



Making Peace Possible



# USIP's Work in Nigeria

## CURRENT SITUATION

*Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has made progress on reforming the country's military and intensifying the fight against the extremist group Boko Haram, which threatens the stability of not only Nigeria, but other countries in the Lake Chad Basin. The group's insurgency has left the country confronting widespread internal displacement, a humanitarian disaster, and the need for reconstruction in the north.*

Nigeria—a major oil producer and Africa's most populous nation and second-largest economy—faces additional challenges: an economic crisis triggered mostly by low oil prices, a resurgence of militancy in the Delta over economic grievances, an uptick in agitation in the Southeast by pro-Biafra nationalists, and ongoing conflicts over land use in the Middle Belt. While the election of Buhari in 2015 marked a milestone in Nigeria's democratic development—the first peaceful transfer of power to a winner from an opposition party—there remains an urgent need to deliver reforms on economic policy and inclusive governance.

## USIP'S WORK

For more than a decade, the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) has sponsored and participated in interfaith mediation and conflict mitigation across Nigeria. The Institute provides education, grants, training, and other resources to bolster the efforts of Nigerian civic and political leaders who are laying the groundwork for a shared, sustainable peace. USIP also works to improve governance in Nigeria through projects that strengthen communication between authorities and citizens, especially below the national level. Through its local contacts and research, USIP's work in the country helps inform U.S. policy towards one of Africa's most important nations. The Institute's work includes:

**Durable Solutions in Northern Nigeria.** USIP brings together northern state governors with civic leaders and the Nigerian government to formulate durable strategies that take into account the views and needs of citizens to address the causes of instability in the north and seize opportunities for stabilizing that region of the country. Many of the same sources of conflict that led to the rise and expansion of violent extremism in northeast Nigeria are present throughout most of the country's northern region.

**Generation Change Fellows Program.** Eighteen Nigerians are among young civil society leaders from across the Middle East and Africa participating in the Generation Change Fellows Program, which aims to help them achieve their potential as powerful forces for constructive change. The two-year program provides mentorship and training to strengthen their conflict management and leadership skills,

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while creating a network of mutual support for their work in difficult environments. USIP also works with the fellows on their community peacebuilding initiatives.

**Women Preventing Violent Extremism.** Through training and facilitated dialogues, USIP supports partners on the ground who connect women civil society leaders and security officials to explore local causes of violent extremism and devise prevention strategies. The project is designed to increase women's involvement and influence in community efforts against extremism and to increase trust and cooperation. Current work involves women-led civil society organizations and security officials in Kaduna and Plateau states, and links their initiatives to national-level policies.



*President Muhammadu Buhari at a USIP event, July 2015.*

**Justice and Security Dialogue.** In 2016, USIP, through local partners, conducted exploratory workshops in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, in which citizens and security officials jointly identified the chief security threats to their communities, as well as opportunities and obstacles to an effective response. The Institute conducts such Justice and Security Dialogues in select communities of the Sahel and Maghreb, with the aim of making civilian security institutions more effective, accountable, and responsive through improved communication and cooperation with local citizens.

**Academic and Research Grants.** With USIP's support, Usmanu Danfodiyo University in Sokoto State is updating its peace studies and conflict resolution program by supporting instructor training and curriculum revisions and improving data gathering, analysis, and documentation. The project includes establishing a network of peace and conflict studies centers in northern Nigeria. In Kano State, the Centre for Information Technology and Development is conducting research to examine the factors that make certain communities more resistant to the threat of violence in northern Nigeria, with the aim of drawing lessons to prevent similar violence in the future.



*Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Linda Thomas-Greenfield at the USIP event Partnership with Nigeria: The U.S. View. March 2016*

**High-Level Policy Discussions.** President Buhari addressed an audience at USIP in July 2015 during his first visit to the U.S. after his election, outlining his "zero tolerance" of corruption and pledging to restore trust in the country's governance. Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, who also has been a pivotal figure in the African Union, spoke at USIP just weeks after that historic election, discussing Africa's potential to overcome its leadership challenges. In 2016, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Linda Thomas-Greenfield spoke on the evolution of U.S.-Nigeria relations.