Nigeria's historic presidential vote of March 2015, in which an opposition candidate won against a sitting president for the first time, may prove to be a milestone for African democracy. The peaceful transfer of power opens new prospects for the continent's demographic and economic giant to strengthen governance, clean up corruption, and reverse the spread of the Boko Haram insurgency in the north. Peace and security continue to be elusive in other parts of Nigeria as well, due to unresolved conflicts in the Niger Delta and in the Middle Belt. Yet President Muhammadu Buhari also must cope with a flagging economy as a result of low global oil prices.

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) provides education, grants, training, and resources to those working for peace in Nigeria, with the aim of informing U.S. government policy and improving governance with approaches that will connect authorities more constructively with citizens, especially at the state level. Initiatives include:

**Senior Working Group:** Building on discussions from the Northern Nigerian Governors Symposium hosted by USIP in March 2014, USIP is identifying key decision makers, first in northern Nigeria and then from among leaders throughout the country, to seek consensus on the need for an inclusive national approach to peace and political processes, particularly in the north.

**Justice and Security Dialogue:** This project is designed to support citizens and authorities in jointly addressing important security challenges within select communities of the Sahel and Maghreb, including in Nigeria. Participants share knowledge and skills and support each other across the broader region. This unique approach, developed by USIP, aims to improve the relationship between security providers and citizens and to support civilian security forces to be more effective, accountable, and responsive.

**Women Preventing Extremist Violence:** The influence and engagement of women is crucial for strengthening communities to resist violent extremism. Through training and facilitated dialogues, USIP staff support partners on the ground to bring together select women civil society leaders with security representatives to understand local causes of violent extremism, and devise strategies for prevention.

**Generation Change:** Young activists can be powerful forces for constructive change. This project, involving fellows from across the Middle East and Africa, helps them establish a network to exchange ideas, practice constructive dialogue, deepen their understanding of conflict resolution, and provide mutual support to maintain resilience in the difficult environments where they work.

**GRANTS**

USIP's grants increase the breadth and depth of the Institute's work by supporting peacebuilding projects managed by non-profit organizations. Current grants related to Nigeria include:

**Strengthening Graduate Education in Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution in Northern Nigeria:** Usmanu Danfodiyo University in Sokoto state is updating its peace studies and conflict resolution program. This grant supports instructor training and curriculum revisions, and provides resources to improve data gathering, analysis and documentation. The project includes establishing a network of peace and conflict studies centers in northern Nigeria.
The Nigeria Forum: The Royal African Society has constructed a high-quality online resource for analysis of Nigerian politics and security surrounding the 2015 elections and, more broadly, examining the political, economic, and security challenges the country faces. The forum is part of the ‘African Arguments’ blogging community, an arrangement that allows a selection of articles to be republished on the website of The Guardian newspaper in the U.K.

USIP staff and experts regularly publish in-depth reports as well as short, timely policy briefs that offer policymakers, practitioners, and scholars a distillation of expert research, lessons learned, and solutions based on USIP’s work around the world. Recent publications on Nigeria include:

Religion and Conflict in Nigeria (2015): Nigeria’s vast population is evenly split between Muslim and Christian. This Special Report examines the intersection and consequences of religious identity, internal conflict, and electoral politics.

Why Do Youths Join Boko Haram? (2014): Drawing on the results of a 2013 study in six northern Nigerian states, this Special Report addresses the question of how youth are radicalized and recruited into armed groups and what the Nigerian government and other interested actors can do to prevent it.

What’s Next for Security in the Niger Delta? (2013): The Nigerian government’s 2009 amnesty of militants in the Niger Delta dramatically reduced the violence that had plagued the region and restored pre-insurgency levels of oil production. But many of the problems that sparked violent confrontations remain unaddressed. This Special Report draws on many sectors of Nigerian society to gauge whether peace on the delta can be sustained.

What is Boko Haram? (2012): The group Jama’atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda’Awati Wal Jihad, known the world over as Boko Haram, is an extremist Islamic sect in Nigeria that has created havoc across the north of the country and in the capital, Abuja. This report addresses the range of conflicting narratives about Boko Haram and suggests how the group can be contained.

USIP frequently hosts events, bringing together thought leaders, scholars, experts, policymakers, and elected officials to discuss peacebuilding efforts around the world and analyze current affairs. Recent events at USIP on Nigeria include:

What’s Right with Africa: Reframing Africa’s Leadership Challenges: Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, who also has been a pivotal figure in the African Union, on April 22, 2015, discussed Africa’s leadership challenges in terms of “What’s Right with Africa.”


U.S. Policy Today for Africa Tomorrow: In July 2014, USIP hosted a conversation on U.S.-Africa engagement with Ambassadors Johnnie Carson and Princeton Lyman, both senior advisors at USIP, and Ambassador George Moose, the Institute board’s vice chairman.

Northern Nigerian Governors Symposium: This private conference in March 2014, brought 13 of the 19 invited northern governors for a two-day session on economic, political, social, and security matters specific to the north and important to U.S. national interests. The program created a rare forum for information-sharing and networking related to a strategic region largely inaccessible to U.S. officials for security reasons.