

# Addressing Insecurity and Strengthening Nation-Building in Nigeria: A Policy Framework for Safe Rural Communities Through the ISODS Model

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## Abstract

Insecurity in Nigeria has evolved into a complex and multidimensional crisis, with rural communities disproportionately affected by violence, economic marginalisation, institutional neglect, and environmental degradation. This persistent instability not only disrupts agricultural productivity and displaces vulnerable populations but also erodes the foundational pillars of national development, unity, and social cohesion. Although Nigeria's National Security Strategy (2014) acknowledges the interdependence of human development and security, prevailing responses remain fragmented, reactive, and overly militarised, with limited attention to the structural roots of rural insecurity. Drawing on case examples from Benue, Plateau, and Borno States, this paper interrogates the systemic drivers of insecurity and critically examines the limitations of conventional state-centric interventions. To address these policy and governance gaps, the study introduces the Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework developed by Bassey Anam (2024)—a holistic, community-based policy model designed to merge security imperatives with inclusive development. The ISODS framework prioritises grassroots engagement, cross-sectoral collaboration, institutional reform, and long-term planning to create resilient, secure, and self-sustaining rural communities. Through an in-depth analysis of Nigeria's rural insecurity landscape and the institutional shortcomings of current strategies, this paper makes a compelling case for adopting the ISODS model as a transformative approach to rural peacebuilding, national integration, and sustainable development.

## Background to the Study

Security and development are mutually reinforcing pillars of nation-building. A secure environment is essential for economic growth, effective governance, and the resilience of social institutions, while equitable and sustained development mitigates the structural conditions that fuel insecurity. When this balance collapses – as it often does in fragile or marginalised regions – it produces a vicious cycle of poverty, violence, and underdevelopment (Collier et al., 2003). In Nigeria, where a significant portion of the population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture and natural resource systems, this cycle presents a profound threat to national stability and the realisation of sustainable development goals.

Although Nigeria's *National Security Strategy* (2014) adopts a multidimensional understanding of security – emphasizing political, economic, social, environmental, and human rights concerns – the state's operational approach remains largely reactive and militarized. The disconnect between strategic vision and implementation has allowed insecurity to fester, particularly in rural communities, which have become flashpoints for conflict, economic exclusion, and institutional failure. States such as Benue, Plateau, and Borno exemplify the worsening rural security crisis. In Benue, farmer-herder clashes have displaced entire communities and devastated agricultural livelihoods. Plateau State continues to experience deadly outbreaks of ethno-religious violence, eroding social cohesion and undermining governance. In Borno, the protracted Boko Haram insurgency has decimated rural economies, destroyed infrastructure, and created humanitarian emergencies. These incidents reflect broader national patterns, including separatist unrest in the South-East, militancy in the South-South, and intercommunal violence across the Middle Belt – all of which underscore the absence of effective state presence and institutional support in rural areas.

Beyond physical violence, structural issues such as widespread poverty, rising rural unemployment, limited access to markets, deteriorating infrastructure, and ecological degradation further entrench insecurity. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2018, 2020), rural unemployment increased sharply over the last decade, correlating with escalating violence and displacement. In many cases, insecurity has made agricultural production unsafe and discouraged investment in long-term rural development. Environmental pressures – exacerbated by climate change – have deepened competition over land and water resources, contributing to ongoing herder-farmer conflicts and unrest in the environmentally degraded Niger Delta.

These realities demonstrate that rural insecurity in Nigeria is not merely a security challenge – it is a governance, development, and sustainability crisis. Conventional, state-centric responses focused narrowly on military deployment have repeatedly failed to address the underlying structural drivers of violence and instability. As a result, there is an urgent need for a transformative, integrative approach that embeds long-term development planning and community participation into national security policy. This paper contends that effectively addressing rural insecurity and strengthening Nigeria's

nation-building efforts requires a paradigm shift in both policies thinking and implementation. It proposes the Integrative Social Development & Sustainability (ISODS) Framework as a comprehensive, community-driven model that bridges the gap between security and development. By fostering inclusive governance, grassroots engagement, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable livelihoods, the ISODS framework offers a viable strategy for building safe, self-reliant rural communities and advancing Nigeria's broader agenda for peace, unity, and inclusive national development.

