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Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue

Mediation for peace

Post-election assessment of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms in Nigeria

Final report

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List of Acronyms

ACN – The Action Congress of Nigeria
ACORD – Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
ADR – Alternative Dispute Resolution
AIG – Assistant Inspector General
AIT – African Independent Television
ANPP – All Nigeria Peoples Party
APC – The All Progressives Congress
APGA – The All Progressives Grand Alliance
CAN – Christian Association of Nigeria
CBCN – Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria
CBO – Community-based organisation
CDC – Community Development Committee
CSO – Civil society organisation
CDD – The Centre for Democracy and Development
CP – Commissioner of Police
CPC – Congress for Progressive Change
CPO – Community peace observer
DFID – The Department for International Development
DIG – Deputy Inspector General
DPA – Democratic Peoples' Alliance
DREP – Dialogue Reconciliation and Peace Centre
DSS – Department of State Services
EUEOM – European Union Election Observation Mission
FBO – Faith-based organisation
FENRAD – Foundation for Environmental Rights, Advocacy and Development
FRSC – Federal Road Safety Corps
HD – Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
HURIDAC – Human Rights Advancement, Development and Advocacy Centre
ICCES – Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security
IDP – Internally Displaced Person
IFI – Interfaith Forum International
IG – Inspector General
IPAC – Inter-Party Advisory Committee
IPCR – Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution
IRI – International Republican Institute
INEC – Independent National Electoral Commission
JDPC – Justice Development and Peace Commission
JNI – Jama'atu Nasril Islam
LACSOP – Lagos State Civil Society Partnership
LGA – Local Government Area
NASFAT – Nasrul-Lahi-Il Fathi Society of Nigeria
NEMA – National Emergency Management Agency
NGF – Nigerian Governors' Forum

NGO – Non-governmental organisation
NHRC – National Human Rights Commission to
NOA – National Orientation Agency
NPC – National Peace Committee
NSCDC – National Security and Civil Defence Corps
NSCIA – National Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs
NSA – National Security Adviser
NSRP – Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme
NTA – Nigerian Television Authority
NUJ – National Union of Journalists
NURTW – National Union of Road Transport Workers
OPC – Odua Peoples' Congress
OSIWA – Open Society Initiative for West Africa
PBCMC – Peace-building and Conflict Management Council
PDP - The People's Democratic Party
PFN – Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria
PIND – Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta
PPA – Progressive Peoples Alliance
PPPN – Plateau Peace Practitioners Network
PVC – Permanent Voters Card
RAC – Registration Area Centre
REC – Resident Electoral Commissioner
SCR – Smart Card Reader
SFCG – Search for Common Ground
SDN – Stakeholder Democracy Network
SISDEV – Support Initiative for Sustainable Development
SOKAPU – The Southern Kaduna People's Union
SSG – Secretary to the State Government
SSS – State Security Services
TVC – Temporary Voters Card
TMG – Transition Monitoring Group

Map of Nigeria



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INTRODUCTION

Background

This report sets out the findings of an assessment of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. Conducted by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre), it focuses particularly on political and inter-communal tensions before, during, and immediately after the polls.¹

The assessment:

- Describes formal and informal mechanisms set up at state and national level to help prevent and address disputes and violent conflicts in the context of the 2015 elections.
- Explains factors that influenced the establishment and management of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms in Nigeria.
- Evaluates the strengths and weaknesses, and advantages and disadvantages, of Nigeria's different ADR methods.
- More generally, identifies the opportunities and scope for using conflict resolution mechanisms to address some of the systemic and recurrent causes of dispute in Nigeria.

The assessment mapped out the issues and events that generated strong tensions ahead of the elections, the efforts undertaken to diffuse them nation-wide, as well those instances where no significant action was taken to mitigate the potential for disputes and violence. To this end, the researchers examined the various formal and informal mechanisms set up at the state and national levels, assessing the extent to which stakeholders were mobilized to reduce the likelihood for electoral violence. They considered the National Peace Committee and the Council of the Wise; faith-based initiatives; coordinated diplomatic interventions; the use of electoral observer groups, especially in high-risk areas; measures taken by security agencies to prevent or curb electoral violence; non-violence campaigns by civil society organisations; the role of the media; and interventions by community elders, traditional authorities, religious leaders, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and political parties.

Methodological and conceptual issues

Methodology

The assessment employed qualitative research methods, namely individual and group interviews with stakeholders involved in the electoral process at the federal and state level. The researchers relied on a standard set of questions to gather comparable data, but conducted semi-structured interviews to ensure that interviewees' answers were not pre-determined. They relied on snowballing sampling techniques to identify potential interviewees and triangulated the information collected to ensure that, as far as possible, the data and findings were reliable.

¹ The research was supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Australian High Commission in Nigeria.

The data used for this assessment is largely based on over 130 in-depth interviews conducted in seven states and at the federal level (see Annex I for a list of interviewees), and augmented with information from additional sources, including media coverage.

The findings of the *preliminary* draft assessment were reviewed, discussed and endorsed at a ‘validation’ workshop held in Abuja on 12th of October 2015 (see Annex II for an addendum report on the ‘validation’ workshop). The addendum report captured the general reflections and observations made by the participants in the workshop, whereas the omissions and factual errors detected by the attendees were corrected in the *final* version of the post-elections assessment.

Alternative dispute resolution: conceptual clarification

For the purposes of this assessment, ‘alternative dispute resolution’ (ADR) covers a broad spectrum of peace initiatives that includes arbitration, conciliation, dialogue facilitation, peace education, sensitisation campaigns, and mediation interventions undertaken outside formal legal processes, that prevent, respond to or transform the actions of individuals or groups involved in the electoral process before, during, and after the 2015 General Election.

Case study selection

The assessment begins by examining peace initiatives at federal level. It then reviews the situation in several states. Some of these recorded a high-level of electoral violence. Others were perceived to be potential flashpoints but in the end experienced little disturbance associated with the election. The states covered are: Kaduna (North West); Plateau (North Central); Borno (North East); Lagos (South West); Rivers and Akwa Ibom (South South); and Abia (South East).

Main themes of the report

Each chapter employs the same general structure:

- i. Background: political history and prevailing conflict issues.
- ii. Tensions before the elections.
- iii. Efforts to reduce tensions and the potential for violence.
- iv. Local perceptions of the Abuja Accord.
- v. The impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives.
- vi. Reducing violence: the way forward.

INITIATIVES AT FEDERAL LEVEL

Background

In the months beforehand, many observers in Abuja, the federal capital, predicted that the March and April 2015 elections could trigger a major crisis. Indicators of stress included longstanding tensions between the North and the South; threats of militant activity in the South South sub-region; a major insurgency in the North East (where Boko Haram had threatened to disrupt the “pagan practice” of elections); tensions over electoral management; and recurring clashes and incidents of intimidation. The public also feared there might be large-scale violence, given the multitude of security challenges, their politicization, and an apparently complete breakdown in trust and communication between the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC).

In the event, the elections were not without violence. According to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), election-related violence killed 58 people between December 2014 and February 2015. At least 50 people were also reported killed in nine of the country’s 36 states on election day and the day after, and many fights broke out between supporters of the major parties.

However, the determination of Nigerians to cast their votes peaceably, irrespective of delays and irregularities, and to respect the outcome of the elections, enabled the country to achieve a democratic handover and a historic transition. Concerted efforts by a range of national and international actors are also thought to have helped avert large-scale violence. Key interventions included relentless peace messaging at the political level and in communities; vigilant monitoring of the electoral process by local civil society groups and foreign observer missions; and high-level diplomatic visits by international actors. INEC introduced technical reforms that produced a more credible and more legitimate voting process. Last and very significantly, Goodluck Jonathan, the outgoing President, conceded defeat promptly – a decision that many believe almost singlehandedly prevented major violent protests in various parts of the country, including Northern Nigeria and his native Niger Delta.

Tensions before and during the elections

As the elections drew near, political rhetoric was fierce, at times vitriolic. Politicians had a tendency to mobilise voter support along ethnic lines, and to sometimes personalise their discourse in religious terms. Some interviewees said that the PDP ran a more aggressive (negative) national campaign than the APC, though this seemed less obvious at state level. At the same time, numerous civil society organisations were monitoring hate speech and condemning it strongly. Comments by the former Katsina Governor, for instance, triggered a wave of criticism across the nation and beyond.²

Campaigning took place in an environment of unease and uncertainty, swept by rumour. When the PDP government postponed the elections,³ officials said it was for security reasons (to give multinational forces more time to launch a concerted attack on Boko Haram), but many national

² Ibrahim Shema was shown in a video urging his supporters to counter any provocation by the opposition and to crush them like ‘cockroaches’.

