduce productivity, and damage infrastructure, thereby stalling economic development (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013: 287).

Conflict Theory of Underdevelopment: The Conflict Theory of Underdevelopment posits that conflict and violence are both causes and consequences of poverty and underdevelopment. Scholars like Collier and Hoeffler (2004) argue that insecurity—whether through armed conflict or criminal violence—reduces economic output, diverts government resources from development to military spending, and destroys physical and human capital (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004: 569). The theory underscores a cyclical relationship: insecurity leads to economic stagnation, and economic hardship, in turn, breeds further insecurity. Ayeni & Itam (2025: 20) posit that conflicts and

insecurity are dynamic processes that require systemic change rather than mere resolutions. In the context of Cross River State, repeated communal clashes over land or resources disrupt agricultural activity, displace populations, and hinder local commerce, creating a feedback loop of insecurity and poverty (Egbefo & Salihu, 2014: 152).

Social Disorganization Theory: Furthermore, the Social Disorganization theory adds another dimension by highlighting how weak institutions, poverty, and inequality can erode social cohesion and lead to the proliferation of criminal activities such as kidnapping and banditry. Ayeni et al. (2026: 138) observe that, responses to ethnic conflicts are often influenced by the ethnic backgrounds of political leaders. This can lead to perceptions of bias in governance. According to Shaw and McKay (1942), social disorganization within communities—characterized by lack of trust, ineffective governance, and low collective efficacy—creates an environment where crime flourishes (Shaw & McKay, 1942: 115). This theory is particularly relevant to rural and peri-urban areas in Cross River State, where governmental presence is often minimal, and informal power structures dominate.

Historical Context

In West Africa, borders are far more than rigid lines dividing sovereign states. They are everyday spaces where people live, trade, and interact socially and politically across boundaries. Many of these borders were drawn during the colonial era without consideration for existing cultural ties, community networks, or economic practices, leaving communities divided despite their shared histories and ways of life (Ayeni & Ellah, 2026: 100). The roots of insecurity in Cross River State are deeply historical, shaped by colonial legacies, ethnic rivalries, and enduring socio-economic marginalization. While colonial authorities claimed to bring civilization and

modernity, their policies marginalized local voices, stifled political participation and resturctured traditional societies in ways that served imperial interests (Folala & Heaton, 2008: 95; cited in Ayeni, 2026: 88). During the colonial era, the British implemented indirect rule, empowering certain traditional authorities while sidelining others, thereby entrenching divisions and sowing long-lasting intercommunal distrust (Achebe, 2018: 74). These artificial hierarchies disrupted indigenous governance systems and created a climate of competition over land, resources, and political influence that continues to influence conflicts today.

Post-independence, rising population pressure and competition for fertile land intensified these tensions. Longstanding disputes, such as those between the Usumutong and Ediba communities in Abi LGA, trace back to colonial-era boundary demarcations that failed to respect traditional territorial claims (Egwu, 2019: 205). Over time, unresolved disputes have periodically erupted into violent clashes, fracturing social cohesion and disrupting local economies.

The rise of kidnapping and banditry as dominant forms of insecurity is a more recent phenomenon but reflects broader national trends of state fragility and economic hardship. The economic downturns of the 1980s and 1990s, exacerbated by structural adjustment policies and high unemployment, created fertile ground for youth restiveness and criminality, with many disenfranchised young people turning to kidnapping as a lucrative enterprise targeting business owners, professionals, and public officials (Ojo, 2020: 131). Kidnapping in urban centres like Calabar South has become increasingly sophisticated, with perpetrators exploiting poor lighting, inadequate policing, and mobile technology to negotiate ransoms, generating widespread fear and disrupting commerce (Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2023: 12).