### **Problem Statement**

Nigeria is increasingly caught in a cyclical entrapment of insecurity, poverty, and underdevelopment—a dynamic often referred to in scholarly discourse as the *conflict-poverty trap* (Collier et al., 2003). Insecurity not only disrupts livelihoods and social cohesion but also impedes economic growth and stifles human development, with rural communities bearing the brunt of these impacts. Recent data from the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER, 2024) identifies insecurity as the foremost driver of poverty nationwide, accounting for an estimated 21% of the variation in multidimensional poverty levels across states. This alarming trend poses a direct threat to national stability and significantly undermines the prospects of cohesive and sustainable nation-building.

Despite a proliferation of security and development initiatives, Nigeria's policy responses have remained largely fragmented, top-down, and reactionary. These approaches frequently fall short of the coordination, grassroots participation, and structural integration necessary to address the deeply entrenched nature of rural insecurity and marginalisation. The persistent inadequacies of past frameworks have prompted renewed government concern, most notably reflected in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's directive for the development of a new national security strategy aimed at addressing escalating crises, particularly in rural areas. This policy shift implicitly acknowledges the shortcomings of previous models and highlights the urgent need for a more inclusive, developmental, and community-based approach to security.

The spread of rural insecurity across diverse geopolitical zones—including the Middle Belt (e.g., Benue and Plateau), the North-East (e.g., Borno), the South-East (e.g., Anambra, Imo, and Abia), and areas within the South-West and South-South—reveals a nationwide pattern of violence, economic stagnation, and weakening state institutions. Many of these rural communities are integral to Nigeria's agricultural economy, population distribution, and sociopolitical balance. Yet they continue to experience increasing levels of violence, youth disenfranchisement, and the erosion of governance systems, posing a serious challenge to national unity and long-term development. This persistent and widespread insecurity signals a deeper structural failure: the inability of the state to synchronise security initiatives with social development and economic empowerment at the grassroots level. Consequently, there is a pressing need to adopt a more holistic, inclusive, and participatory policy model capable of addressing the interconnected challenges of insecurity, poverty, and underdevelopment in a sustainable manner.

In response, this study proposes the Integrative Social Development & Sustainability (ISODS) Framework as a strategic alternative for building safe and resilient rural communities. The ISODS model emphasises comprehensive problem diagnosis, bottom-up planning, participatory implementation, sustainable financing, local capacity building, and multi-level policy engagement. By integrating development and security imperatives into a unified framework, ISODS offers a viable pathway for empowering rural populations, enhancing national resilience, and advancing the goals of inclusive and sustainable nation-building in Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this paper is to critically examine the multidimensional nature of rural insecurity in Nigeria and to propose the Integrative Social Development & Sustainability (ISODS) Framework as an alternative, inclusive policy model for promoting safe rural communities and strengthening nation-building through the integration of security, development, and grassroots participation.

1. Examine the relationship between security, development, and nation-building in the Nigerian context, with a particular focus on rural communities.
2. Identify and analyse the structural drivers of rural insecurity.
3. Critically evaluate the limitations of current state-centric and militarized security approaches and their implications for development.
4. Introduce and conceptualize the Integrative Social Development & Sustainability (ISODS) Framework as an alternative model for addressing insecurity through inclusive, participatory, and development-driven strategies.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the persistent insecurity challenges in Nigeria's rural communities and to propose a policy framework for addressing them through the Integrated Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Model. The qualitative approach was chosen to enable an in-depth understanding of the socio-political dynamics, lived experiences, and institutional responses that shape rural insecurity and national development. Data for this study were collected from secondary sources including peer-reviewed journal articles, government policy documents, official reports, books, and credible online publications. These materials were selected based on their relevance to themes of rural insecurity, community resilience, nation-building, and policy development in Nigeria. Content and thematic analysis were used to critically evaluate the data, identify patterns, and draw insights that inform the proposed ISODS policy framework.