³ The elections were scheduled for 14 February 2015, and postponed to 28 March.

stakeholders said the PDP, afraid of losing, wanted more time to improve its chances, or that it was a political manoeuvre to retain power. The former President, Goodluck Jonathan, reassured Nigerians that the elections would take place, adding that they were not worth the blood of any Nigerian. However, the PDP as a whole did not dispel public anxiety convincingly, and some rumours (speculations about a possible military takeover, for example) generated significant public debate and unease.

In addition, there was doubt that INEC was technically prepared. The use of permanent voter cards (PVCs) and smart card readers (SCRs) was widely discussed. Some Nigerians, including many PDP officials,⁴ strongly objected to biometric technology, because they believed it was unreliable and would slow the accreditation process. Several interest groups argued that INEC was violating the constitution by denying people with temporary voter cards the right to vote. Others endorsed the technology, on the ground that only card readers could guarantee a credible, transparent election. The rate at which PVCs were collected in the various states also raised concern. Some wondered, for example, how residents in besieged Borno State could collect more PVCs than the citizens of Lagos. The adoption of these and similar tools (such as a biometric register of voters, and an advanced fingerprint identification system) made the electoral process more difficult to manage, and more contentious, especially in light of concerns over the disenfranchisement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other voters who lacked PVCs.⁵

Though commonplace in Nigeria, defections of high-profile politicians from one party to another also increased tensions. The mass defection of five PDP state governors, and 49 members of the House of Representatives, left the PDP without a majority in the House of Representatives for the first time since 1999.⁶ The departure of Rotimi Amaechi, the former Governor of Rivers State, and Rabiu Kwankwaso, the former Governor of Kano State, dealt a significant blow to the Jonathan administration, because both states were key PDP strongholds. They simultaneously deprived the PDP of strategic financial resources and enriched the campaign of Goodluck Jonathan's main opponent in the Presidential election, General Muhammadu Buhari. In the same period, the PDP recruited several prominent APC politicians and allegedly took steps to impeach several APC governors.

As the electoral campaign heated up, the risk of clashes in the Niger Delta seemed to increase. Ex-militants threatened to take up arms again if Goodluck Jonathan did not win. One stated that, when fighters returned to the creeks, Nigeria's troubles in the north would be 'child's play'. Nor were militants the only ones who felt 'their' man was entitled to another elected term. Many communities in the Delta felt perennially excluded and simultaneously saddled with the impact of major environmental degradation. Violence in the region would inevitably have put at risk or displaced many local and non-local Nigerians.

The Boko Haram insurgency, and its instrumentalisation by the political class, was another major concern. Many feared that Boko Haram would carry out its threat to stage attacks on polling stations, while politicians seemed more interested in discrediting each other than tackling the insurgency. Some of Jonathan's supporters claimed that the group was essentially a ploy to make

⁴ Some representatives from the All Progressives Grand Alliance and the Labour Party also opposed the card reader.

⁵ INEC came under immense pressure on several counts: to ensure that IDPs in the north-east could exercise their right to vote; to fulfil its electoral responsibilities despite financial constraints; and to remove its Chairman. It was also criticised for making preparations for the elections very late in the day.

⁶ See: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/in-political-earthquake-5-pdp-govs-defect-to-apc/165332/>.

Nigeria ungovernable under his leadership; some in the APC declared that Jonathan was unable to defeat the militants and indifferent to the plight of people in the north. In the words of a former diplomat, Boko Haram was ‘used as a political football by politicians’ to sow mistrust and exploit ethno-religious differences.

Finally, once the votes were cast and counting began, fear of deliberate political interference grew inside and outside the country. Some groups warned that several northern states were a ‘powder keg’ that could ‘catch fire’ if electoral fraud was exposed. In Rivers, some 2,000 women were tear-gassed when they tried to march on the INEC office in Port Harcourt to protest against suspected voting irregularities. During the count, allegations of misconduct emerged in several states, including Lagos, where the PDP accused INEC of colluding with the APC, and Imo, where the APC Governor denounced the military for obstruction. In Abuja, while the votes were being tabulated, the former Niger Delta minister Godsdan Orubebe seized the microphone and staged a brief but very public sit-in. Accusing Professor Attahiru Muhammadu Jega, INEC’s Chairman, of being ‘partisan’ and ‘selective’, he called for the announcement of the election result to be suspended on the grounds that Jega had refused to investigate PDP complaints in the northern states of Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Jigawa, but had launched a probe into APC claims of irregularities in Rivers. At the time, rumours were circulating that the Chairman’s security detail had been withdrawn.⁷

In fact, the tabulation and announcement process continued without further derailment. After the elections, some electoral experts drew attention to the findings of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG): noting that the votes in five states did not tally, they argued that INEC managed to step round a political landmine by accepting technical imperfections in some states to obtain stability across the nation. If this was the strategy, it added another layer of tension within INEC but arguably safeguarded the overall electoral process without endangering its credibility.

Efforts to reduce tensions and potential for violence

Ad-hoc high-level panels

As the elections neared, several groups and organisations launched initiatives and activities. One of the most visible was the Abuja Accord, a peace pledge that morally committed the presidential candidates to peaceful elections. The pledge was signed during a ‘sensitisation’ workshop organised by the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Inter-Party Affairs, and was facilitated by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and former Commonwealth Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku. It led to the creation of the National Peace Committee (NPC), an ad hoc body of eminent Nigerians who came together, under the chairmanship of Abdulsalami Abubakar, to monitor compliance with the accord, to advise the Government and INEC on resolving disputes arising from non-compliance with the accord, and to mediate post-electoral disputes and crises.⁸

In the run-up to the elections, the NPC provided a forum for dialogue and confidence-building between the main political parties and the presidential contestants. A forum was needed: the Chairmen of both the PDP and APC admitted that existing channels of communication and interaction were inadequate. The NPC went to great lengths to ease concerns in the two political

⁷ It seems that in fact the police detail in question continued to offer protection to the INEC Chair.

⁸ Many organisations and agencies added their support to the efforts of the NPC, including the Kukah Centre, the HD Centre, UNDP, DFID, the Swiss and Australian missions in Abuja, the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Inter-Party Affairs and the Kofi Annan Foundation.

camps and to downplay rumours (that an interim government would be formed, that the security forces and electoral tribunals were partisan, on the tenure of the INEC Chairman, on the effects of permanent voter cards, etc.). It also assuaged fears of lengthy and possibly biased judicial appeals by offering to mediate (with technical support from the HD Centre) if serious post-electoral disputes occurred.

In its encounters with the political principals, the NPC denounced some of the parties' negative campaign tactics that focused on 'personality' rather than policies, and called on political leaders to instruct their parties to refrain from using divisive, defamatory or inciting language.⁹ In interviews with the media, the PDP Chairman, Alhaji Mu'azu, described the NPC as a 'watchdog for peaceful and credible elections'. Responding to their concerns, he acknowledged faults in the PDP's record and reassured the NPC that he would encourage party members to act correctly, and would investigate misdemeanours. The APC's National Chairman, John Oyegun, praised the NPC in similar terms, describing it as the 'most influential body at the most critical time', and he too undertook to control the excesses of APC campaigners and advocate non-violence among its supporters.

The NPC also convened business leaders, women, religious, traditional leaders, youth leaders, civil society organisations, media proprietors, journalists and representatives of diplomatic and observer missions. These outreach efforts made sure that the electoral process was both monitored closely and discussed. It offered a national platform for exchanging opinions, raising concerns and increasing transparency. Finally, through its Secretariat (the Kukah Centre, supported by the HD Centre), the NPC liaised with key international delegations and observer missions, encouraging them to convey similar messages to the candidates and their parties, notably on electoral fraud and peaceful acceptance of the election result.

The Council of the Wise added its weight to calls for a peaceful election. Coordinated by the Savannah Centre and supported by the MacArthur Foundation, the Council drew its membership from across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, and included respected diplomats, religious leaders, professors, and senior members of the judiciary. Council members travelled around the nation, bringing together political leaders and other stakeholders at state level, denouncing hate speech and preaching peace. They launched media campaigns, released adverts and jingles, and urged the media to report professionally and fairly.

Civil society organisations and think-tanks

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), amongst several others, were also active. CDD focused most of its efforts in the northern part of the country (Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa). It hosted political debates that informed Nigerians about the parties' manifestos and how parties planned to govern, campaigned on the radio for peaceful elections, and facilitated communication between journalists and INEC during polling and the count.

IRI organised roundtables with the Centre for International Private Enterprises (CIPE) in an attempt to bridge the gap between business coalitions and party candidates. It collaborated with CDD on the National Political Party Discussion Series, and with the Office of the Special

⁹ PDP leaders included the National Chairman, the Deputy National Chairman, the National Secretary, the National Legal Advisor, the National Youth Leader, the Deputy Director General of the Presidential Campaign, the National Auditor; APC leaders included the National Chairman, the Deputy National Chairman, the National Secretary, the Presidential Campaign Director of Mobilisation, and the Deputy Director General of Operations.

