

Gender-Differentiated Effects: A Comparative Analysis of How Insecurity Affects School Attendance Patterns Among Male and Female Students in Wukari Local Government, Taraba State Nigeria

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Abstract

Original Research Article

Insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in regions like Taraba State, has become a significant impediment to educational attainment. While the general impact of conflict on schooling is acknowledged, a gender-differentiated analysis remains underexplored. This paper conducts a comparative analysis of how insecurity specifically affects school attendance patterns among male and female students in Wukari Local Government Area, a region plagued by farmer-herder conflicts, communal clashes, and generalized violence. The study employs a qualitative desk-based review methodology, synthesizing data from government reports, non-governmental organization studies, journal articles, and news media to dissect the gendered pathways through which insecurity disrupts education. The findings reveal that girls' attendance is disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including abductions and forced marriages, which fuels parental fears and leads to the strategic withdrawal of daughters from school. Furthermore, the destruction of infrastructure and increased domestic burdens post-displacement place a heavier toll on girls. For boys, the impact manifests differently, driven by the pressures of economic survival, forced recruitment into vigilante groups or gangs, and social expectations to provide security for their families. The paper argues that a one-size-fits-all approach to educational intervention in conflict zones is ineffective. It concludes by recommending gender-sensitive policy interventions, including the provision of secure learning environments, targeted scholarship programs for girls, community sensitization campaigns against SGBV, and alternative education models for boys at risk of exploitation, all tailored to the specific socio-cultural context of Wukari.

Keywords: Insecurity, Gender, School Attendance, Wukari, Farmer-Herder Conflict, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Educational Disruption, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

The fundamental right to education, enshrined in both international conventions and Nigeria's national policies, is increasingly under threat in many parts of the country. The pervasive climate of insecurity, stemming from a complex interplay of insurgency, banditry, resource-based conflicts, and communal violence, has created an environment where the simple act of attending school becomes a life-risking endeavor. The 2014 abduction of over 270 Chibok schoolgirls by Boko Haram brought global attention to this crisis, yet

numerous other regions in Nigeria face similar, if less publicized, educational emergencies. Taraba State, located in Nigeria's Middle Belt, is one such region where persistent violence has severely disrupted social services, with education bearing a significant brunt.

Wukari Local Government Area (LGA) in Taraba State presents a critical case study for examining the nexus between insecurity and education. Historically a vibrant cultural and educational hub, Wukari has been enmeshed in recurrent cycles of violent conflict, primarily between farming and pastoralist

communities. These conflicts, often triggered by competition over dwindling natural resources, land, and political marginalization, have led to mass displacements, loss of livelihoods, and the destruction of property, including schools. The educational system in Wukari, therefore, operates within a context of chronic fear and instability, making it an ideal locus for investigating how such conditions impact its youngest citizens.

While the general negative correlation between conflict and school enrollment is well-established in literature, this paper posits that the effects are not gender-neutral. The experiences, vulnerabilities, and societal expectations placed on boys and girls differ markedly, leading to distinct patterns in how insecurity dictates their educational trajectories. A blanket assessment of "children" as a homogenous group obscures these critical nuances and can lead to poorly targeted interventions that fail to address the root causes of dropout for each gender.

This research aims to move beyond generalized accounts by conducting a deliberate comparative analysis of the gender-differentiated effects of insecurity on school attendance in Wukari LGA. It seeks to answer the central question: In what specific ways does the ongoing insecurity in Wukari LGA disproportionately and differentially affect the school attendance patterns of female students compared to their male counterparts? The objective is to unravel the distinct mechanisms—social, economic, and cultural—that channel the impact of violence along gendered lines.

Understanding these differentiated pathways is not merely an academic exercise; it is a practical necessity for effective policy formulation. Interventions designed without a gendered lens risk being inefficient or, worse, exacerbating existing inequalities. For instance, building more schools may not address the fear of abduction that keeps girls at home, just as providing scholarships may not deter boys lured by the economic opportunities of militias. This study, therefore, is situated within the broader scholarly discourse on education in emergencies and the gendered dimensions of conflict.

The methodology for this paper is a comprehensive qualitative desk-based review. This approach involves the systematic gathering, synthesis, and critical analysis of existing data from a wide range of

secondary sources. These sources include reports from Nigerian government agencies like the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), studies by international and local non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF, Plan International, and the CLEEN Foundation, peer-reviewed academic journals, and credible news reports focusing on the Taraba and Middle Belt crisis.