The study applies interpretivist epistemology, allowing for the examination of context-specific realities and the subjective meanings that communities and stakeholders ascribe to insecurity and development challenges. This methodological orientation also provides the flexibility to synthesize diverse scholarly perspectives with practical policy insights, thereby ensuring that the recommendations are both evidence-based and contextually grounded. Overall, the qualitative nature of this study ensures a holistic and nuanced



exploration of insecurity and its implications for nation-building, while offering an innovative, locally adaptable solution through the ISODS Model.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Concept of Insecurity**

Insecurity is broadly defined as a persistent state of fear, vulnerability, and uncertainty regarding personal safety, often arising from either perceived or actual lack of protection (Béland, 2005). In the Nigerian context, insecurity transcends physical threats and includes psychological and economic dimensions. Many Nigerians experience insecurity not only as a threat to their lives but also as a continuous struggle to satisfy basic needs amidst irregular incomes, erratic access to essential services, and inadequate social safety nets.

Achumba et al. (2013) conceptualise security as the presence of stability, continuity of livelihood, and protection from both physical and psychological harm. In contrast, insecurity denotes the absence or disruption of these conditions. In Nigeria, this is evident in the collapse of stable employment systems, unpredictable access to basic amenities, and heightened exposure to criminal activity and violence. These realities have entrenched disenfranchisement, particularly among unemployed youth, many of whom resort to militancy, criminality, or other destabilising behaviours as coping mechanisms.

Nigeria is confronted by a range of national security and public safety challenges, including terrorism, insurgency, urban crime, critical infrastructure sabotage, natural disasters, and public health emergencies. These threats are particularly acute in rural communities, where weak state presence further exacerbates vulnerability. In the north-west, rampant banditry and kidnappings are widespread; the north-east continues to suffer under the burden of Boko Haram insurgency; and the south-east grapples with separatist agitations. These security concerns are closely tied to deep-rooted social and economic problems, including endemic poverty, slow economic growth, and persistent inflation. Underlying these issues are systemic governance failures, manifest in limited state capacity, mismanagement, and widespread corruption, all of which hinder effective service delivery – especially in rural areas.

Insecurity in Nigeria is multidimensional and can be broadly categorized as follows:

1. **Physical threats:** This includes terrorism, militancy, banditry, kidnapping, and violent crime.
2. **Economic vulnerabilities:** High levels of unemployment, income instability, food insecurity, and restricted access to social protection systems. Youth disenfranchisement is especially severe, with many young people feeling excluded from socio-economic opportunities, thereby becoming increasingly restive and contributing to security instability.
3. **Social insecurity:** This is characterized by the erosion of trust within communities, weak public institutions, and social fragmentation. As insecurity escalates, it further obstructs vital economic and institutional reforms.

Figure 1 illustrates that nearly all states in Nigeria face varying degrees of insecurity. The challenges range from attacks by militant Islamist groups, violent activities of criminal gangs, farmer-herder conflicts, agitations by militant Biafran separatists, piracy in coastal areas, and even human rights abuses by security forces against civilians. This overview highlights the complex, interconnected nature of insecurity in Nigeria and underscores the urgent need for integrated and community-centred policy frameworks to achieve sustainable peace and development, particularly in rural regions.



Figure 1.

### Rural Communities

According to Ekong (2010), rural communities or areas in Nigeria are typically defined as settlements with populations of fewer than 20,000 people or where at least half of the inhabitants are engaged in agricultural activities. Similarly, Oko (2010) characterises rural areas as natural or agrarian communities where farming is the principal occupation, often governed by traditional norms and customs and frequently marginalised in national development agendas.

The relative peace that once characterised rural areas in Nigeria has been disrupted by Boko Haram attacks, banditry, farmer-herder clashes, and communal violence. These conflicts are often exacerbated by religious and ethnic tensions, and have increasingly involved abductions, which have evolved into a widespread practice of kidnapping for ransom. A report by the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS, 2015) indicated that over 1.8 million people have been displaced in rural Nigeria due to insecurity. Amnesty International (2020) similarly reported that rural communities across the country face relentless attacks by armed assailants, resulting in the deaths of over 1,000 individuals between January and August 2020 – most of whom were located in the northern regions. This wave of violence remains unrelenting and has steadily extended into the southern

parts of Nigeria. Academic inquiries into rural insecurity in Nigeria have explored various dimensions, including the role of Boko Haram (Abubakar et al., 2017), vigilante groups and informal policing (Basiru & Osunkoya, 2009), the impact of terrorism on agriculture (Jelilov, Ayinde, Tetik, Celik et al., 2018), and the nexus between insecurity and food insecurity (Nwozor et al., 2019), among others.