Adviser to the President on Inter-Party Affairs on a series of sensitisation workshops held around the country (in Ondo, Anambra, Ekiti, and Osun). It also hosted several trainings on communication strategies and party conventions, in which representatives from the PDP, the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), the APC, the Labour Party and international experts participated.

The actions of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) were based on several assumptions: that the political class was not accountable to the public at large; that INEC could not run the elections alone and the citizens needed to protect their votes; and that the best way to prevent violence was to hold credible elections. OSIWA's interventions, therefore, sought to promote citizen awareness of the electoral process, reign in the excesses of politicians and promote accountability. OSIWA's civil education campaign included mass media peace messaging (via internet, cinema, radio, TV) which targeted the middle class in various areas of the country. To this end, it collaborated with INEC's Citizen Contact Centre and the youth-led coalition 'Enough is Enough' on the 'Register, Select, Vote, Protect' (RSVP) campaign. OSIWA also supported efforts by the National Human Rights Commission to document cases of violence and hate speech; the work of religious leaders in the north¹⁰ who facilitated interfaith dialogue between communities; and the CLEEN Foundation's analyses of the preparedness of the security agencies in the run up to the elections. Finally, OSIWA rallied international action to make political parties and leaders accountable for their conduct during the elections.

The MacArthur Foundation supported the efforts of the Council of the Wise, the Centre for Information Technology and Development and a range of other NGOs that observed the election, promoted civic education, and established informal channels of communication. Many of the problems that occurred before the poll were due to misinformation and rumour. The MacArthur Foundation sought to address this by keeping lines of communication open between key electoral actors. It liaised closely with the Governor of Kano State, for instance, to manage the announcement of the election's postponement, which coincided with the coronation of the Emir of Kano. The event was attended by many dignitaries, including the APC's presidential candidate at the time, the former Head of State Yakubu Gowon, the Sultan of Sokoto Sa'ad Abubakar, and several Governors. To help prevent tensions from escalating, the MacArthur Foundation acted as an intermediary, dispelling rumours and conveying factual information to targeted stakeholders.

The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), an initiative funded by DFID, was one of the programmes that supported communities to manage conflicts during the electoral cycle (and beyond). Through the 'Justice for All' programme, NSRP promoted accountability at community level and assisted traditional leaders to mediate disputes before they became violent. It also aided civil society organisations with election risk analysis and scenario planning. NSRP helped set up an expert group to triangulate data, analyse findings and share recommendations with key electoral stakeholders. The CLEEN Foundation, for example, channelled regular updates to the national police force, enabling it to integrate perspectives from different stakeholders into their strategies and responses. Information was also shared on a regular basis with INEC, for incorporation into the electoral risk management tool.

The Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), a think-tank under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also promoted peaceful elections. Supported by UNDP, it organised an interfaith dialogue in Northern Nigeria in Kaduna, to bridge the gap between Christians and Muslims on issues of peace and security in the state. It further mobilised stakeholders from eight states of the federation, including Edo, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Ogun, Oyo, Kwara and Lagos,

¹⁰ Notably in Sokoto, Zamfara, Yobe, and Katsina.

(traditional authorities, security agencies, religious leaders, media, youth groups, road transport workers, political parties, INEC officials) to identify threats to peaceful elections and proffer solutions that could sustain peace among individuals, communities and supporters of political groupings. Finally, the Institute carried out a Review of the National Peace Policy and hosted the screening of *Selma*, a movie meant to sensitize citizens with regard to the value of elections and the benefits of ensuring peaceful polls.

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room gave essential support to many of the initiatives described above. Supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and OSIWA, it shared election-related information, monitored events across the country, supplied updates in real time to electoral stakeholders, and provided a forum for numerous official and non-government actors. Throughout the election, it promoted transparency and accountability by helping to coordinate civil society advocacy.

Electoral security

The CLEEN Foundation ran three major programmes: it ran threat assessments in all Nigeria's geopolitical zones, conducted an election viability poll, and coordinated a network of NGOs that monitored the conduct of security personnel during the elections. The findings of the assessments and the poll were shared with INEC, the security agencies, and civil society organisations. In addition, the CLEEN Foundation continued to train the security forces, starting at the rank of Inspector General (IG), Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Assistant Inspector General (AIG), and Commissioner of Police (CP) and gradually reaching down to lower ranks. During the elections, it established call centres across the country, in collaboration with a special unit of the police, to oversee the conduct of police officers in the field; and exchanged information with INEC's call centres, the National Security Adviser (NSA), and the NHRC, on cases of electoral fraud and violence, and action to remedy them.

The security agencies worked to prevent and mitigate electoral violence. Coordination took place through the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES).¹¹ The Assistant Inspector Generals, further facilitated the signing of peace pledges at state level. Overall, despite public apprehension before the elections and some notable exceptions in the South-East, the security agencies respected the rule of law and INEC's guidelines.

International support and diplomacy

Efforts by national actors were complemented by high-level diplomatic visits and peace messaging from abroad. Many international leaders and organisations registered their concerns, called for peaceful elections, and cautioned politicians to conduct themselves peacefully. Private and public interventions were made by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, former President of Ghana John Kufuor, U.S. President Barack Obama, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron, U.K. Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the African Union, ECOWAS, and the European Union. Interviewees suggested that backchannel diplomacy by US and UK officials during the collation and tabulation process played an important role.

Media coverage and electoral awareness

Traditional and social media influenced public awareness both positively and negatively. Positively, they made it possible to educate voters, encourage participation in the electoral

¹¹ INEC established the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES), with an eye to improving the management of electoral security in an integrated manner.

process, and advocate peaceful acceptance of the result. Grassroots peace campaigns communicated with both victims and perpetrators of violence on a large scale: the ‘Vote not fight’ campaign alone was estimated to have reached 62 million Nigerians. On the eve of the presidential elections, in an unprecedented Media Peace Day, every radio station in the country contributed air time for peace messaging. The use of Twitter, Facebook and Whatsapp also increased the credibility of the poll, by enabling election information to flow freely between citizens across the country.

Negatively, most interviewees said that media reports were often biased (especially sources that were State-owned or affiliated to political parties). The media were widely thought to have spread slurs on behalf of political interests, and comments that incited ethnic tension. Regulators fined broadcasting organisations that contravened the National Union of Journalists’ (NUJ) Code of Conduct, but some interviewees argued that the penalties incurred were ultimately covered by the political sponsors (added in advance to the invoice).

The impact of conflict prevention initiatives

A large number of bodies became involved as the elections approached. Interviewees had different views of their value and effectiveness. Some praised the cumulative impact of conflict prevention efforts, and INEC’s ability to make use of technology. They felt these initiatives were mutually reinforcing and helped the public to manage the election: they instilled confidence in the electoral process, encouraged citizens to support democratic practices, and reassured voters that they had a genuine choice at the polls that could not be stolen from them. Overall, interviewees felt that the effort did have a positive effect, because there was relatively little violence, the president honourably conceded defeat, and the transition unfolded smoothly.

Others were less ready to attribute the relative lack of violence to pre-electoral interventions. For them, the most important aspect was the determination of Nigerian citizens to exercise their mandate peaceably and to resist vote-rigging. Civil society may have helped to create an environment conducive to non-violence, but ultimately Nigerians decided that the elections were a turning point and peacefully seized the opportunity for change.

A third group argued that the electoral process had been flawed and that what ‘saved the day’ was the fact that the vote reflected the will of the people. Had Jonathan been declared the winner, many doubted that the opposition would have accepted the result. In the north, countless Buhari supporters believed they had already won and, according to interviewees, no amount of peace messaging would have quelled their thirst for justice. Other issues would have also come to the fore, adding to tension: the fact that voting had not taken place normally in some polling stations, the disenfranchisement of IDPs, the withdrawal of card readers midway through polling, etc.

Notwithstanding these reservations, the majority of interviewees felt that conflict prevention efforts did have positive effects and helped the elections to occur in relative calm. Some pointed out that the National Peace Committee (NPC) had made clear to the political class that Nigerians were watching their excesses and would not allow their rhetoric to push the nation to the brink. By persuading the main presidential candidates to publicly reaffirm their commitment to the Abuja Peace Accord, and to call on their supporters to refrain from violence, the NPC strengthened public confidence ahead of the polls. Nigerians were reminded that President Goodluck and Gen. Buhari were political rivals, not enemies, and that the country needed to stand united during and after the electoral process. This represented a significant departure from the approach Gen. Buhari had adopted in 2011, when some felt he did not adequately speak out

against violence. As one interviewee said, it would have been difficult for the main presidential candidates to ‘go on a rampage after defeat’, having made these commitments.

