

# Impacts of Conflict, Violence on Women and Girls in Plateau

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Plateau State, located in Nigeria's diverse Middle Belt region, has seen perennial conflict between farming communities and nomadic herdsman in recent decades. These clashes have resulted in the destruction of property and livelihoods and the deaths of thousands of people since 2010, including women and children. Much of the violence has pitted those considered to be original owners of the land and those considered to be settlers. While these conflicts stem from struggles over access to land, cattle grazing, water and other key natural resources, the diversity of the Middle Belt region means that land-based conflicts easily become conflated with grievances related to ethnicity, religion and political power.

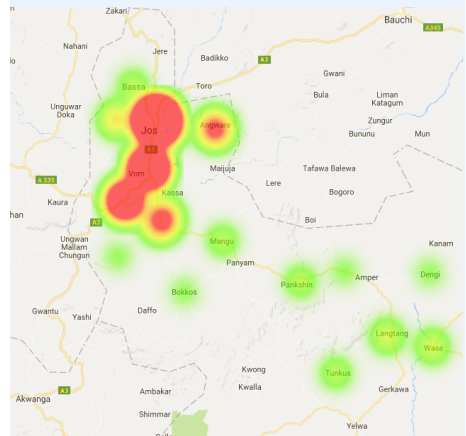
Although the number of reported conflict fatalities in Plateau state has fallen in 2016, the effects of displacement and violence

continue to reverberate in the lives of women and girls. Continuing to monitor trends and incidents of VAWG, and how they are interrelated to other conflict drivers, is critical to understanding the effects of violence on the lives of women and girls and to better inform prevention and response efforts.

Domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault accounted for most of the reported incidents of violence against women and girls in Plateau state between January 2015 and September 2016. This included domestic and sexual abuse by male family members – fathers, husbands, cousins and uncles – as well as by trusted authority figures, such as pastors and members of the security forces. In two cases from January 2016, for example, it was reported that an Evangelist in Jos raped an underage girl who was sent to him for prayers,

## VAWG Incidents in Plateau

Figure 3: Reported Incidents 2014-2016



Heatmap shows the number of reported incidents of Violence Against Women & Girls in Plateau state. Hotspots include Jos South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGAs. (All data sources were used—including NSRP, ACLED and Nigeria Watch)—formatted for the online platform.

## Examining the Patterns and Trends in Violence Affecting Women and Girls in Plateau State, Nigeria

Grazing access and land-related conflict between farmers and herders has remained a source of violence and fatalities in Plateau state. Amidst this backdrop of insecurity, women and girls often become targets of the violence and unrest, which is supported by incident reports from the NSRP Plateau Observatory over the past two years. Inci-

dents such as forced marriages, sexual assault by security forces deployed to the area, and displacement and destruction of livelihoods have all had significant impacts on women and girls, particularly in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Riyom and Jos North/South. This report examines the different ways in which communal violence

— particularly conflict over grazing access and land rights — impacts those most vulnerable within communities. It also highlights the ongoing sexual violence and domestic abuse which women and girls regularly face in Plateau state, and provide recommendation for stronger monitoring and prevention measures.

Data used in this Brief is based on incidents reported using Partners for Peace (P4P) Map, which integrates and formats conflict data from different sources including NSRP, Nigeria Watch and ACLED. The platform is supported by Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) [www.pindfoundation.org](http://www.pindfoundation.org)

threatening that if they informed anyone, their prayers would not be effective.

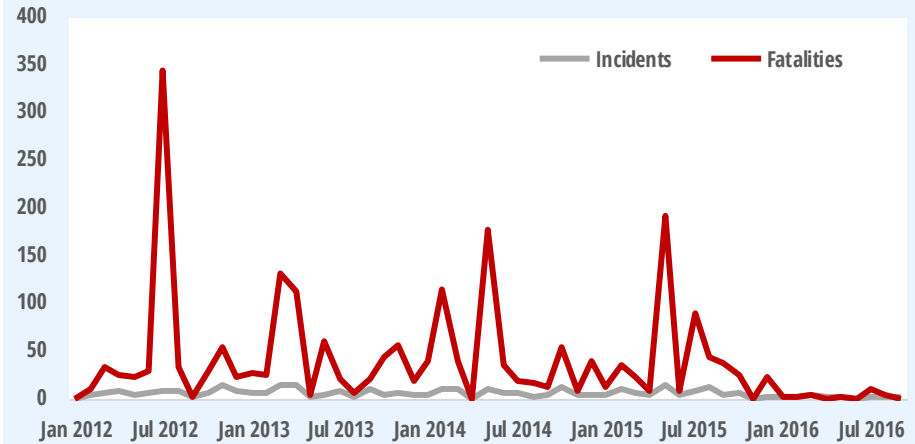
A number of reported rapes, particularly of underage girls, were perpetrated by neighbors or local shopkeepers. For example, in May 2016 it was reported that a 16-year old girl was raped by a shopkeeper when she went to the market to repair two plastic chairs for her family. In another case reported in January 2016, an 8-year old girl was raped by the gatekeeper of a neighborhood compound when she went to fetch water. Several reports of child abuse also involved employers, including older women, beating their maids or house girls. These incidents underscore the pervasive nature of the sexual and domestic violence facing women and girls in their local communities, places of worship, schools and workplaces.