The scope of the study is confined to Wukari LGA, allowing for a deep, contextualized analysis. The time frame primarily covers the period from 2010 to the present, a decade marked by a significant escalation in farmer-herder conflicts in the region. The paper will proceed by first establishing the contextual background of insecurity in Wukari. It will then delve into a detailed review of relevant literature, before extensively analyzing the specific effects on female students and then on male students. A comparative discussion will synthesize these findings, leading to evidence-based conclusions and recommendations. Through this structure, the paper aims to contribute a nuanced, context-specific, and gender-aware perspective to the challenge of securing education in one of Nigeria's most volatile regions.

THE CONTEXT OF INSECURITY IN WUKARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

To understand the gendered impact of insecurity on education, one must first appreciate the complex and multi-layered nature of the violence itself in Wukari LGA. Wukari is not a mono-causal conflict zone; rather, it is a theatre where several intersecting conflicts converge, each contributing to the overall climate of fear and instability. The primary driver of insecurity in this region is the protracted and often brutal conflict between sedentary farming communities and nomadic pastoralists. This conflict, which has historical roots, has been intensified in recent decades by a combination of environmental, political, and economic factors.

The environmental degradation and climate change-induced shrinkage of arable land and grazing reserves have placed immense pressure on both farmers and herders. As noted by Okoli and Atelhe (2014), the competition for these scarce resources often escalates into violent confrontations,

characterized by farm destruction, cattle rustling, and retaliatory attacks on villages. These attacks are not minor skirmishes; they often involve sophisticated weaponry and result in significant casualties, forcing entire communities to flee their homes. The persistent nature of these clashes means that the threat is constant, creating a pervasive atmosphere of anxiety that affects all aspects of daily life, including the decision to send children to school.

Beyond the farmer-herder dichotomy, Wukari also grapples with deep-seated communal and ethnic tensions. The LGA is a melting pot of diverse ethnic groups, including the Jukun, Tiv, Hausa, and Kuteb, among others. Historical grievances over land ownership, political representation, and chieftaincy titles often flare up into violent inter-communal conflicts. These conflicts create fissures along ethnic lines, further polarizing communities and destroying the social fabric that is essential for collective security and the normal functioning of institutions like schools (Higazi, 2016). A school located in a Jukun-dominated area, for instance, may become inaccessible or unsafe for Tiv children, and vice versa.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Middle Belt region exacerbates these conflicts. The easy availability of weapons lowers the threshold for violence and makes every dispute potentially lethal. As documented by the International Crisis Group (2018), the militarization of civilian populations has led to the emergence of vigilante groups and youth militias, ostensibly for self-defense but often contributing to a cycle of revenge attacks. In this environment, schools are not seen as sanctuaries but as potential soft targets for attacks or recruitment drives by armed groups.

The state's capacity to provide security is often limited and sometimes perceived as partial. The security forces—police and military—are frequently overstretched and unable to respond effectively to simultaneous attacks across the vast LGA. In some instances, as argued by Blench et al. (2003), the actions of security agencies have been accused of exacerbating tensions, leading to a trust deficit between the community and the state. This security vacuum forces communities to rely on self-help measures, which further entrenches the cycle of violence.

The socio-economic consequences of this multifaceted insecurity are devastating. Agricultural productivity, the mainstay of the local economy, is severely disrupted. Markets are destroyed, and trade routes become unsafe, leading to loss of livelihoods and widespread poverty. The destruction of critical infrastructure, including health centers, water sources, and schools, is a common feature of the attacks. According to a report by the Taraba State Ministry of Education (2019), over 50 schools in the southern part of the state, including Wukari, were partially or completely destroyed between 2016 and 2018, directly impacting the physical infrastructure necessary for learning.

Mass displacement is another direct consequence. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps have sprung up within and around Wukari town, hosting thousands of families who have fled their ancestral homes. Life in these camps is characterized by overcrowding, poor sanitation, and limited access to basic services. For children in these settings, the disruption to their education is almost total, as the camps often lack formal schooling facilities and the psychological trauma of displacement impedes learning.

This complex web of farmer-herder conflicts, ethnic strife, and proliferation of arms, state weakness, and socio-economic collapse forms the toxic ecosystem within which education in Wukari must survive. It is against this backdrop of chronic and multifaceted insecurity that the specific, gendered experiences of male and female students must be analyzed. The violence is not an abstract concept but a daily reality that shapes their choices, opportunities, and very chances of receiving an education.