The wide-ranging consultations that the NPC conducted also made Nigerian stakeholders more prepared to support peaceful elections. The NPC met with the Service Chiefs, the National Security Adviser, the Inspector General of Police, the Director of State Services, and the Chairman of INEC, assessed their preparedness, and urged them to address remaining areas of concern (notably the distribution of PVCs). Although the committee’s authority was purely moral, it represented respected persons and bodies from across the country, and this credibility enabled it to call on the security agencies to act impartially in the interest of the public.

At the same time, many interviewees noted that the NPC emerged at a fairly late stage. When it was created, campaigning had already started and much harmful rhetoric had already made its way into public discourse. Describing the NPC as ‘a last-minute fire-fighting intervention’, one interviewee remarked that it appears to be ‘part of the Nigerian DNA, that you have to get to the brink, for people to pull their weight’. Another insider familiar with the NPC process explained that it was ‘based on the convening power of some who decided at the last hour to take the bull by the horns’. This ruled out a quiet, well-considered planning process to agree on what the NPC stood for, what it would do, and how it would operate. The NPC could have perhaps benefited from more advance planning and a more professional management system. Arguably, its effectiveness was also hampered, to a certain degree, by institutional rivalries and donor politics. Several organisations and individuals appear to have jostled for recognition, visibility and leadership, creating confusion over financial responsibilities and limiting the NPC’s operational capacity.

Nevertheless, despite some real and perceived weaknesses, the NPC sent a strong message in support of peace, restraint and stability that reverberated across the country. On the eve of the elections, the now famous handshake and embrace of the presidential candidates made headlines. To the average voter, the peace pledge meant that the two leaders might not push the nation over the edge. For activists, it was a tool for holding politicians to account. In addition, the NPC provided a rallying point for the international community: external actors could align their actions with an influential national platform, whose members had made it clear that they were ready to deal with post-election disputes.

Importantly, peace messaging reached well beyond the political elites. Civil society organisations targeted specific local audiences via stakeholders that had popular appeal. Constituencies were mobilised for peace by a wide range of professional groups, including artisans, businessmen, teachers, traders, transporters, landlord and tenant associations, student and youth unions, vigilante groups, etc. These initiatives helped change the electoral narrative and dynamic. They gave people a sense of ownership: preventing violence was a responsibility of the political elites and community leaders, but also of the electorate, irrespective of occupation, gender, or political affiliation.

Some interviewees also considered that efforts to engage with political parties were helpful. Public debates challenged the contestants to explain their programmes and agendas, and discuss governance issues concretely. Broadcast weekly, live, from December until the presidential elections, these regular conversations helped the electorate to make informed choices at the polls, and promoted a culture of constructive political debate in an environment otherwise flooded with inflammatory comment.

Two other actors were key to preventing violence. Though INEC’s technical preparedness was often questioned, the electoral reforms it introduced under the former Chair, Professor Attahiru Jega, put candidates on a more equal footing and reduced electoral fraud. The voter registration

process (started in 2010) reportedly eliminated 4 million fake and multiple registrations. Separate procedures were introduced for accreditation and for voting, to ensure that ballots could only be cast once. Politicians were given less lead time to interfere with the electoral process after INEC delayed announcing its the identity of its returning officers. Finally, notwithstanding all the criticism, the PVCs and card readers reduced the potential for fraud, including ‘community voting’.¹²

Indeed, PVCs became an emblem for many Nigerians, heralding a new era in which they had the power to reject electoral impunity and bad governance. As Niyi Osundare (poet and media columnist) highlighted in an opinion piece, their sense of empowerment was exemplified by two female voters who, during the presidential polls, held their cards up to the cameras and apparently said something to the effect: ‘You see this card? It is what we shall use to sweep out this government of thieves. If the coming government is not better, we shall use it to sweep them away too’.¹³ Likewise, compared to the 2011 general elections, there was a marked improvement in the performance of security officials. CLEEN Foundation observers reported that 89 per cent of the polling units they visited were orderly. Though irregularities and pockets of violence could be found across the country, in most cases adequate measures had been put in place to ensure safety and protect the integrity of the electoral process.

¹² In 2011, for example, Goodluck Jonathan was reported to have won 95 per cent of the votes cast in Akwa Ibom, 99 per cent in Anambra, and 99.6 per cent in Bayelsa. Electoral experts attributed such results partly to ‘community voting’, under which local leaders thumb-printed the ballots of chosen candidates on behalf of their communities. In the 2015 elections, it was impossible to ‘produce’ votes on behalf of all *registered* voters, because only the ballots cast by *accredited* voters were valid.

¹³ At: <http://blogs.premiumtimesng.com/?p=167773>.

KADUNA STATE

Overview: political history and prevailing conflict issues

To a large extent, the politics of Kaduna State mirror the politics of the country. The former administrative capital of the Northern region is divided along ethnic and religious lines, and its diversity contributes to a fierce competition for power. In the northern part of the state, the population is largely Hausa-Fulani and Muslim, while the southern half is home to some thirty ethnic groups who are predominantly Christian. Relations between northerners and southerners in the state have long been tense, and community leaders have often traded accusations of marginalisation and discrimination. As is the case in the Middle Belt, the struggle for political, cultural, and religious ‘ownership’ has fuelled inter-communal conflict.

As in other parts of Nigeria, Kaduna’s communal tensions have periodically flared up in deadly sectarian violence. Since 1987, disputes and violent attacks have claimed thousands of lives. In February and May 2000, for example, at least 2,000 people were killed after Christian protests erupted over a proposal to adopt Sharia law. Mass casualties and vast destruction of property also occurred after the disputed 2011 elections, when rioting quickly acquired a sectarian and ethnic dimension. A state commission of inquiry subsequently found that 815 people had been killed. Attacks have continued since then, and the human cost of conflict has continued to rise. Alongside fears of religious domination, tensions are generated by contested land rights and the allocation of resources between pastoralists and farmers. It has proved difficult to prosecute in court individuals who participated in mass violence, and the communities remain, to a large extent, polarised, segregated and aggrieved. Further complicating the situation, the creation of Local Governments, Senatorial Zones and Districts intensified struggles for power and associated ethnic rivalries and affinities.

Between 1999 and 2011, PDP supremacy at local and state level was essentially unchallenged. In 2011, the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) was a strong contender, though the PDP ultimately won all but one of the state’s 23 local government councils. Before the 2015 elections, 21 political parties (many of which were alleged to exist only on paper) joined the PDP in a purported effort to consolidate democracy in Kaduna. In parallel, four political groups (the ANPP, CPC, ACN, and APGA¹⁴) merged in a large opposition platform under the APC in 2013. The latter enjoyed more support in northern and central zone, while the PDP was strong in southern Kaduna. In the event, APC candidates won by a significant margin in both the presidential and gubernatorial election. In the state assembly, the APC won 27 of 34 available seats.

Tensions before the elections

Given Kaduna’s recurrent crises, voters in the state viewed the elections with apprehension. Many feared the elections could be a catalyst for a new wave of violence and the CLEEN Foundation included Kaduna among the 15 states in which electoral violence was most likely to occur in the absence of adequate preventive measures. Tensions were stoked both by politicians

¹⁴ Respectively, the All Nigeria Peoples Party, the Congress for Progressive Change, the Action Congress of Nigeria, and the All Progressives Grand Alliance.

and by some religious leaders who had allegedly sided with them. PDP and APC propaganda denounced the other party's motives and plans, and both parties allegedly resorted to intimidation, including through the police and military. Interviewees said that candidates in Kaduna had insinuated that they 'either won the elections, or heads would roll'. Youth supporters openly threatened each other, vowing to 'protect' their votes at all costs.

The gubernatorial primaries generated particular resentment, especially in the APC. While the PDP had experience of settling intra-party differences and imposing internal discipline, the APC had recently been created by merger: its foundations were tenuous and it was less experienced at managing dissent. Lacking mechanisms that could handle disputes effectively and discreetly, it prepared for the polls, pushing to the side internal problems that subsequently resurfaced in the National Assembly.

These political squabbles unfolded in the context of a long-standing quest for supremacy between southern and northern Kaduna. Since its creation in 1976, the state had been governed by a succession of Muslim leaders. In 2010, the sitting Governor, Namadi Sambo, joined Goodluck Jonathan in the presidential race, enabling a Christian leader from the south, Patrick Yakowa, to take over. However, a year later Yakowa died in a helicopter crash and was succeeded by Ramalan Yero, a Muslim from northern Kaduna – altering the balance of power again. Most northerners wanted to retain the state's top office. In their eyes, politics was a 'game of numbers': elections should not be determined by zoning considerations but issues. By contrast, minority ethnic groups in southern Kaduna hoped to be led by a politician from their zone, who would provide them with more security and community development.