### **Root Causes of Rural Insecurity and Implications for Nation-Building**

Rural insecurity in Nigeria is driven by a complex web of structural, environmental, and governance-related factors. Addressing these root causes requires more than militarised responses—it necessitates holistic and development-centred interventions. The persistent instability in Nigeria's rural regions is not merely a product of violence, but also of longstanding social, economic, and political grievances that have remained unresolved.

1. **Resource Competition and Environmental Stress:** One of the most persistent drivers of rural conflict is competition over natural resources, particularly land and water. Clashes between farmers and pastoralists often arise when migrating herders encroach on farmland, destroy crops, or contaminate water sources (Blench, 2004; Ofem & Inyang, 2014). Climate change and desertification in northern Nigeria have intensified herder migration southward, escalating conflict and insecurity in the South-East, South-West, Middle Belt, and parts of the South-South.
2. **Terrorism and Border Insecurity:** The Boko Haram insurgency has severely disrupted rural life in Northern Nigeria, displacing more than 2.6 million people—most of whom reside in rural areas (UNHCR & World Bank, 2016). These communities, often devoid of adequate security infrastructure, remain highly susceptible to attacks and exploitation by extremist groups.
3. **Banditry and Mass Kidnappings:** Banditry in rural Nigeria has evolved into a sophisticated criminal enterprise, especially in states such as Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, and Sokoto. The frequency of attacks on villages has increased, and a new pattern of mass abductions for ransom has emerged, further aggravating insecurity.
4. **Ethnic, Religious, and Inter-Communal Tensions:** Historical grievances related to land ownership, political marginalisation, and cultural identity continue to fuel inter-communal violence in rural regions. Notable examples include the Aguleri-Umuleri and Umoba-Anam conflicts in Anambra State, and the religious and ethnic clashes in Plateau, Kaduna, and Benue States. These conflicts have resulted in significant loss of life and property, and have eroded social trust and cohesion (Ibeogu, Abah, & Chukwu, 2019).
5. **Rural Unemployment and Youth Disenfranchisement:** The surge in rural unemployment—from 4.2% in 2010 to 28% in 2020 (NBS, 2018; 2020)—has created a breeding ground for insecurity. In areas with limited government presence, unemployed youth are often recruited by criminal networks, insurgent groups, and political actors. Lacking economic opportunities, many young people participate in violence for minimal financial compensation (Balogun, 2021). This

widespread youth disenfranchisement highlights policy failures, where poverty alleviation initiatives are often poorly targeted and captured by patronage systems, leaving the most vulnerable without support.

This multi-faceted crisis underscores the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to rural security and development—one that strengthens community resilience, addresses root causes, and reinforces the role of rural areas in national cohesion and sustainable development.

### **Structural Gaps in Rural Security and the Crisis of Nation-Building**

Rural insecurity in Nigeria has evolved from localised farmer–herder conflicts into a more complex and entrenched crisis that poses a serious threat to national stability and undermines development efforts. Across the Middle Belt, North-East, South-East, South-West, and South-South regions, rural communities are increasingly targeted by organised criminal networks, insurgent groups, and opportunistic actors capitalising on the weak presence of the state. What was once considered seasonal or regional violence has now escalated into widespread, livelihood-threatening insecurity, characterized by banditry, mass abductions, highway ambushes, and the displacement of rural populations. These developments are partly driven by high youth unemployment, poverty, and the lure of illicit economies in the absence of legitimate opportunities. Criminal gangs exploit the overstretched nature of Nigeria's security apparatus, while insurgent groups such as ISIS-West Africa continue to control significant territory in states like Borno, highlighting the enduring nature of these security challenges (Balogun & Adeoye, 2022).