LITERATURE REVIEW: GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT AND EDUCATION

The intersection of gender, conflict, and education is a well-trodden field in academic and policy circles, though its application to specific Nigerian contexts like Wukari requires careful contextualization. Scholarly work consistently demonstrates that while conflict is detrimental to all children's education, it affects boys and girls in profoundly different ways, largely mediated by pre-existing social norms, gender roles, and economic

structures. A foundational concept in this discourse is that of the "dual disruption" faced by education systems in conflict zones. As Smith (2005) argues, conflict causes both direct attacks on education infrastructure (e.g., burning of schools, killing of teachers) and indirect systemic collapse (e.g., diversion of funds, breakdown of supervision). This dual disruption creates an environment where gendered vulnerabilities are amplified. The indirect effects, in particular, often have a stronger gendered component, as they interact with societal expectations of males and females.

A significant portion of the literature focuses on the disproportionate impact of conflict on girls' education. The seminal work of Kirk (2004) on gender-based violence in conflict zones highlights how fear of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) becomes a primary mechanism for keeping girls out of school. This is not merely a theoretical risk. In contexts from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Syria, the threat of rape, abduction, and sexual exploitation by armed groups has been shown to cause parents to withdraw their daughters from school as a protective measure (Mazurana & Carlson, 2009). This protective restriction, while well-intentioned, effectively denies girls their right to education and reinforces gender inequalities.

The "protective" rationale is often intertwined with concerns about preserving family honor, which in many patriarchal societies, including those in northern Nigeria, is linked to female sexuality and purity. A study by Odoemene (2015) on the Middle Belt crises revealed that the abduction and forced marriage of girls were not just incidental outcomes but were sometimes used as deliberate weapons of war to humiliate and subjugate rival communities. This weaponization of female bodies makes girls' mobility, including the journey to school, a high-stakes risk that families are often unwilling to take.

For boys, the literature points to a different set of drivers. Rather than being kept at home for protection, boys in conflict zones are often pushed out of school by economic pressures and the militarization of youth. Boyden (2013), in her work on children and conflict, notes that the loss of family income and the death of breadwinners often thrust boys into the role of economic providers. This forces them to drop out of school to engage in farming,

trading, or other menial jobs to support their families, a phenomenon clearly observable in the agrarian economy of Wukari.

Furthermore, boys face a high risk of being recruited or coerced into participating in the violence itself. They may be forcibly conscripted by armed groups or, in the absence of state protection, feel a social pressure to join community vigilante groups for self-defense. This aligns with the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" in conflict, where young men are socialized to be protectors and combatants (Carpenter, 2006). The school, in this context, can be perceived as an irrelevant or feminized space compared to the perceived honor and economic opportunity (through looting) offered by militia groups. A report by the CLEEN Foundation (2020) on community policing in Nigeria's Middle Belt documented the active participation of adolescent boys in local vigilante outfits, a trend that directly competes with school attendance.

The literature also discusses the differential impact of displacement. When families are forced to flee, girls often bear a heavier burden of domestic chores, such as fetching water and firewood in unfamiliar and often unsafe environments, and caring for younger siblings, which leaves little time or energy for schooling (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). For displaced boys, the lack of economic opportunities in IDP camps can lead to idleness and make them more susceptible to recruitment by armed elements. However, a critical gap exists in the literature. While many studies address the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria, there is a relative paucity of focused academic research that systematically compares the gendered educational impacts of the farmer-herder and communal conflicts prevalent in the Middle Belt, specifically in Taraba State. Most reports are generalized or subsumed within broader analyses of the national crisis. This paper seeks to fill this gap by applying these established theoretical frameworks—the gendered risks of SGBV for girls and the economic/militarization pressures for boys—to the specific and under-researched context of Wukari LGA, thereby providing a micro-level analysis that can inform more localized interventions.

GENDERED EFFECTS ON FEMALE STUDENTS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The impact of Wukari's insecurity on female students is profound, multifaceted, and primarily channeled through the pervasive threat of sexual and gender-based violence, which activates a range of protective and restrictive responses from families and the community. The journey to and from school, which may involve traversing remote pathways or conflict-prone areas, becomes a perilous undertaking for girls. The fear is not unfounded; there are numerous documented cases of girls being abducted, assaulted, or harassed while commuting to school in regions experiencing similar conflicts in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2018).