Ominously, religious sensibilities were also being manipulated. Constituencies in southern Kaduna were led to believe that a vote for Goodluck Jonathan was a vote for Christianity, while Muslims were encouraged to rally behind Muhammadu Buhari. In the gubernatorial contest, similar attempts were made to take political advantage of religion. Both candidates were Muslim, but some campaigners apparently claimed that the former governor Mukhtar Ramalan Yero (PDP) was a 'better Muslim' than Malam Nasir El-Rufai (APC). Leaflets were reportedly distributed in mosques warning against voting for the El-Rufai. Likewise, according to interviewees, some Christian pastors told their congregations that El-Rufai would start demolishing churches if elected. Allegedly, Dr Ahmad Abubakar Mahmud Gumi also expressed his support for the former Governor, Yero, whipping up religious resentment.

As the elections drew nearer, the campaigns degenerated, and both parties made provocative statements in inflammatory language. After an attack on his convoy, the former Governor allegedly encouraged his followers to retaliate. Party offices, billboards and campaign vehicles were destroyed, increasing the public's concern that political provocateurs on both sides would resort to extreme measures. Perceived impunity for electoral offences, along with continued violence in the countryside (cattle rustling and reprisals) left communities feeling that Kaduna was on the verge of conflict.

Fear of possible attacks, and of the scale of the crisis, compelled many to relocate their families. Southerners moved their families to the south of the country, while Muslims and Christians relocated to areas of the state that are religiously homogeneous. This movement was reportedly accompanied by stockpiling of weapons, ammunition, food, kerosene and recharge cards. Business almost ground to a halt because traders, afraid of violence and looting after the elections, refused to restock their warehouses.

Efforts to mitigate tensions and reduce the potential for violence

With 2011 still fresh in people's minds, and new threats on the horizon, a range of actors mobilised to prevent electoral violence. Religious leaders, traditional rulers, civil society groups, security agencies, INEC, and government institutions urged Nigerians to exercise their democratic rights and civic duties peacefully. Their activities focused on sensitisation campaigns, peace advocacy, inter-faith dialogue, ADR and voter education.

Religious figures seem to have played a more constructive role in the 2015 elections, though allegations were also made that some religious leaders promoted political agendas. A number of Christian and Muslim clerics worked to reduce tensions and preach peace, especially among the impoverished youths. Imams and pastors addressed their congregations in sermons and on radio and TV, encouraged their followers to register, collect their PVCs, cast their vote peacefully, and remain vigilant. Some Christian pastors interviewed for this study claimed to have encouraged their congregations not to respond to provocations and to make 'sacrifices' for the sake of peace.

Several inter-faith initiatives sought to mitigate ethno-religious conflict. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) brought Muslim and Christian clergy together at a meeting chaired by the Sultan of Sokoto, while women's groups in Kaduna promoted trust and dialogue between the two faiths at grassroots level. Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, co-directors of the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Mediation Centre, also encouraged communities to remain peaceful through the election.

Traditional rulers drew mixed reviews. According to some interviewees, ward, village, and district heads, as well as the chiefs and emirs, regularly convened meetings with their subjects to remember the loss of life and destruction of property that occurred in previous elections. They appealed for calm and peace at open rallies and football matches between Christian and Muslim youth teams. However, several interviewees also indicated that traditional rulers had openly supported certain candidates. The Emir of Zazzau (Zaria), for example, was stoned by his own subjects for his alleged partisan behaviour and collusion with the outgoing state government. Other leaders were rumoured to have been paid by the PDP. They attended meetings convened by the former Governor, calling for religious harmony and peaceful coexistence, but having little credibility on the ground to translate their words into actions.

The security agencies also made efforts to avert electoral violence in Kaduna. The Commissioner of Police asked candidates and party leaders to dialogue, calm their rhetoric, and prohibit their supporters from removing other parties' campaign materials. At the Commissioner's request, the gubernatorial candidates signed a peace pact similar to the Abuja Accord. The police public relations committee also cooperated with a range of actors across the state, including community leaders, youth and vigilante leaders, civil society representatives, clerics, and the road transport union. It urged them to tell their members and the wider public to shun acts of violence and thuggery. The Army, Navy, Air Force, police and paramilitary forces patrolled Kaduna in vans and armoured personnel carriers to demonstrate their readiness to keep order. According to interviewees, this show of force helped to deter troublemakers during and after the poll.

Interviewees reported that state authorities also made some attempts to promote peace and religious harmony. In 2012, the late Governor Ibrahim Yakowa set up a 70-man peace and reconciliation committee to identify lasting solutions to the problems that have caused Kaduna's recurrent crises. The committee travelled across the state, holding public hearings with communities, and issued a report. Apparently, after Yakowa's death, the succeeding administration showed little interest and the report's recommendations were not implemented. Instead, the Yero administration collaborated with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN),

through the Bureau for Religious Affairs, on a one-day youth sensitisation and awareness conference.

Separately, the State Government facilitated a quarterly peace initiative that brought Christian and Muslim clerics together. At these meetings, the authorities tried to impress on those in attendance that killing fellow Nigerians of a different denomination, or destroying places of worship, eradicated neither their fear nor their perceived enemy. In meetings with other actors, the authorities emphasized that community leaders would be held accountable if they allowed violence to occur in their areas.

Women's and youth groups also advocated for peace and ran enlightenment campaigns. They organised town-hall meetings with their communities, highlighted the role of citizens in ensuring peaceful, free and fair elections, and contacted women, traditional rulers and clerics to disseminate information on the PVCs. In 2014-2015, the Gender Awareness Trust established electoral mandate protection teams in the senatorial districts, trained civil society representatives from the Local Government Areas, distributed toolkits, accredited monitors with INEC, and reported from Kaduna to the Women's Situation Room in Abuja. They also spread a message of peace through bulk SMS text messages, and jingles aired on the radio.

Youth leaders too were fearful that the elections would cause bloodshed. They organised youth forums and invited party leaders and contestants in the state elections as guest speakers. They engaged with the youth wings of the major political parties to discuss how they might jointly prevent violence. Members of the Kaduna Youth Council called on politicians to calm their followers, made similar appeals to religious figures, and issued appeals for calm on radio and TV. After Niger Delta militants issued threats, the Northern Youth Council of Nigeria and the Ijaw Youth Council Worldwide came together in Kaduna and signed a peace pact. They agreed to avoid inflammatory comments and, along with other groups such as Ohaneze Youth Wing, Miyetti Allah, Eggon Youth Movement, and the Idoma and Hausa Elite Clubs, they endorsed the formation of a common front for a peaceful post-election Nigeria.

Across the state, civil society organisations undertook grassroots political education and awareness-raising campaigns. SOKAPU,¹⁵ for example, convened community leaders, civil associations, election candidates, and chairmen of political parties, in a meeting to discuss the provisions of the Public Order Act. It advised political actors to accept the election result, warning them that communities would blacklist those who indulged in political thuggery and hate speech. In town hall meetings, SOKAPU also advised communities to vote on the basis of candidates' credentials and performance. It disseminated peace messages using town criers as well as print and electronic media.

Most of the active NGOs in Kaduna acted as observers during the elections, and monitored political developments beforehand. A number pressed politicians to calm their rhetoric and petitioned the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission to react critically to hate speech. A smaller number tried actively to reduce tensions. The Interfaith Mediation Centre trained community peace observers (CPOs) to monitor conflict indicators and help prevent disputes from becoming violent. During the elections, when anxiety mounted over the late arrival of electoral materials and INEC officers, CPOs reduced voter tension by providing vehicles, helping to distribute people and materials, and enabling accreditation to start. The Centre also assisted in another incident related to the State House of Assembly elections. A PDP candidate who had been disqualified from standing by a court ruling campaigned in spite of the injunction, and won; when INEC refused to certify her victory, citizens in the constituency (Sanga Local Government

¹⁵ The Southern Kaduna People's Union.

Area) protested that they would resist attempts to deny them representation. The Centre swung into action, liaising with the military to deploy soldiers on the ground, and with INEC to make an official statement. These actions reduced the threat of violence while the dispute was taken to the Kaduna High Court. After the elections, Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye continued to work with religious leaders across the state, training and supporting them to resolve disputes by means of dialogue and restorative justice.

Many of the above actions were supported by international donor agencies. In addition to supporting civil society and inter-faith initiatives, donor agencies organised a two-day workshop to train journalists on best practices in election reporting. The workshop sensitised journalists to ethical principles, improved their capacity to monitor effectively, and strengthened reporting that deliberately entrenched democratic values and avoided inflaming passions. Interviewees and other actors in Kaduna nevertheless expressed concern about political bias in the state media, noting that private broadcasters tended to be more balanced.

Finally, local and international monitoring groups helped to deter and detect irregularities, contributing to the integrity of the electoral process and enhancing public confidence. In addition to numerous local NGOs, observers included DFID, All Nigerian Nationals in Diaspora, the Australian High Commission, the European Union (EU), the United States, Amarante, the African Union (AU), and IRI.