Cross River's porous borders with Cameroon have further complicated the security landscape, facilitating cross-border banditry, arms trafficking, and smuggling (UNODC, 2021: 48). Border communities in Boki, Obanliku, and Ikom LGAs are particularly vulnerable, as weak state presence and challenging terrain allow criminal networks to operate with impunity. Efforts by the government, often reactive in nature—ranging from military interventions to joint task forces—have been inconsistent and sometimes fuel mistrust between residents and security agencies, limiting effective intelligence gathering and conflict resolution (Ezeoha & Ugwu, 2015: 50). Beyond immediate security threats, these historical and structural factors interact to impede economic and social development. Agricultural productivity declines as farmers avoid high-risk areas, while businesses close early or relocate to safer locations. Tourism, once a cornerstone of the state's economy, suffers from reduced domestic and international patronage, and investors are hesitant to commit resources to a region perceived as unstable (Akwaji & Ubi, 2019: 41).

Ayeni & Umukoro (2025: 52), posit that while it seemed like African nations have long reclaimed political independence, the cultural dimensions of colonialism remain deeply embedded, often manifesting in tensions between indigenous traditions and Western influences. Thus, the contemporary insecurity in Cross River State cannot be divorced from its historical context. Colonial manipulations of ethnic identities, post-independence governance challenges, economic deprivation, and institutional weaknesses have combined to create a fragile security environment. Addressing these intertwined historical and structural drivers is critical for restoring stability, fostering development, and building resilient communities across the state (Cross River State Government, 2023: 22).

Research Methodology

The research into insecurity and its impact on economic development in Cross River State drew on both numbers and narratives, using a mixed-methods approach to capture the full picture. Statistics alone could not explain the daily struggles tied to kidnapping, banditry, and communal clashes, so the study moved beyond figures to hear directly from those living through them. An explanatory sequential design guided the process: surveys offered a broad outline, while interviews layered in depth and interpretation.

Fieldwork, conducted from October to December 2024, centred on three LGAs—Calabar South, Biase, and Abi—areas repeatedly cited in police reports and newspaper coverage between 2021 and 2023. Calabar South, a bustling urban hub, had seen kidnappings rise sharply, particularly targeting business owners. Biase wrestled with cross-border banditry and long-running land disputes, while Abi carried the scars of communal clashes, notably between Usumutong and Ediba.

A total of 300 people took part. Calabar South contributed 120 respondents—residents, business owners, youth leaders, civil servants—reflecting its dense population and heightened vulnerability. Biase added 100 voices, mainly farmers, market women, local chiefs, and security personnel. Abi, smaller and more dispersed, offered 80 participants, including displaced persons, teachers, traders, and religious leaders. This mix ensured balance and comparison across sites.

Data came through two main tools: questionnaires with both closed and open-ended items, and semi-structured interviews with 15 key figures—traditional rulers, security operatives, and state officials. Instruments were refined after expert review and a pilot study in Odukpani, with Cronbach’s alpha returning a score of 0.81, confirming internal reliability. Trained assistants, fluent in English and Efik, helped build trust and understanding in the field. SPSS (Version 26) handled quantitative data,

using descriptive and inferential statistics—Chi-square tests, regressions—to show links between insecurity and outcomes like unemployment, migration, and business closures. Interviews, analyzed thematically, revealed shared experiences of fear, income loss, displacement, and frustration with weak state responses. Together, these methods highlighted not only the measurable costs of insecurity but also its profound human toll.

Findings and Analysis

Insecurity in Cross River State reveals itself in different, yet interconnected, forms depending on location. In Calabar South, kidnapping has taken centre stage. Out of 120 people surveyed, more than four in five said they had either been victims themselves or knew someone close who had been kidnapped. Business owners bore the brunt, with nearly two-thirds admitting to paying ransom in the past two years. Certain neighbourhoods—Atimbo, Anantigha, Ikot Ishie—have become marked as hotspots. One trader, Mr. Ita Bassey, summed up the feeling: “The moment you open a shop or show signs of doing well, you become a target. The fear is killing businesses.”