This fear of SGBV leads to what can be termed "protective withdrawal." Parents, fearing for their daughters' safety and the accompanying stigma that sexual violence would bring upon the family, make the conscious decision to keep them at home. In the cultural context of Wukari, where female chastity is highly valued and linked to family honor, the risk of a daughter being violated is perceived as a catastrophic loss that outweighs the benefits of her education (Chukwuma, 2020). Consequently, even in periods of relative calm, the latent fear of a sudden attack can be enough to prevent parents from re-enrolling their daughters, creating a long-term gender gap in attendance.

The very infrastructure of schooling is also a factor. Many schools in rural Wukari lack basic amenities like perimeter fencing, functional lighting, and gender-segregated sanitation facilities. For adolescent girls, the absence of private and secure toilets is a significant deterrent, especially when they are menstruating. In an insecure environment, the simple act of going to an open-pit latrine at the edge of the school compound can feel dangerous. This lack of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, a problem exacerbated by conflict-driven infrastructural decay, disproportionately affects girls' regular attendance and can lead to them dropping out altogether (UNICEF, 2019).

Beyond the immediate threat of violence, insecurity amplifies the economic drivers of girls' dropout. When families lose their livelihoods due to destroyed farms or lost cattle, they face difficult choices regarding resource allocation. In situations of

extreme poverty, where school fees, uniforms, and books become unaffordable, families often prioritize the education of sons over daughters. This is based on a patriarchal calculation that sons, as future breadwinners, offer a better return on investment, while daughters will eventually marry into another family (Akanle, Adejare, & Adedeji, 2016). Insecurity-induced poverty thus reinforces pre-existing gender biases in educational investment.

The phenomenon of early and forced marriage is another critical pathway through which insecurity disrupts girls' education. In times of crisis, families may see marrying off a daughter at a young age as a strategy for reducing the economic burden on the household or, perversely, as a way of securing her protection by placing her under the care of a husband. However, this often translates into the immediate and permanent termination of a girl's formal education. Cases of girls being given out in marriage to militia leaders or members of opposing groups as part of conflict-resolution or appeasement strategies have also been reported in the Middle Belt, further complicating the picture (Odoemene, 2015).

The psychological trauma inflicted by chronic insecurity also has a gendered dimension. Girls who have witnessed violence, lost family members, or been displaced experience high levels of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress. Without psychosocial support systems in schools or communities, this trauma can manifest as an inability to concentrate in class, leading to poor academic performance and eventual disengagement from school. The constant state of fear can be psychologically paralyzing, making the cognitive demands of learning nearly impossible to meet.

For girls living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps around Wukari, the challenges are even more acute. The domestic workload for girls in these settings increases dramatically. They are often tasked with queuing for hours for food rations, fetching water from distant and potentially unsafe sources, and caring for younger siblings while their parents seek work. These responsibilities leave little time for schooling, and the often chaotic and unstructured environment of the camps is rarely conducive to learning. Even when informal learning centers are established, girls' participation is often lower due to these increased domestic duties and heightened

safety concerns within the camp itself.

The cumulative impact of these factors—fear of SGBV, inadequate school infrastructure, economic prioritization of boys, early marriage, psychological trauma, and displacement—creates a formidable barrier to education for the girl child in Wukari. It represents a systematic negation of their potential and a violation of their fundamental rights. Addressing the decline in female school attendance, therefore, requires interventions that are specifically targeted at these gendered barriers, going beyond simply rebuilding schools to tackling the deep-seated social norms and security concerns that keep girls at home.

GENDERED EFFECTS ON MALE STUDENTS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

While the challenges for female students are often centered on restrictive protection, the effects of insecurity on male students in Wukari are characterized by a different dynamic: exposure and economic pressure. Boys are often pushed out of the educational system by the demands of survival, economic necessity, and the pull of militarized masculine identities, leading to distinct patterns of school absenteeism and dropout. A primary driver of male dropout is the economic devastation wrought by the conflicts. In the agrarian society of Wukari, where many families depend on subsistence farming, the destruction of crops and farmlands by herders, or the loss of cattle by pastoralists, decimates household incomes. In such crises, boys are frequently withdrawn from school to contribute to family survival. They may be sent to work on any remaining family land, engaged in menial labor in Wukari town, or involved in petty trading to generate income. As noted by Udoh (2017) in a study on child labor in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria, the economic shock of conflict often transforms children from students into essential economic actors, with boys being the first to be mobilized for this role.