Local perceptions of the Abuja Accord

Interviewees had mixed views of the impact of the National Peace Committee and its interventions at federal level, especially as they related to the local level peacemaking efforts. Some believed the Abuja Accord helped keep politicians in check across the federation. In Kaduna, people referred to the Accord – and its commitments – frequently, and the text was used by local campaigns for peace. APC offices apparently alerted their constituencies to the accord. As noted, the peace pledge was replicated in Kaduna State.

Other interviewees pointed out that candidates and their supporters continued to intimidate and threaten each other after the Abuja pledge had been signed. Days after the signing, the outgoing Governor of Kaduna was allegedly caught on tape telling his supporters to damage the APC if his team was ever attacked while campaigning. He was also said to have warned his opponent not to enter Kaduna state, threatening to destroy his house or place him under house arrest. Interviewees said that the Governor later apologised for these remarks, claiming he had been misunderstood. Some interviewees also recalled the disruption caused by Godsday Orubebe, a PDP official, when INEC announced the election result: they felt his actions revealed political attitudes more clearly than the Abuja Accord and indicated the potential for violence. People in Kaduna had reportedly been ready for battle if their votes had been disregarded.

The impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives

By and large, interviewees in Kaduna felt that there had been a concerted effort to ensure peace which, to an extent, was falling on deaf ears. Communities did not want violence, but many were prepared to ‘defend’ their vote. Had Muhammadu Buhari lost, spontaneous, mass violence would have occurred in Kaduna and, according to reports, in most northern states. The large turnout at APC rallies and Buhari’s massive following in the north left many convinced of his victory and likely to dismiss a different outcome as fraudulent. According to most interviewees,

by conceding defeat promptly, Goodluck Jonathan single-handedly ensured that northerners had no reason to fight. At the same time, a number of interviewees considered that conflict prevention initiatives made a positive contribution in Kaduna. People were constantly reminded of their power to vote, that card readers would protect against rigging, that no economic incentive was as precious as peace, that violence would benefit no-one. Despite the political wrangling, peace messaging helped to create an atmosphere that was conducive to violence-free elections.

Other interviewees noted that longer-term reconciliation efforts had also laid the groundwork for peaceful elections in Kaduna, and contributed to a more holistic approach to conflict prevention. Religious leaders, for example, pointed out that Islamic and Christian institutions in Kaduna regularly used alternative dispute resolution techniques. Clerics used theological studies and reflection to encourage their followers to listen to one another and dialogue. The promotion of forgiveness, reconciliation and coexistence was a major component of their work.

Most interlocutors also acknowledged the limits of existing conflict prevention and ADR approaches. Some clerics were known to call for peaceful elections while encouraging their congregations to vote for the most 'credible' candidate – an approach that observers sometimes interpreted as canvassing for contestants of the same faith. The state government's involvement posed different risks of bias and conflict of interest. Peace campaigners felt the government should do more to support ADR in communities by offering financial assistance and enforcing decisions, but worried that they would be obliged to follow the government's agenda if they accepted its money. They cited the experience of traditional rulers, whose credibility had been eroded by perceived collusion with the government.

Reducing violence: the way forward

Target the grassroots. Looking forward, interviewees underlined the importance of community-based approaches. There is a perception in Kaduna, and perhaps beyond, that politicians are part of the problem and that grassroots communities are the key to avoiding armed violence. According to local stakeholders, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms should rely on individuals who have a lot of influence in their constituencies, not those who operate under the banner of religious and traditional authority, but lack followers. ADR initiatives should also target less privileged people in rural areas, rather than city elites. They reasoned that armed violence is experienced most often and most directly by communities in the countryside. Civil society organisations that have programmes in rural areas should therefore be frontline partners in ADR programming.

Assist victims, punish perpetrators. Interviewees emphasized that assistance to victims should be a critical element of ADR strategies. In Kaduna, many lives have been lost and properties destroyed in recurrent crises. As long as those who are responsible walk away free, reconciliation and bridge-building will not last and will not be perceived as genuine. In addition, if perpetrators are made accountable and punished, it will deter other potential trouble-makers.

Pursue inter-faith dialogue. Given Kaduna's religious divisions, inter-faith dialogue is likely to be another key component of efforts to foster a culture of peace. Despite accusations of bias, religious leaders in the state have the ability to defuse existing and potential tensions, especially in cases where socio-economic competition appears in a religious guise. They can help communities to achieve some consensus on divisive issues and restore a shared sense of justice. Inter-faith initiatives, as well as inter-community dialogue, would be a long-term investment in the cohesion of Kaduna state.

Follow up previous peace initiatives. Finally, it is important to reactivate dormant peace committees that were established in the past. Citizens in Kaduna would like to see these committees restart, working in an inclusive manner to monitor and document abuses, capture people's views on insecurity, share their findings, and bridge the gap between government and people. They also thought that the conflict prevention efforts launched in 2015 should continue in the next electoral cycle, in consultation with the affected communities.

PLATEAU STATE

Overview: political history and prevailing conflict issues

Because of its recent history, Plateau state was identified (with several other states) as a potential flashpoint during the general elections. In 2001-2002, it had experienced one of the worst ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria's history. Migrants and locals had lived side by side since tin was first mined in the state in 1902. Disputes sometimes occurred between local ethnic groups (especially over the origin and ownership of Jos, the capital city) but the more dangerous conflicts occurred between these groups, and the Hausa and Fulani communities. Often too conveniently explained in terms of ethno-religious competition, in fact the Plateau conflict is more complex in nature.¹⁶

Violent clashes have been recorded in Plateau State since 1994. However, the most devastating occurred in 2001. Triggered by a protest of Christian youths after the appointment of Alhaji Mohammed Muktar (a member of the Hausa community) to the post of Jos North Coordinator of the Federal Government Poverty Alleviation Programme, it led to the death of over 1,000 people and widespread destruction of property.¹⁷ Another crisis erupted in 2004, this time triggered by land and chieftaincy issues, in which several hundreds were killed. Further violent conflicts erupted in 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2012, following riots that erupted over disputed local government elections, the reconstruction of a house destroyed in the 2008 riots, disputes between farmers and herdsmen over grazing of farmland, and land-related conflict between the Berom, and Hausa and Fulanis.

In addition to these conflicts, Plateau state also has a history of electoral violence. An inconclusive local government election in Jos North LGA in 2008 led to such severe conflict between local communities and the Hausa that the Nigerian Army was required to restore peace; more than 760 people were killed. Given Plateau State's record, all observers were interested in the conduct of the election.

Tensions before the elections

Contested PDP gubernatorial primaries

Interviewees said that the PDP primaries had generated considerable tension because they were fraught with irregularities. In the end Senator GNS Pwajok emerged as the party's candidate, but the PDP delegates who elected him were said to have been handpicked by former Governor Jonah Jang and the decision was contested within the PDP. In addition, Jonah Jang hailed from Plateau North Senatorial district, and his ethnic group, the Berom, had dominated Plateau politics for eight years. There was a strong feeling that his successor should be from either the Southern or Central Senatorial District. The majority of interviewees emphasised the strength of the desire to elect a Governor from these Districts, and that this issue heightened tension in the state.

¹⁶ See A. Higazi, 'Rural Insecurity on the Jos Plateau, Central Nigeria: Livelihoods, Land, and Cattle Amid Religious Reform and Violent Conflict'. Nigeria Research Network, Oxford.

¹⁷ See Idahosa and Akov, 2013, 'Ethno-Religious Conflict and Peace Building in Nigeria: The Case of Jos, Plateau State', Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, Vol 2 No 1, p. 353.

Ethno-religious and local-settler tensions

Interviewees also agreed that the general elections took place in an atmosphere of palpable tension and insecurity. Due to violence between the Berom and the Fulani over cattle rustling and land disputes, especially in Local Government Areas around Jos where ethnic groups did not live together in integrated communities, Plateau people of local origin felt highly insecure. In a society already segregated on ethnic lines, voters felt violence was very likely to erupt at some stage during the poll.

Provocative political campaigning

As elsewhere, campaigning was characteristically provocative. Interviewees reported that candidates in both parties used language that excited prejudice and anger. A photo-shopped picture of one APC candidate, Simon Bako Lalong (a Christian), showed him praying in a mosque while holding the Tesbir. It was distributed in an attempt to stigmatize the APC as a Muslim political party in a state where many were Christians. The Berom and other indigenous ethnic groups of the state were encouraged to think that voting for Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, the APC Presidential candidate, would endanger them (because Buhari would be sympathetic to the interests of Hausa-Fulanis). The Hausa-Fulanis were labelled APC supporters and often threatened on this ground. The middle name of another APC candidate (now Governor Lalong) was 'Bako', meaning 'stranger' in Hausa: PDP supporters allegedly referred to him as a non-local wherever he campaigned. Provocation was not one-sided. It was widely alleged that the PDP candidate, Senator Pwajok, was not only a Berom like former Governor Jang, but Jang's relative. On this ground, opponents claimed that Jang would rule the state by proxy if Pwajok became Governor.