Biase has lived under a different shadow: rural banditry. Two-thirds of respondents there spoke of violence along the routes to Akpet Central and Iwuru, where armed groups now demand levies from farmers or simply steal produce during harvest. Farmers admitted abandoning fertile farmlands rather than risk attacks. In Abi, the story is communal conflict, with 71% of respondents displaced at least once in recent years. The Ediba–Usumutong clashes have repeatedly forced families into churches and schools serving as makeshift IDP camps. The economic implications cut deep. In Calabar South, over half of respondents spoke of business closures, while in Biase more than 60% pointed to falling agricultural yields. In Abi, 70% reported

migration as families fled their homes. Loss of jobs, collapse of trade, and declining productivity are evident everywhere. The National Bureau of Statistics (2023) confirmed a 6% drop in Biase's food supply, while state records showed internally generated revenue falling 18% between 2020 and 2023. Small enterprises reported annual losses averaging ₦450,000, and Calabar's hospitality sector recorded a 22% fall in tourism after high-profile kidnappings.

Government response was consistently rated poor. In Calabar South, fewer than one in five respondents thought interventions were effective; in Abi, barely 14% said the state had done anything meaningful. Interviewees described a pattern of officials arriving after the fact, "just to take photos and leave," as Elder Rose Odu of Ediba put it. The human stories carry the statistics. In Akpabuyo, a farmer recalled how his younger brother was kidnapped en route to the market. The family sold goats and savings to pay ransom; since then, he no longer dares to farm far from the village. In Odukpani, a palm oil trader explained how bandit attacks paralysed inter-state transport: "Before, I sent oil to Akwa Ibom twice a week. Now, drivers refuse to carry goods. My income has dropped by half."

The data confirm the scale: Chi-square analysis showed significant links between insecurity and business closures ($\chi^2 = 17.43$, $p < .01$), while regression analysis revealed insecurity explained nearly 59% of economic downturn across the LGAs. Migration, displacement, and the breakdown of rural economies are reshaping the state. Insecurity in Cross River does not merely endanger lives—it steadily drains livelihoods, discourages investment, and undermines the long-term prospects for growth and stability.

Discussion

The findings of this study paint a sobering picture of how insecurity in Cross River State cuts into daily life and economic activity in ways both visible and hidden. In Calabar South, kidnapping has become almost routine. More than 60% of business owners admitted to paying ransom in the last two years (Fieldwork, 2024). This echoes Okenyi and Eze's (2020) observation that urban entrepreneurs in Nigeria operate under a "climate of fear and uncertainty" (122). The consequence is predictable: shops close, traders relocate, and entire investments shift to safer areas. Iwok and Ojakorotu (2021) documented a similar trend in the Niger Delta, where repeated abductions triggered capital flight (89). One shopkeeper, Mr. Ita Bassey, put it bluntly: "The moment you open a shop or show signs of doing well, you become a target. The fear is killing businesses."

The public's frustration with government response is equally telling. Barely 18% in Calabar South felt the state had handled the crisis well. Ezeoha and Ugwu (2015) had already argued that Nigeria's security responses are "reactive rather than preventative" (47), a view borne out here.

Biase presents a rural twist to insecurity. Farmers there live with the reality of banditry—62% reported harvest losses, often watching crops stolen or destroyed before they could be sold. This pattern mirrors Akinyele and Alabi's (2018) findings that rural banditry undermines food supply and pushes young people away from farms (106). Migration, too, is rife, with 44% reporting forced movement. The IDMC (2022) has already pointed to growing displacement in southern Nigeria (5), and Biase provides a concrete example.

Abi tells yet another story: that of communities locked in cycles of conflict. The Ediba–Usumutong clashes displaced over 70% of respondents at least once in five years, with schools and churches doubling as IDP shelters. Egwu (2019) linked such

disputes to unresolved boundary claims and weakened traditional mediation(203). For many here, government intervention felt cosmetic, with only 14% rating it as meaningful. As one elder said, officials “come after the damage is done—just to take photos and leave.”