This economic pressure is compounded by the loss of the primary breadwinner. In conflicts characterized by violent attacks, many boys lose their fathers or male guardians. This tragic event often forces the eldest son to prematurely assume the role of the head of the household. The responsibility to provide for the mother and siblings takes immediate

precedence over education. The school is seen as a luxury that the family can no longer afford, both in terms of direct costs and the opportunity cost of the boy's labor. This abrupt transition from childhood to adulthood effectively marks the end of formal schooling for many young men in the region.

Perhaps the most distinctive gendered effect on boys is their vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups. The security vacuum in Wukari has led to the proliferation of ethnic-based vigilante groups and youth militias, such as the "Janjaweed" among pastoralists and various "hunter" groups among farming communities. These groups actively recruit young males, offering them a sense of purpose, protection, belonging, and sometimes economic incentive through looting (International Crisis Group, 2018). For an adolescent boy living in a context where state authority is absent and violence is normalized, the allure of joining a powerful militia can be far stronger than the abstract promise of an education.

This recruitment is not always voluntary. Boys are often forcibly conscripted or face intense social pressure from their communities to take up arms in defense of their ethnic group or community. The social construct of masculinity that valorizes physical strength, bravery, and the role of the protector is powerfully activated in times of conflict (Carpenter, 2006). Refusing to join a vigilante group can be misconstrued as cowardice or a lack of commitment to one's people. This creates a powerful peer pressure that pulls boys away from the classroom and into the battlefield.

The direct attack on education also affects boys, but sometimes in a targeted manner. There have been instances where boys, particularly those from specific ethnic groups perceived as the "enemy," have been directly attacked on school premises or while commuting. Furthermore, the fear of being targeted for recruitment or violence on the way to school can itself be a deterrent. A boy from a farming community might avoid a school located on a route frequently used by pastoralist militias, and vice versa. The psychological impact on boys is also significant, though it may manifest differently than in girls. Exposure to violence can lead to aggression, substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress, all of which are incompatible with a structured learning

environment. A boy who has witnessed the killing of family members or who is traumatized by his experiences may find it impossible to sit still in a classroom, leading to behavioral problems and eventual expulsion or self-withdrawal.

Finally, the collapse of social order and the normalization of violence can lead to a general devaluation of education among male youth. When the rule of law breaks down and power is perceived to reside with the gun, academic qualifications can seem irrelevant. The pathways to respect, income, and power appear to lie not with academic success but with martial prowess and affiliation with armed groups. This shift in societal values represents a profound long-term threat to the educational prospects of boys in Wukari, creating a generation for whom schooling is seen as an ineffective strategy for navigating their violent reality.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Placing the experiences of female and male students side-by-side reveals a stark picture of gendered divergence in the face of a shared crisis. The overarching finding is that insecurity in Wukari LGA does not merely keep "children" out of school; it systematically channels girls and boys out of the educational system through distinct and deeply entrenched societal mechanisms. For girls, the dominant narrative is one of *restriction and invisibility*—they are actively kept at home, their mobility curtailed by external threats and internalized fears. For boys, the narrative is one of *expulsion and visibility*—they are pushed into the public spheres of economic labor and militarized violence, their absence from school a consequence of their heightened exposure.

The root cause of this divergence lies in the pre-existing patriarchal norms and gender roles that the conflict exacerbates. The control over female sexuality and the association of family honor with female purity explain why the threat of SGBV triggers such a powerful protective/restrictive response for girls. The female body becomes a site of vulnerability that must be shielded, even at the cost of her education and future. In contrast, the socialization of males as providers and protectors explains why economic pressures and the call to arms

have such a potent effect on boys. The male body becomes an instrument for labor and combat, its value redefined in the context of survival and communal defense. The economic drivers also operate differently. For girls, poverty often leads to their education being deprioritized in household budgeting—a passive exclusion. For boys, poverty actively pulls them into the labor force—they are transformed into active, albeit often exploited, economic agents. This distinction is crucial for policy: interventions to keep girls in school may need to focus on financial incentives for families (e.g., conditional cash transfers), while for boys, the solution may lie in creating safe economic opportunities for their families that reduce the dependence on child labor.