Delays and perceived inequities in the distribution of PVCs

Delays in the distribution of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) was a further source of tension. It was believed in some quarters that INEC had deliberately distributed more PVCs in Jos North and areas populated by Hausa-Fulani than in other Local Government Areas. Former Governor Jang requested the courts to require INEC to allow Temporary Voters Cards (TVCs) to be used if INEC could not distribute PVCs before the official deadline of 8 March 2015.¹⁸

Efforts to reduce tension and the potential for violence

Fearing violence in Plateau State, a wide range of actors and stakeholders participated in ADR and conflict prevention initiatives as the elections neared, including international and local government and non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, traditional authorities, security agencies, and the media.¹⁹ Most of these initiatives were collaborative and focused on peace messaging, voter education, training for INEC staff at polling units, conflict management, dialogue facilitation processes, training in conflict-sensitive reporting, and persuading candidates in the state to sign peace accords. We highlight here three initiatives, by the Dialogue

¹⁸ See 'Jang Drags INEC to Court Over Skewed Distribution of PVCs'. At: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/jang-drags-inec-to-court-over-skewed-distribution-of-pvcs/202988/>.

¹⁹ Organizations engaged in ADR initiatives included the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Search for Common Ground, the Dialogue Reconciliation and Peace Centre (DREP), members of the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN), official agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA), pressure groups such as the Plateau Council of Elders, state security agencies - the Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Security (DSS), the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Plateau State Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Reconciliation and Peace Centre (DREP), the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), and the Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN).

Dialogue Reconciliation and Peace Centre (DREP)

DREP, an NGO, was founded in 2013 by Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama, Catholic Bishop of Jos and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN).²⁰ The Mission Statement declares its 'commitment to provide a safe space for dialogue and reconciliation among diverse religions, ethnic and political groups in Plateau State and beyond, and to support capacity development for transforming violent conflict'.²¹

DREP is an interfaith initiative and Bishop Kaigama co-chairs it with the Emir of Wase, who also doubles as the State Chair of the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI). In 2015, recognising the risk of an election-related crisis²² and the state's high illiteracy level, DREP ran civic education programmes in several communities to reduce the number of invalid votes, a major potential cause of conflict. DREP also ran awareness-raising campaigns with young voters, encouraging them to collect their PVCs from INEC and cast their vote.

INEC addressed several issues in local communities across the state, including the role of security agents on polling day, and the voting process itself. It lobbied gubernatorial candidates and their officials to stop hate speech, and urged religious leaders to preach messages of peace and coexistence. On 14 January 2015, DREP brought together the three leading gubernatorial candidates (APC, Labour, and PDP) to sign a Peace Accord in which they affirmed their desire to conduct peaceful elections and accept the result.

Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN)

The PPPN has over 60 member NGOs involved in peacebuilding in Plateau state. According to its President, Godwin Okoko, the Network ran advocacy initiatives in the Local Government Areas of Barkin Ladi, Jos North, Jos South, Mangu, Mikang and Riyom, aimed at young adults, political parties and their candidates, and community leaders (District Heads).²³ Jos North was a particular focus for civil society organisations because it had always been a hotbed of ethno-religious and political violence. The PPPN tried to reach all the Local Government Areas in Plateau state through NGOs with a strong local presence.

It used the existing community security architecture headed by District Heads to identify and deal with election-based conflicts. In one case, for example, the District Head of Yelwan (Shendam Local Government Area), supported by the PPPN, organised voter education workshops to teach voters in each community how to conduct themselves on election day, their rights as voters, and how to report any irregularities they observed. Search for Common Ground

²⁰ DREP effectively assumed the responsibilities of the moribund Plateau State Interreligious Council, established during former Governor Joshua Dariye's administration. In addition to facilitating interfaith dialogue, it trains local community leaders in conflict management and interfaith dialogue. DREP is funded by the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).

²¹ 'Archbishop Kaigama Stresses Importance of Cooperation and Love for Peaceful Coexistence'. At: <http://www.cnsng.org/makepdf.php?tab=715>.

²² To reduce tension after bomb attacks in Jos in May 2014 and February 2015, DREP convened a Press Conference to state that the bombs did not target Christians, while encouraging all Plateau residents, irrespective of their ethno-religious affiliations, to combat terrorism in the state. The press statement is significant because Christian reprisal attacks occurred after three churches were bombed in 2012, allegedly by Boko Haram.

²³ The PPPN targeted 40 Secondary school Principals, 40 teachers, 40 members of parents-teachers associations, and 40 students, and sought out 40 story-telling moments for 40 primary school pupils on peace education. It also began conflict-resilience and conflict transformation training for 40 members of communities.

(SFCG), an active member of the Network, collaborated with the District Head of Bokkos Local Government Area to identify youths in the community who might cause violence: at a Town Hall meeting of twelve villages attended by the State Commissioner of Police, the District Head and young adults of the community agreed that youth drug abuse was a hindrance to peace and decided to close all chemists²⁴ and bars twenty-four hours before the elections. In Wase, the second largest Local Government Area in Nigeria, the Emir instructed the four District Heads with jurisdiction to convene similar Town Hall meetings to determine potential causes of electoral violence: together with young adults in the community, they appointed youth leaders who were declared responsible for monitoring the conduct of youths in their communities, and who were held responsible in the event of violence.

HD Jos Forum

When two campaign vehicles belonging to the Goodluck Jonathan campaign were burned, and attacks on settlements and cattle rustling increased in Barkin Ladi, Bokkos, Jos South and Riyom Local Government Areas, the HD Advisory Committee²⁵ decided to convene a Stakeholder Conference. In parallel, the heads of the security agencies in the state asked HD to facilitate a consultation between the security agencies and the public, to discuss the upsurge in violence and the community's low confidence in the security agencies and the state government. HD's Jos Forum therefore convened two meetings, a 'Stakeholders Meeting on Prevention of Election Violence Before, During and After the February 2015 Elections' (January 2015), and a 'Consultative Forum of the Communities of 8 LGAs with the Heads of Security Agencies on How to De-escalate Tensions and Ensure Violence Free Elections in Plateau State' (March 2015).

At the January event, participants included community leaders, religious, women, youth, staff of civil society and ethnic associations, as well as representatives of young adults, women, and the elderly who were considered to be especially at risk from violence. INEC, the police, the Jos Forum and civil society organisations briefed the meeting on election procedures, the proper conduct of polling officials, security issues, use of PVCs and smart card readers, and how to prevent community violence during the election. Political parties were urged to adhere to the Abuja Accord.

At the March forum, HD invited District Heads, the Heads of Ethnic Development Associations, Christian and Islamic leaders, and youth and women associations, to a dialogue. The 253 participants came from communities in 8 Local Government Areas in Plateau State and one in neighbouring Kaduna State.²⁶ The event was also attended by the state's security chiefs,²⁷ religious and traditional leaders, and a representative of the Plateau state government. Highlighting recent killings, displacement of settlements, and crop destruction in rural areas around Jos, some participants questioned the deployment, discipline and conduct of security

²⁴ In northern Nigeria, cough syrup and other medications are often abused though they can be purchased legally from chemists and supermarkets.

²⁵ The HD Centre has run an inter-communal dialogue and dispute resolution process in Jos since January 2013, called the HD Jos Forum. The process aims at establishing long-term solutions to the lingering crises in the city and the surrounding LGAs. The approach is community-driven and cuts across all levels of civil society, with the focus being on the main communities in and around Jos.

²⁶ The communities represented came from the following LGAs in Plateau: Bassa, Barkin Ladi, Bokkos, Jos East, Jos North, Jos South, and Riyom. The Paramount Ruler of the Attakar people in Kaura (Kaduna State) was also invited because ethnic Attakar lived in Ganawuri District (Riyom) and were at the centre of conflicts there.

²⁷ Security chiefs included the State Director of the Department of State Security, the State Commissioner of Police, the Army Strike Force Unit, the Commander of the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

agencies, and their relations with local communities. Others noted that some politicians had attempted to whip up religious and ethnic sentiments, and had hired youths to foment trouble. In response, the state government and security chiefs reassured citizens that they were firmly committed to securing a smooth electoral process. The security agencies pledged to cooperate with local stakeholders to ensure the elections were free of violence. They identified the specific problem of illegal arms dealers and asked the public to cooperate in addressing this security challenge. The communities and security agencies signed a Declaration of Commitment to violence-free elections in 2015. Those present made recommendations for action to relevant security agencies and INEC.

HD's efforts to prevent electoral violence also benefited from an Early Warning and Early Response system that HD's Tension Management Network established. The Network appointed 50 local residents across every district of the six Local Government Areas of Basa, Barkin Ladi, Jos East, Jos North, Jos South, and Riyom, who reported potential or actual conflict situations to District Coordinators. The District Coordinators reported to HD's Tension Management Group any emergency that required intervention by the security services, INEC or the State government.