As has been noted in previous NSRP Observatory Platform publications, the abuse of trust is a recurrent theme in Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) data. In most of the reported cases of domestic abuse and sexual assault, the perpetrator is known to the victim, whether as a family member, authority figure or acquaintance in the community. The personal nature of these incidents may decrease reporting rates and reinforce the culture of silence.

These are just a few examples of the 283 incidents of violence against women and girls reported on the platform in Plateau state since January 2015, from NSRP and other sources. The highest number of reports in Plateau state came from Local Government Areas (LGAs) Jos North and Jos South, followed by Riyom and Barkin Ladi.

### Overall Levels of Violence in Plateau State

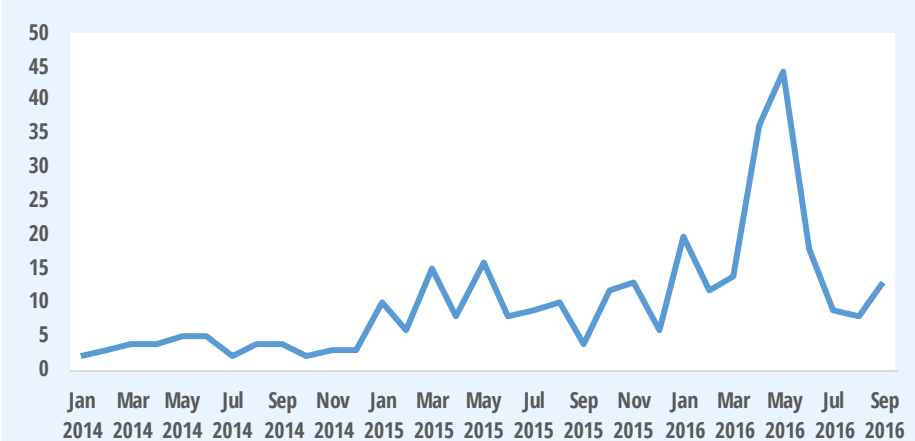
Figure 2: Reported Incidents and Fatalities 2015-2016



Graph shows the number of reported incidents of violence and conflict-related fatalities, in Plateau state over the past five years. Large spikes in violence are linked to communal conflict, including land-related violence in LGAs such as Riyom. Source: ACLED and Nigeria Watch data.

### Trends in Incident Reporting of VAWG in Plateau State

Figure 3: Reported Incidents and Fatalities 2015-2016



Graph shows the number of reported incidents of Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG), using all sources—including NSRP, ACLED and Nigeria Watch—formatted for the online platform. Each data source has different data collection methods, and therefore should not be seen as an indication of overall patterns and trends across time and space of violence. As this brief shows, violence affecting women and girls often goes unreported. The graph does however show more incidents reported during months in Plateau state with heightened conflict risk notably during inter-communal violence in 2015 and 2016 related to land issues.

## Impacts of Land-Related Violence and Insecurity on Women and Girls

With its rich arable land, Plateau's dominant occupations are subsistence farming and grazing. However, the state has also been hotbed for violence over land competition in recent years, particularly between herders and farmers in rural areas. Communal conflict has also been exacerbated by political jockeying and ethnic tensions – with the state home to over 40 different ethno-linguistic groups.

As outlined in Figure 4, a majority of incidents related to violence perpetrated against women and girls reported since 2012 through the NSRP Observatory and other sources on the online platform, have related to domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault.