Despite decades of state-led interventions, rural insecurity endures due to the failure to integrate security policy with inclusive social development and economic empowerment strategies. Scholars such as Ogueri & Nnadi (2010), Nweke (2011), Ebeh (2015), and Uduo & Obaji-Akpet (2025) establish a clear link between national development and national security, contending that insecurity is both a cause and a consequence of poverty, marginalisation, and poor governance. In this regard, rural insecurity disrupts agricultural production, displaces communities, and impedes progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thereby trapping rural populations in a self-perpetuating cycle of deprivation and violence.

1. **Militarised and State-Centric Security Architecture:** A prominent critique in the literature is that Nigeria's security framework is overly militarised, state-centric, and reactive. It prioritises short-term coercive responses over long-term developmental solutions. National security strategies have typically failed to address the underlying socio-economic drivers of insecurity, such as inequality, unemployment, and the erosion of local governance institutions. Government interventions tend to concentrate on arming military and police forces, with insufficient investment in human capital development, inclusive governance, or preventive social policy. Under this militarised model, civilian



spaces — particularly in rural areas — are increasingly occupied by military forces, resulting in a blurring of the lines between internal security and external defence. This has led to unintended outcomes, including the erosion of civil authority, strained community–police relations, and increasing reports of human rights violations. According to Ebeh (2015), the militarisation of civil life reflects a postcolonial legacy where security is perceived as a mechanism of repression rather than as a tool for citizen protection and empowerment.

2. **Fragmentation and Poor Inter-Agency Coordination:** Another structural gap lies in the disjointed coordination between security agencies, including the military, police, and intelligence services. As noted by Nte & Nte (2025), these agencies frequently operate in silos, resulting in delayed responses, duplicated efforts, and internal rivalries that hinder the efficacy of counter-insurgency and peacebuilding operations. This fragmentation is exacerbated by the absence of a robust, centralised command-and-control mechanism that could enable unified and timely responses to complex security threats.
3. **Over-Centralisation and Marginalisation of Local Expertise:** The centralised structure of military operations also undermines the autonomy of field commanders, many of whom possess deeper insights into local contexts and could implement more nuanced, community-sensitive interventions if granted the authority. Simultaneously, non-kinetic approaches such as peacebuilding, youth empowerment, and inter-ethnic reconciliation remain chronically underfunded and underutilised. This reinforces a narrow, force-driven paradigm of security management.
4. **Unrealised Reforms and Policy Implementation Failures:** Although reforms like the 2019 National Security Strategy called for community engagement, intelligence-led policing, and the integration of technology in surveillance, their impact has been limited by bureaucratic inertia, insufficient political commitment, and inadequate funding (NIS, 2019; Akinyemi & Olaopa, 2021). This persistent implementation gap has deepened citizens' mistrust in public institutions and contributed to a sense of state neglect.
5. **Exclusion of Rural Voices from Policymaking:** A major shortcoming in Nigeria's security and development policies is the exclusion of rural perspectives from decision-making processes. Rural communities are often regarded as passive recipients of top-down policies, rather than as active agents in peacebuilding. Studies by Ogueri & Nnadi (2010) and Uduo & Obaji-Akpet (2025) indicate that national policies frequently reflect the interests of political elites and urban stakeholders, rather than the lived experiences and needs of rural dwellers. This disconnect results in the design and implementation of programmes that lack local legitimacy, are poorly aligned with rural realities, and suffer from low levels of community ownership. Furthermore, poverty alleviation initiatives often fail due to misdirected targeting, elite capture, and generic policy frameworks that overlook the diverse nature of rural poverty. In many cases, such initiatives are used as instruments of political patronage rather than as genuine interventions aimed at structural transformation.

