



UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE
Making Peace Possible

USIP's Work in Nigeria



Chris Kwejia/USIP

Courtesy of the Plateau Peace Building Agency



In 2019, the Network of Nigerian Facilitators (NNF) helped Kaduna and Plateau state peacebuilding institutions orchestrate a peace agreement to resolve a long-standing, cross-border violent conflict between Aten, Fulani and Takad communities in both states. The resulting peace agreement, signed in December 2020, signified their commitment to begin a peace process guided by the state peacebuilding institutions with support from the NNF and USIP.

CURRENT SITUATION

As Africa's most populous country, largest economy and most notable democracy, Nigeria is a bellwether for the continent. A weakening economy, rising insecurity and violent conflicts threaten progress made in its democratic development. Amid deepening distrust in government and institutions, Nigeria has significant work to do in improving national, state and local security and governance ahead of national and state elections in 2023.

USIP'S WORK

Nigeria's federal system gives governors great responsibilities in addressing the issues driving the country's multiple conflicts, including farmer-herder violence, deepening regional divides, armed banditry and the Boko Haram insurgency. USIP brings together state governors, national policymakers and civic leaders to design and implement inclusive policies that mitigate violence and strengthen community-oriented security. The Institute engages a variety of influential figures, empowers citizens and uses its expertise and convening power to inform Nigeria policy in the United States, the region and around the world. Recent work includes:

Nigeria Working Group on Peacebuilding and Governance. Since 2016, this working group has fostered relationships between citizens, policymakers and national and international figures to ensure that a diverse array of voices impact decision-making processes. These relationships allow the working group to turn expert analysis into tangible, actionable policy advice. For instance, recommendations for addressing the country's current security and political challenges — informed by a 2021 convening with



religious and civic leaders from the National Peace Committee and the Inter-Faith Initiative for Peace — were published in [leading Nigerian newspapers](#). In 2021, amid deepening public mistrust, the working group harnessed its collective experience and relationships to advance high-level dialogue between major civic groups working for peace across the country and the Nigerian government. The working group is regularly invited by state and national policymakers to provide recommendations on a range of issues, from [inclusive governance](#) and electoral violence to communal conflicts between pastoralists and farming communities.

Network of Nigerian Facilitators (NNF). The NNF is a group of professional peace mediators trained by USIP to resolve local conflicts through nonviolent means across several states throughout the country. NNF dialogues focus on strengthening community-security sector relationships and mitigating intercommunal, pastoralist-farmer and election-related violence. Since 2019, the NNF has collaborated with state peacebuilding institutions to address conflicts and support local peace processes. In 2021, the NNF helped conduct USIP research to better understand the drivers and dynamics of communal conflicts across Nigeria.

Working with State Governments and Peacebuilding Institutions. USIP helps governors and state peacebuilding institutions to establish inclusive, cooperative strategies that prevent and resolve violent conflicts; ensure that policies focus on citizens' needs; stem the potential for all forms of violence; and allow communities to play meaningful roles in the transition process.

Strengthening Local Security. Through USIP's ongoing [Justice and Security Dialogue](#) project, citizens at the local level collectively identify security challenges and organize dialogues that bring together internally displaced communities and police in Northeast Nigeria to develop practical and concrete solutions to address security concerns, build trust and foster accountability.

Informing Policy through Research. USIP conducts research on governance and security to better advise Nigerian policymakers in their response to these challenges. [A 2020 public opinion survey found new linkages between COVID-19, instability and conflict](#). These survey findings informed policy discussions with senior U.S. and Nigerian policymakers, including Nigerian President Buhari and state governors. USIP also published research [mapping state peacebuilding institutions](#); [assessing election-related violence risks](#); and [outlining pathways to civilian-led governance](#) amid the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria.

Convening Stakeholders. USIP convenes government officials, partners and civic leaders at its U.S. headquarters and Nigeria country office for candid conversations that foster collaboration and inform policy and program priorities. USIP hosted discussions in 2020 with the Nigerian ministers of foreign affairs and humanitarian affairs and senior U.S. policymakers. Throughout the pandemic, USIP convened a series of virtual roundtables with Nigerian federal and state policymakers and key stakeholders to examine COVID-19's impact on security and governance. In 2019, USIP hosted eminent U.S. and Nigerian civic leaders and government officials for a roundtable to explore the state of Nigerian governance 20 years into its democratic transition.

Expanding the Institute's Field Work. In 2020, USIP officially established a country office in Abuja. This accomplishment allows the Institute to continue its impactful operations, broaden its regional scope and sustain its direct action for peace in Nigeria.