However, women and girls have also been directly impacted by broader insecurity in the region. As outlined in Figure 5, of the reported fatal incidents involving women and girls from Nigeria Watch data since

2012, more than three quarters of the incidents related to land conflicts violence stemming from grazing access. The largest number of these fatalities came from the LGAs of Jos South, Barkin Ladi and Riyom.

Ongoing land-related conflict and inter-communal violence in the region has also had long-term impacts on women and girls through displacement and subsequent economic disempowerment. In many of the reported cases, women who were widowed and displaced due to conflict in Plateau state become the sole providers for their children and thus face extreme financial pressures which increase their vulnerability to abuse. They are also often the first victims of attacks between herdsmen and farming communities, along with their young children. Displacement due to land and inter-communal conflict compounds existing inequalities in education, employment and earnings facing women in Nigeria.

### Inter-Communal Violence: VAWG Key Incidents in 2015

- **February** – Clashes between herdsmen and a farming community led to the death of a man and his wife in Barkin Ladi
- **March** – At least two women were killed in reprisal attacks following the arrest of armed youths
- **March** – At least six people, including women and children, were killed in two separate attacks in Barkin Ladi
- **May** - Multiple women were killed while harvesting crops in Riyom during clashes between herdsmen and local farmers
- **June** – A woman and her daughter were killed in an attack related to land and cattle issues
- **July** – Three women were killed in an attack on a farming community in Barkin Ladi
- **July** - multiple women and children were killed during violence in Riyom and Barkin Ladi. Security Forces turned the local health clinic into an operational base.

### Reported VAWG Incidents by Type

Figure 4: Reported Incidents 2012-2016

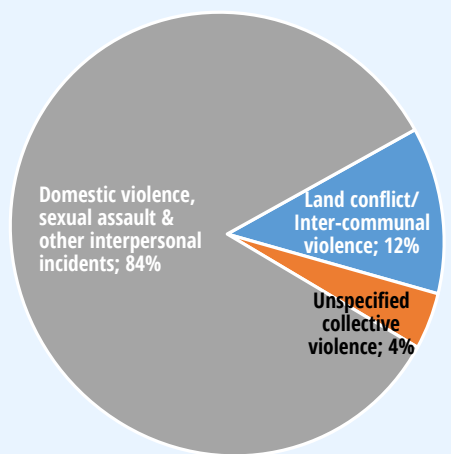


Chart shows the types of violence reported during January 2012 to September 2016, with more than three quarters of the incidents relating to inter-personal violence, sexual assault and domestic abuse. The next most salient category within the data was land conflict and inter-communal violence. All data sources were used—including NSRP, ACLED and Nigeria Watch—formatted for the online platform.

### Reported VAWG Fatalities

Figure 5: Reported Incidents 2012-2016

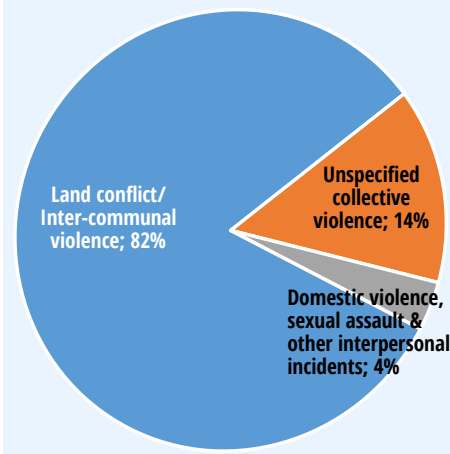


Chart shows the reported fatalities involving women and girls by incident type from January 2012 to September 2016. Unlike Figure 4, majority of VAWG conflict incidents involving fatalities were related to land conflict and inter-communal violence. This highlights the pervasive impact of collective violence on women and girls. Nigeria Watch data was used—formatted for the online platform.

According to the 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey,<sup>1</sup> 38% of women aged 15-49 in Nigeria have received no formal education (compared to 21% of men). Rural women are at a further disadvantage; more than half have no education, compared with a slightly higher 16% of urban women.

Many women are also less likely to be employed than their husbands, and for those women who are employed, the majority earn significantly less than their husbands. In Plateau state, only 25% of employed women reported that they are mainly in control of the cash they earn, and 83% of employed women reported earning less than their husbands.

Following the death of a husband, married women may find themselves in a precarious

1. URL located at: <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/DM52/DM52.pdf>

financial situation if they lose control of family assets, particularly land. In Plateau State, only 5% of women are the sole owners of a house and 11% of women own land (compared to 37% and 46% of men, respectively). Several women reported being cut off from property and monetary assistance following the death of their husband, with relatives citing customary law or community tradition.