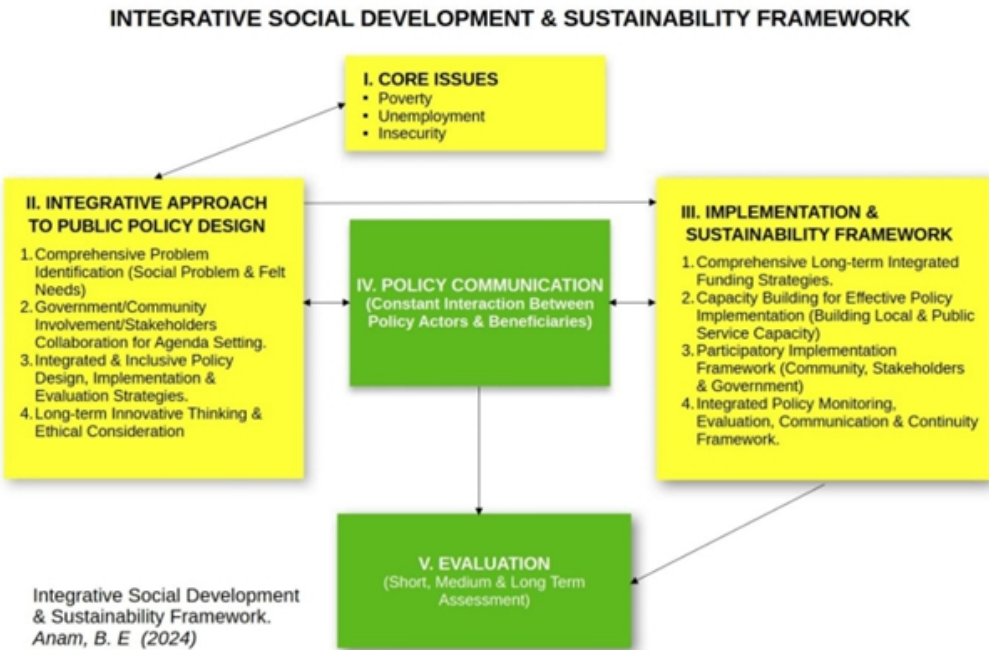


The multiple failures in policy formulation, coordination, implementation, and inclusivity have contributed to a widening security vacuum in rural Nigeria. The lack of grassroots participation, coupled with the urban concentration of security resources, has left many rural areas vulnerable and neglected. Without a paradigm shift towards integrated, community-led, and development-oriented security strategies, rural Nigeria will continue to suffer instability. This, in turn, threatens the broader objectives of nation-building, sustainable economic growth, and national cohesion.

**An Integrated Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework for Safe Rural Communities**

The persistent failure of Nigeria's traditional, security-first approaches to effectively address the multidimensional nature of rural insecurity and underdevelopment underscores the need for a fundamental paradigm shift in national policy and strategy. Military-centric, top-down interventions—though occasionally successful in containing immediate threats—have repeatedly proven inadequate in resolving the deep-rooted social, economic, and institutional challenges that fuel violence and instability in rural areas. In this regard, the Integrated Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework, proposed by Bassey Anam (2024), presents a compelling alternative. It offers a holistic, community-driven, and development-focused approach to rural security—one that prioritises resilience, inclusion, and long-term transformation over short-term coercive control.

The ISODS Framework is built upon five interrelated pillars that collectively target the structural causes of rural insecurity and foster an enabling environment for sustainable development and inclusive nation-building:



**1. Core Problems: Poverty, Unemployment, and Insecurity**

At the heart of the ISODS model lies the recognition that poverty, unemployment, and insecurity are interlinked in a self-reinforcing cycle. The widespread incidence of poverty among Nigerians, coupled with high youth unemployment, fosters disenfranchisement and renders rural areas susceptible to social unrest and violent extremism. These challenges cannot be addressed in isolation; rather, they must be tackled concurrently as mutually reinforcing development deficits.

**2. Integrative Approach to Public Policy Design: Bottom-Up, Inclusive, and Adaptive**

The ISODS framework advocates for a bottom-up approach to policy formulation, beginning with the identification of local needs and problems as defined by the communities themselves. This approach prioritises stakeholder consultation, participatory agenda-setting, and context-specific policy planning. It emphasises flexibility, ethical governance, and a long-term outlook, thereby ensuring that both security and development policies are inclusive and sustainable. The model calls for the integration of community intelligence, indigenous knowledge systems, and local governance structures into the policymaking process to enhance relevance and legitimacy.