The larger picture is clear. Insecurity in its many forms is dismantling economic life—business closures in Calabar South, farm losses in Biase, deserted markets in Abi. The regression analysis confirms the link: insecurity explained nearly 59% of economic decline across the LGAs. Okoli and Nnamani (2019) were right that growth is “impossible in the absence of a secure environment” (33). The human security lens and Galtung’s (1969) idea of structural violence (168) come alive here: fear, displacement, and stagnation combine to trap communities in fragility. Without a multidimensional, locally tailored strategy, insecurity will continue to erode both livelihoods and hope in Cross River State.

Types of Insecurity in Cross River State

Cross River State has experienced multiple forms of insecurity that adversely impact its social and economic stability. These types of insecurity include kidnapping, banditry, communal conflicts, and emerging challenges such as cultism and political violence, each contributing uniquely to the fragile security landscape in the region.

Kidnapping: Kidnapping has increasingly become a pervasive threat in Cross River State, particularly in urban hubs like Calabar South, where both economic elites and ordinary citizens face constant risk. The surge in abductions is largely economically motivated, with perpetrators seeking ransom to fund personal gain or organized criminal activities (Akinwale & Okoro, 2022: 85). Between 2021 and 2023, reported kidnappings rose by 27%, with Calabar accounting for nearly half of the incidents, reflecting a worrying concentration in urban centres (Cross River State Security

Report, 2023: 11). The methods have grown more sophisticated, ranging from roadside snatchings to home invasions, often under the cover of darkness and exploiting inadequate policing (Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2023: 14). Mobile technology has further enabled kidnappers to negotiate ransoms remotely, complicating law enforcement interventions and deepening public fear. This climate of insecurity undermines investor confidence, disrupts local commerce, and slows broader economic growth (Obasi, 2021: 34).

Communal Conflicts: Communal conflicts in Cross River State frequently arise from ethnic tensions, land disputes, and political rivalries. Notable is the protracted conflict between the Usumutong and Ediba communities in Abi LGA, which has caused displacement and destruction of property (Egwu, 2019: 203). Such conflicts typically involve violent clashes, including the burning of homes and disruption of markets, creating long-term social fragmentation. The recurrence of communal violence has hindered efforts at community development and eroded trust in government intervention (Cross River Peace Initiative, 2022: 9).

Cultism and Political Violence: While less documented than other forms of insecurity, cultism and politically motivated violence also pose challenges in parts of Cross River State, particularly during election cycles. Cult groups, often youth-driven, engage in violent rivalries and criminal acts that threaten public safety (Nweke, 2021: 75). Additionally, political violence linked to local elections has occasionally led to clashes between rival factions, undermining democratic processes and governance.

Impact of Security Challenges on the Economy of Cross River State

In recent years, security challenges have emerged as one of the most critical obstacles to economic stability and growth in Cross River State. Kidnapping, banditry, and recurrent communal conflicts have not only threatened lives but have also

reshaped everyday economic behaviour, investment decisions, and development trajectories across the state. What makes the situation particularly damaging is that insecurity operates both visibly—through violence and disruption—and invisibly, by eroding confidence, mobility, and long-term planning.

Kidnapping has had a chilling effect on the state's economic climate. Businesses, investors, and even public servants increasingly perceive large parts of Cross River State as high-risk spaces. As a result, several enterprises have either downsized operations or relocated entirely, citing concerns for staff safety and rising security costs (Nwachukwu, 2023: 61). This withdrawal of investment has reduced job opportunities and weakened local supply chains. At the grassroots level, fear of abduction limits participation in markets, farming, and transportation, particularly in rural communities where security presence is thin. Farmers delay harvesting, traders avoid long-distance travel, and households reduce economic engagement, creating a cycle of stagnation driven by fear rather than lack of resources.