This economic disenfranchisement makes women vulnerable to sexual and economic predation and often leaves them at the mercy of extended family members. Based on data from NSRP, multiple women who had been displaced reported in early 2016 that they had been approached by men requesting sex in return for food. In one case reported in March 2015, a woman was abandoned by her husband; when she sought the help of her father-in-law, she was sexually assaulted by him.

### Displacement and Poverty: VAWG Key Incidents

- **May 2015:** A 15-year old girl and her family escaped after their house was burnt down. Her sister was raped by security personnel.
- **May 2015:** A 32-year old woman was forced to give birth in an IDP camp, after her house was burnt down during land conflict. She has 7 children and is unable to provide for them.
- **May 2015:** A woman lost her house to during violence in Riyom, her 8 children are suffering with no food to eat or accommodation.
- **May 2015:** An 80-year old woman was displaced from her home that was burnt down in suspected inter-communal land conflict in Riyom. She lamented that she had never lacked clothes and food before but now she has to depend on other people.
- **April 2016:** A woman and her family were displaced after their house was burned down in Barkin Ladi. She moved to Jos to find work and reported that men asked her to exchange sex for food.
- **May 2016:** A widow was stranded without accommodation in Jos after being displaced by conflict in Barkin Ladi.
- **May 2016:** A 15-year old girl did not have money to pay for food or school fees after being displaced by land conflict.
- **May 2016:** A 13-year old girl who was displaced by conflict ended up working without food or pay.
- **September 2016:** A 10-year old girl whose family had been displaced during inter-communal violence in Riyom, was brought to police by in Jos. Her female guardian abused her through starvation, flogging and neglect, which resulted in serious physical injuries.

## Conclusion

The data collected in Plateau state over the past 18 months highlight the long-term impacts of land and inter-communal conflict on women and girls. Beyond being victims of direct physical attacks, including sexual abuse, during land and intercommunal conflict, the effects of displacement and increased economic and social vulnerabilities continue to impact the daily lives of women and girls, long after violence has subsided.

Prevention efforts should particularly consider the economic and social vulnerabilities of women and girls following displacement, and coordinate with local organizations working to provide social services and empower women. In Plateau, which relies heavily on farming and agriculture for livelihoods, the knock-on effects for women who are uprooted from their land or denied access to their farms following the deaths of a husband or male family member is particularly devastating. As in other states, education and awareness-raising on recognizing and reporting VAWG incidents is needed at the community level to combat the culture of silence in families and communities. It should also focus specifically on issues that affect women and girls in agricultural communities who have been abused and displaced during inter-communal land conflicts and often lose their livelihoods as a direct result of land conflicts.

## Recommendations

**1** Plateau state remains vulnerable to heightened conflict risk, with regular pockets of violence related to land and communal violence. Peace actors must continue to monitor hotspots closely – particularly communities around Northern LGAs such as Riyom and Barkin Ladi – and implement interventions to reduce the risk violence. Special attention should be paid to women and children in analysis and planning, ensuring their inclusion.

**2** To keep reporting levels steady, the capacity of local NGOs, Peace Clubs, and other community organizations must be strengthened through regular training on the reporting of incidents to help to break the culture of silence. The impacts of conflict on women are often not known or are recorded in a context-specific way that does not facilitate easy follow-up or planning for prevention. This is where the NSRP Observatories and Observatory Steering Committees (OBSTECs) can and do play a key role. In training and encouraging proper reporting, by survivors as well as wider community members who may witness these incidents of violence, data can be effectively used to support research and planning for prevention.

**3** Connect with local organizations working on issues of women's empowerment, particularly in the areas of employment and education, to encourage reporting and better coordinate efforts to mitigate the vulnerability of women following displacement from communal and land-related conflict.

**4** Work closely with OBSTEC members to plan targeted awareness raising among their constituencies in Plateau state about how the current environment of insecurity is specifically impacting women and girls, and how this can be addressed. OBSTEC members are in key positions to not only impact awareness, but also help catalyze response.

**5** Work with national and international organizations to help implement state-wide strategic messaging and communications campaigns about how the environment of insecurity in Plateau state is impacting women and girls. This can and should include engagement and outreach with local media outlets and courtesy calls by OBSTEC members and others who are familiar with the issue to community leaders. These courtesy visits should include traditional rulers, hospitals, schools, courts, and public security forces involved in responding to land-related conflict.