**3. Sustainable Implementation: Capacity, Funding, and Accountability**

Effective implementation under the ISODS framework requires long-term, integrated funding strategies, including national budget allocations, development grants, concessional loans, and private sector corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Equally important is the development of institutional and community capacities to promote local resilience and self-reliance. The framework encourages a participatory implementation model in which responsibilities are shared among government agencies, civil society, and local communities. This collaborative approach ensures that programmes are executed efficiently and can be retained, adapted, and scaled over time. To ensure impact and maintain momentum, the ISODS model incorporates a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanism that promotes transparency, accountability, and continual improvement in both security and development outcomes.

**4. Policy Communication and Citizen Engagement**

Policy effectiveness is closely linked to robust communication and citizen engagement. The ISODS framework embeds multi-layered communication strategies designed to promote transparency, build public trust, and foster broad-based support. It ensures that citizens are well-informed, consulted, and actively involved at all stages of the policy cycle. This inclusive approach cultivates a sense of ownership, reinforces accountability, and strengthens the legitimacy of public interventions at the grassroots level.

## **5. Evaluation and Policy Learning**

The ISODS model treats evaluation as an ongoing process of learning and adaptation, rather than a one-off assessment. It focuses on assessing both the intended and unintended consequences of policy interventions across short-, medium-, and long-term horizons. The results of these evaluations are used to inform evidence-based policymaking, ensuring that interventions remain responsive, contextually relevant, and capable of adapting to the evolving realities within rural communities.

### **The Relevance of the Integrated Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework in Addressing Insecurity and Strengthening Nation-Building in Rural Nigeria**

The Integrated Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework, introduced by Bassey Anam (2024), presents a comprehensive and development-focused model for addressing the persistent crisis of rural insecurity in Nigeria. Its relevance lies in its holistic, community-driven, and policy-integrative design that recognises the multifaceted nature of insecurity and its deep-rooted socio-economic underpinnings.

- 1. Tackling the Root Causes of Insecurity:** At the core of the ISODS Framework is the recognition that insecurity in rural Nigeria is not merely a consequence of weak policing or state failure, but is deeply interwoven with poverty, youth unemployment, marginalisation, and the absence of inclusive development (Anam, 2024). This position is supported by empirical studies which highlight that economic deprivation, exclusion from governance processes, and the collapse of rural livelihoods contribute significantly to violence and instability (Ebeh, 2015; Nte & Nte, 2025). By focusing on integrated social development, ISODS directly addresses these root causes, providing both preventative and restorative pathways to peace.

#### **A Bottom-Up, Community-Oriented Approach**

Traditional state-centric responses in Nigeria have been largely reactive, heavily militarised, and top-down in orientation (Akinyemi & Olaopa, 2021). These approaches often fail to account for the social and cultural complexities of rural communities, leading to mistrust, resistance, and policy failure. In contrast, the ISODS model promotes a bottom-up, inclusive method of policy formulation that empowers local stakeholders through participatory governance and community consultation. This approach aligns with global best practices in conflict prevention and sustainable development, which emphasise local ownership and legitimacy as essential to effective peacebuilding (UNDP, 2021).

- 2. Strengthening Nation-Building through Inclusive Development:** Nation-building in Nigeria has historically suffered from the uneven distribution of public goods and the neglect of rural regions in national planning. The ISODS Framework, by embedding security interventions within broader development

strategies—such as education, health, job creation, and infrastructure—contributes to rebuilding the social contract between the state and its rural populations. This is crucial for fostering national unity, bridging regional disparities, and enhancing the legitimacy of state institutions (Ogueri & Nnadi, 2010).