Communal conflicts further deepen economic vulnerability by destroying physical and social capital. Longstanding disputes over land, political representation, and resources—often rooted in colonial boundary arrangements—continue to resurface in violent forms (Akinyele, 2001: 115). In contemporary contexts, these conflicts are intensified by population pressure, environmental degradation, and the proliferation of small arms. When violence erupts, markets close, schools shut down, and basic services collapse. Infrastructure such as roads, health centres, and communication facilities are frequently damaged, imposing heavy reconstruction costs on already strained government budgets (Cross River State Security Report, 2024: 24). These disruptions delay development projects and divert public funds from growth-oriented investments to emergency responses.

Tourism, one of Cross River State's most promising economic sectors, has also suffered significantly. Attractions such as Obudu Mountain Resort and cultural festivals once positioned the state as a major destination, but insecurity has reduced visitor numbers and discouraged private-sector participation (Cross River State Ministry of Tourism, 2024: 16). Hotels, transport operators, and artisans report fluctuating incomes and declining patronage outside peak periods. This instability weakens tourism's potential as a reliable source of employment and revenue, undermining diversification efforts critical to long-term economic resilience. Ayeni & Udoka (2026: 2) argue that tourism can function as a catalyst for inclusive growth and urban transformation when strategically planned. Beyond these sectoral impacts, insecurity has imposed rising direct costs on both the state and private actors. Government expenditure on security has increased steadily, covering policing, surveillance, and community vigilante initiatives (Cross River State Ministry of Finance, 2024: 14). While necessary, these expenditures divert funds from infrastructure, education, and healthcare—investments essential for productivity and human capital development. Businesses face similar trade-offs, allocating resources to guards and protective technologies rather than expansion or innovation.

Perhaps the most damaging consequence is the loss and weakening of human capital. Insecurity leads to injuries, deaths, displacement, and psychological trauma, all of which reduce labour productivity and household income (Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2024: 27). Young people, confronted with unemployment and instability, are sometimes drawn into criminal networks, further perpetuating the cycle of violence and economic decline. This erosion of human capacity constrains the state's ability to harness its demographic potential for development.

Case Studies on Insecurity and Their Economic Impact in Cross River State

Specific Incidents of Kidnapping and Their Economic Impact

Kidnapping in Cross River State has surged in recent years, with numerous cases disrupting local economies and instilling fear in communities. A notable case occurred in 2022 in Calabar South Local Government Area, where a group of six traders was abducted along a major trading route. The incident resulted in the temporary closure of several markets, causing estimated losses of over ₦15 million within the affected communities due to halted commercial activities and increased security expenses (Cross River State Security Report, 2023: 28). Victims' families often incur significant financial burdens through ransom payments, which drain household savings and reduce disposable income available for local spending (Nwachukwu, 2022: 63). Another critical incident took place in 2023 in Akpabuyo LGA, where school children were kidnapped from a rural community. The event forced prolonged school closures, affecting educational outcomes and reducing the community's future human capital potential, with long-term economic implications (Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2023: 30). The fear generated by such incidents discourages investment and deters skilled labour from settling in vulnerable areas, further stalling economic development.

Communal conflicts in Cross River State are often rooted in historical land disputes, ethnic rivalry, and competition over scarce resources. A significant conflict between the Bekwarra and Boki communities in 2022 led to the destruction of homes, farmlands, and market centres. This resulted in the displacement of over 3,000 residents and an estimated economic loss of ₦250 million due to destroyed property and lost agricultural output (Egwu, 2019: 210). Beyond the immediate financial losses, these conflicts undermine social cohesion and discourage investment. Businesses

avoid conflict-prone areas, while government agencies divert funds toward emergency relief and reconstruction instead of developmental projects (Cross River State Development Plan, 2022: 41). The cyclical nature of communal violence perpetuates poverty and underdevelopment, affecting the entire region's economic prospects.