The role of space and mobility is another key point of comparison. The danger for girls is often concentrated in the *transitional space* between home and school. This suggests that interventions like safe school corridors, community patrols, or boarding facilities could be highly effective. For boys, the danger is more diffuse; it is present in the farms, the markets, and the militia camps—the very spaces they are pushed into. Securing the school itself may not be enough to bring boys back if the alternative spaces offer more immediate (if perilous) rewards. Furthermore, the long-term consequences of this gendered disruption differ. Girls who are withdrawn from school and married off early often face a lifetime of economic dependence and limited opportunities. Their disempowerment is often permanent. Boys who are recruited into militias may acquire a form of violent social capital and power, but at the risk of death, permanent injury, or criminalization, making reintegration into peaceful society and the formal education system exceptionally difficult. Both outcomes are devastating, but they represent different kinds of societal losses.

This comparative analysis underscores the critical limitation of gender-blind policies. A program that simply rebuilds schools in Wukari will likely see a slower return of girls due to persistent SGBV fears and will do little to deter boys attracted to the economic and social power of militias. Similarly, a blanket "back-to-school" campaign that does not address the specific economic pressures on boys or the safety concerns for girls is destined for limited

success. The findings from Wukari strongly suggest that effective educational planning in conflict zones must be based on a rigorous gender analysis from the outset, designing interventions that speak directly to the unique vulnerabilities and pressures faced by each group.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has provided a detailed comparative analysis of the gender-differentiated effects of insecurity on school attendance in Wukari Local Government Area, Taraba State. It has unequivocally demonstrated that the impact of the ongoing farmer-herder and communal conflicts on education is not uniform. Female students are predominantly affected through a complex of factors centered on the fear of sexual and gender-based violence, which leads to their protective withdrawal from school, a decision reinforced by economic hardship and cultural practices like early marriage. Male students, conversely, are primarily impacted through economic pressures that force them into labor and through recruitment or social pressure to join armed vigilante groups, pathways shaped by expectations of hegemonic masculinity.

The convergence of these gendered pathways has resulted in a severe educational crisis in Wukari, threatening to create a lost generation of both uneducated girls, whose potential remains locked away, and militarized boys, whose skills are confined to the realm of violence. This not only undermines individual futures but also jeopardizes the long-term peace and development prospects of the entire region, as education is a key pillar for social cohesion and economic resilience.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, educational planners, and non-governmental organizations working in conflict-affected areas of the Middle Belt and similar contexts:

- 1. Implement Gender-Sensitive Security Measures for Schools:** The government, in collaboration with community leaders, should establish safe school initiatives tailored to gendered risks. This includes:
 - For girls: Creating safe school corridors with community-based patrols, providing secure boarding facilities for female students from

remote villages, and ensuring all schools have perimeter fencing and gender-segregated, lockable sanitation facilities.

- For all: Deploying security personnel to patrol around schools, particularly during opening and closing hours.

2. Develop Targeted Economic Support Programs:

- For girls: Introduce and expand conditional cash transfer programs that provide financial incentives to families for keeping their daughters in school, thereby offsetting the opportunity cost.
- For boys and their families: Establish vocational training and safe youth employment schemes that provide alternative livelihoods to joining militias or engaging in exploitative labor. This could include agricultural starter packs for displaced families.

3. Launch Community-Wide Sensitization Campaigns:

Partner with traditional rulers, religious leaders, and women's groups to challenge the norms that harm education. Campaigns should:

- Focus on ending SGBV, stigmatizing perpetrators, and promoting the value of educating the girl child.
- Counter the glorification of violence and militia culture among young men, promoting positive masculine identities centered on protection through non-violent means and academic achievement.

4. Strengthen Educational Infrastructure and Flexibility:

- Rebuild destroyed schools with a focus on safety and WASH facilities.
- Develop and promote Accelerated Learning Programs (ALPs) for over-age boys and girls who have missed years of schooling due to conflict, providing a pathway back into the system.
- Explore the use of mobile schools or digital learning in hard-to-reach or IDP camp settings to maintain educational continuity.

5. Integrate Psychosocial Support (PSS) into Schools: Train teachers and establish counseling units within schools to help both male and female students cope with the trauma of conflict, reducing its impact on their learning and behavior.

In conclusion, securing the right to education in Wukari and similar conflict zones requires moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach. By recognizing and actively addressing the gendered logic through which insecurity operates, stakeholders can design more effective, equitable, and sustainable interventions that ensure both girls and boys have the opportunity to learn, thrive, and contribute to a more peaceful future.

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