3. **Sustainable Implementation and Multi-Sector Collaboration:** Another strength of the ISODS Framework is its emphasis on sustainability through coordinated funding mechanisms, capacity building, and inter-sectoral collaboration. The model advocates for partnerships between government, civil society, the private sector, and traditional institutions to ensure the continuity and adaptability of programmes (Anam, 2024). This multi-stakeholder approach addresses the chronic implementation gaps observed in previous rural security interventions, which often collapsed due to poor coordination and lack of grassroots support (Balogun & Adeoye, 2022).
4. **Promoting Policy Learning and Accountability:** Finally, the ISODS model incorporates a rigorous evaluation and policy learning component, making it a dynamic and responsive framework. By monitoring both intended and unintended outcomes, the framework allows for continuous improvement, adaptation to local realities, and institutional learning. This is especially important in Nigeria's fluid and often volatile rural security landscape, where static solutions have proven inadequate (NIS, 2019).

The ISODS Framework is highly relevant to the Nigerian context, particularly for rural communities that have long borne the brunt of insecurity and underdevelopment. Its focus on integrated social development, local participation, sustainable implementation, and continuous evaluation positions it as a transformative model for addressing insecurity while laying a strong foundation for inclusive and durable nation-building. By rooting security within the broader context of social development and sustainability, the ISODS Framework moves beyond the reactive, coercive paradigms that have failed Nigeria's rural communities. It offers a blueprint for building safe, self-reliant, and inclusive communities, which are essential for political stability, economic transformation, and national unity. ISODS aligns with global development best practices, complements the SDGs, and reflects a modern understanding of security as human-centered, preventive, and participatory.

## Conclusion

This study has critically examined the relevance of the Integrated Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework proposed by Bassey Anam (2024) in addressing the complex security challenges facing rural communities in Nigeria and in promoting nation-building. The analysis confirms that traditional state-centric and militarised approaches have largely failed to stem the tide of rural insecurity, which is rooted in socio-economic deprivation, institutional exclusion, and development deficits. The

ISODS model, by contrast, offers a multidimensional and inclusive framework that integrates community participation, sustainable development planning, transparent governance, and policy responsiveness.

By placing local ownership, social equity, and collaborative implementation at the centre of security strategy, the ISODS Framework presents a viable pathway for transforming rural insecurity into resilience, thereby fostering inclusive national development. It is particularly suited to Nigeria's fragmented socio-political context, where rural marginalisation continues to undermine national unity and sustainable peace. In this regard, ISODS is not only a framework for rural security but also a blueprint for participatory nation-building in a diverse and divided polity.

### Recommendations

The study recommends,

1. **Mainstreaming ISODS into National and Sub-National Security Policy:** The Federal Government of Nigeria, through relevant institutions such as the National Security Council and Ministry of Budget and National Planning, should adopt and integrate the ISODS Framework into national security and development policies. State governments, particularly those affected by rural insecurity, should likewise domesticate the framework through context-specific adaptations.
2. **Strengthening Community Engagement in Policy Formulation and Implementation:** Government at all levels should institutionalise mechanisms for grassroots participation, including community development committees, local security forums, and rural stakeholder dialogues. This will ensure that policies reflect local realities and secure greater community buy-in and ownership.
3. **Prioritising Social Investment as a Security Strategy:** Policymakers should reframe rural security not just as a law enforcement issue but as a developmental imperative. Investments in rural infrastructure, agricultural extension services, vocational training, youth employment, and health systems should be considered core security measures.
4. **Improving Inter-Agency Coordination and Decentralised Security Governance:** The Federal Government should facilitate a decentralised security architecture that empowers local authorities, traditional institutions, and community leaders to participate in peacebuilding and early warning systems. This should include reforming the security sector to enhance synergy between police, military, and intelligence units.
5. **Establishing a Monitoring and Learning System:** A robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system should be embedded within ISODS implementation to track outcomes, assess impact, and allow for policy adjustments. Feedback loops from rural communities should be formally institutionalised to inform continuous policy refinement.



6. **Securing Long-Term Funding and Cross-Sectoral Partnerships:** Sustainable implementation of ISODS requires dedicated funding through government budgets, development aid, and private sector partnerships, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. Multilateral institutions such as the UNDP, World Bank, and African Development Bank should also be engaged to support community-driven development and security initiatives.
7. **Promoting Public Awareness and Policy Literacy:** Civil society organisations and media platforms should be supported to raise public awareness about ISODS and its benefits. Education campaigns should target both rural dwellers and urban policymakers to bridge understanding and promote policy coherence.

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