Combating Insecurity in Cross River State

Tackling the persistent insecurity in Cross River State demands a comprehensive approach that blends robust security measures, community involvement, and socio-economic development. Strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies is fundamental. This entails not only enhanced training and intelligence capabilities but also sufficient funding to enable rapid and coordinated responses to kidnapping, banditry, and communal clashes (Cross River State Ministry of Security, 2023: 15). Collaboration between state and federal security forces can further improve operational efficiency, ensuring that threats are addressed swiftly and decisively.

Equally important is empowering communities to take part in their own security. Community policing and vigilante networks, when properly trained and regulated, can supplement formal security efforts, improving surveillance and fostering trust between residents and authorities (Udoh & Okon, 2021: 80). By providing local actors with resources and accountability frameworks, grassroots participation becomes a vital complement to official measures.

Conflict resolution mechanisms also play a critical role. Engaging traditional rulers and community leaders in mediation processes helps to resolve disputes before they escalate into violence. Integrating indigenous conflict-resolution methods with formal legal systems can create culturally resonant and sustainable solutions (Egwu, 2019: 215).

Finally, addressing the socio-economic roots of insecurity is essential. Initiatives aimed at youth empowerment—through vocational training, formal education, and job creation—can significantly reduce the attractiveness of criminal activities (Nwachukwu, 2022: 70). Similarly, investments in rural infrastructure, such as road networks and marketplaces, not only stimulate local economies but also strengthen social cohesion, providing communities with both security and opportunity. Together, these strategies form a multi-layered response capable of curbing insecurity and fostering development across the state.

Recommendations for Economic Recovery and Development

Economic recovery in Cross River State post-insecurity requires deliberate policies that rebuild affected sectors and restore investor confidence. The government should prioritize infrastructure rehabilitation, including roads, schools, and healthcare facilities destroyed during conflicts (Cross River State Development Plan, 2022: 48). Improved infrastructure facilitates economic activities and attracts private sector investment.

Promotion of agricultural development is key, given its importance in the state's economy. Providing farmers with subsidized inputs, access to credit, and extension services can help revive agricultural productivity disrupted by insecurity (Cross River Agricultural Development Programme, 2023: 25). Establishing secure farm-to-market routes will also ensure that produce reaches markets efficiently.

Furthermore, enhancing public-private partnerships can mobilize additional resources for economic development. Encouraging local businesses to participate in security financing and development projects fosters a shared responsibility model that benefits both security and economic sectors (Udoh, 2022: 60).

Finally, transparent governance and anti-corruption measures are critical to ensure that resources allocated for security and development are effectively utilized. Strengthening institutions and involving civil society organizations in monitoring can improve accountability and public trust (Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2023: 33).

Conclusion

This study has examined the multifaceted nature of insecurity in Cross River State, focusing on kidnapping cultism, political violence and communal conflicts, and their profound implications for economic development. Findings reveals that insecurity poses significant direct and indirect costs to the state's economy by disrupting agriculture, trade, infrastructure, and social services. Kidnapping incidents have not only resulted in loss of lives and ransom payments but have also instilled fear that undermines local commerce and education. Banditry has exacerbated rural insecurity, limiting agricultural productivity and compelling communities to divert resources to security efforts rather than economic activities. Similarly, communal conflicts have led to widespread destruction, displacement, and socio-political instability, which collectively hinder investment and development initiatives. The research highlights that while community-based security measures and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have contributed to mitigating insecurity, these efforts require stronger governmental support and coordination. Addressing the root causes of insecurity through socio-economic interventions—such as youth empowerment, infrastructure development, and inclusive governance—is imperative for sustainable peace and economic growth. Ultimately, the economic development of Cross River State is intricately linked to the restoration of security and social cohesion. Policymakers, security agencies, and community leaders must collaborate to

implement comprehensive strategies that not only suppress violence but also foster an enabling environment for investment and prosperity. Without such integrated approaches, the cycle of insecurity and economic stagnation is likely to persist, undermining the state's potential for long-term development.

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