Finally, the HD Jos Women's Steering Committee convened two meetings in January 2015 with women from Barkin Ladi, Jos North, Jos South, and Riyom, which were attended by the State Commissioner of Police, INEC officials, and representatives of the Local Government Areas concerned. The meeting discussed the effects of the 2008 and 2011 post-election violence, and concluded that the major obstacles to peace were vote-buying, the manipulation of election results, and the destruction of election materials. The women resolved to inform their communities on electoral laws, practices that hinder the electoral process, and the consequences of flouting the electoral law. The Steering Committee also targeted Plateau youth in key hotspots (Gangare, Sarki Street, Bulbula, Filin Ball, Yan Shanu Area, Layin Zana and Abba Na Shehu wards), by convening four meetings with representatives of youth and vigilante groups, the communities, women, and political and religious leaders.

Local perceptions of the Abuja Accord

Virtually all interviewees agreed that the Abuja Accord facilitated by the NPC had inspired the Peace Accord signed by gubernatorial candidates, other candidates, and party leaders. When asked to what extent the pledge had helped to prevent violence at state level, responses varied. The majority of interviewees thought it had helped greatly, by setting an example for state politicians, and opening a channel for dialogue. To some extent it also directly discouraged politicians and their supporters from perpetrating violence.

The impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives

Local ADR initiatives facilitated dialogue between political actors and provided community leaders, civil society organisations and security agencies with opportunities to cooperate. In addition, the consultations that were organised helped to identify local leaders who could help to prevent conflict in potential trouble spots and gave young adults an opportunity to air their concerns (about the difficulty of collecting PVCs, for example, and the government's failure to prosecute election offenders), while civil society groups, INEC and security agencies used the same platforms to clarify issues that youth groups raised. Existing networks and forums for dialogue also helped to lower tension. For example, when the gubernatorial election results were

delayed, the HD Women Steering Committee reduced tensions by inviting a number of trusted figures to issue an appeal on the radio to youth, women, and traditional and religious leaders, urging them avoid violence and accept the election result.

Reducing violence: the way forward

The majority of interviewees agreed that the peace messaging efforts of traditional authorities in Plateau State would have been more effective if they had not been widely perceived as partisan. In addition, the tensions between communities, especially in and around Jos, complicated the relationship between traditional leaders of those communities. The statutory body of traditional rulers, the Plateau State Council of Traditional Rulers, is said to have been divided.

Some civil society organisations were also perceived to be partisan, which limited the impact of their interventions. In this regard, many interviewees criticised the state administration of the time for failing to support civil society initiatives sufficiently, including efforts to foster peaceful coexistence. Apart from setting up 'Operation Rainbow'²⁸ with the support of security agencies (the DSS, Police and Army), to undertake early warning and early response across the state, interviewees believed that the authorities had not engaged actively enough with other peace interventions. Bearing in mind the above, interviewees made the following recommendations:

Understand the drivers and triggers of violence in Plateau. A number of peace practitioners in the state said that far-reaching progress will be difficult to achieve unless those who lead peace initiatives have a firm understanding of state power structures. They said that it is important to look beyond the foot soldiers deployed to foment trouble, and to engage with the main instigators of violence and injustice. Referring specifically to clashes between the Berom and the Fulani, they said that powerful actors often manipulate these events, which will persist until those responsible are deterred or brought to account.

Foster effective collaboration between the state government and peace practitioners. Most of the peace practitioners interviewed in Plateau state believed that the government needs to support the various peace initiatives run by civil society organisations across the state. Interviewees also said that the recommendations of Commissions of Inquiry into past crises in the state should be revisited and implemented. They stressed the importance of fostering a partnership between the state government and civil society, believing that this will be an essential component of any serious programme to achieve sustained peace and stability in the state.

Provide timely civic education for INEC staff and voters. As in other states, interviewees felt that, in future elections, more civic education should be provided to INEC officials, especially ad-hoc staff, as well as voters. They believed that most of the problems associated with smart card readers and voting procedures were due to poor understanding of the voting process, by the public and by some of INEC's temporary staff. Tensions that occurred when some ballot papers were invalidated (because they were thumb-printed incorrectly or folded inadequately) could also have been avoided if voters and INEC staff had been trained properly before the poll.

Institutionalise ADR mechanisms in Plateau State. Because the formal justice system is under pressure and reaches decisions slowly, interviewees urged the state government to

²⁸ Launched in 2010, 'Operation Rainbow' is a joint initiative between the Federal Government and the Plateau State Government with support from UNDP. It brings together bringing together personnel from the Special Task Force (STF), the Mobile Police (MOPOL), the Nigeria Police, the Department of State Services (DSS) and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence (NSCD), in an early warning and early response infrastructure.

institutionalise ADR mechanisms in the state (as Lagos and Kano have done). They said that the capacity of civil society organisations should be strengthened to enable them to run ADR programmes. This would ease the burden on courts, and enable less privileged groups (especially in local communities) to seek redress for their grievances fairly and affordably. Interviewees believed that more sophisticated ADR mechanisms in the state could resolve most electoral disputes without recourse to the courts.

Ensure that traditional and religious leaders are neutral and impartial. Had all traditional authorities and religious leaders remained neutral during the elections, interviewees felt they would have been in a stronger position to persuade candidates and their supporters to avoid violent behaviour. Their influence and moral authority, added to the voices of those advocating peaceful conduct, would have reduced the incidence of electoral violence. To influence the conduct of politicians and youth, and act as impartial arbiters where needed, traditional and religious leaders should be neutral and impartial throughout election periods.

Amend the Nigerian Constitution on the status and rights of locals and settlers. Given the repeated crises in Plateau state involving indigenous and settler ethnic groups, many interviewees argued that the National Assembly should remove ambiguities in the Nigerian Constitution. Certain sections of the Constitution (Sections 25(1) and 42) affirm a single citizenship and forbid discrimination against Nigerians based on birth, whereas Section 318(1) of the amended 2011 Constitution, which defines membership of a state within the country, confers special privileges on those 'born of the soil'. Interviewees were divided on how the Constitution should be revised. Some said it should confer on every Nigerian the right to citizenship wherever he or she decides to reside. Others said that it should confer special rights and privileges on indigenous groups relative to settlers.

BORNO STATE

Overview: political history and prevailing conflict issues

With other states in Nigeria's North East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe), Borno State²⁹ has suffered severely from the terrorist group Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram). Terror attacks orchestrated by Boko Haram are the main source of insecurity in Nigeria. It has attacked government installations, the United Nations (UN) office in Abuja, public figures and government officials, and public places such as motor parks and markets, as well as numerous communities. In April 2013 the unresolved abduction of over 200 school girls from Chibok (Borno State) pushed Boko Haram activities sharply up the peace and security agenda, nationally but also globally and regionally.

In 2015, the APC was the front-runner in Borno State, since the PDP had been weakened by internal squabbles which worsened when it changed its gubernatorial candidate on the eve of the elections. A Federal High Court in Abuja had declared Gambo Lawan to be PDP's lawful candidate. He had won the primaries in 2014 but the PDP subsequently replaced him by Muhammed Imam; INEC obeyed the court ruling and Lawan replaced Imam in March 2015.

The two main politicians in the state were Governor Kashim Shettima (APC) and former Governor Ali Modu Sherrif. In July 2014, Sherrif defected from the APC to the PDP, exacerbating tensions between the parties. The APC accused the Jonathan administration of fraternizing with Sheriff whom they considered a sponsor of Boko Haram in the state – an effective slur because the public believed the federal PDP government had done too little to reduce the hardship caused by Boko Haram's sustained onslaught on the North East's infrastructure and citizens, many of whom had been killed or displaced.

Tensions before the 2015 elections

Uncertainty and apprehension over Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Very late on, it remained unclear whether and how those who had been forced by the conflict to leave their homes (internally displaced persons/IDPs) could vote. Though INEC had announced that it had made voting arrangements for IDPs in the North East, it was not clear that the Electoral Act permitted IDPs to vote outside their areas of domicile, whereas only 8 of 27 Local Government Areas in the state were accessible for security reasons. Until INEC finally confirmed that the Electoral Act permitted IDPs to vote, this remained a major concern.

Threats of violence by Boko Haram

In a video released in February 2015 (before the elections were postponed), Boko Haram vowed that the elections would not take place peacefully. Its leader, Abubakar Shekau, declared:

Allah will not leave you to proceed with these elections ... because you are saying that authority is from people to people, which means that people should rule each other, but Allah says that the authority is only

²⁹ The researchers could not travel to Borno or elsewhere in the North East because of military operations. Interviews were conducted with residents of Borno State who now live in Abuja or visited Abuja. Some were interviewed by phone.

to him, only his rule is the one which applies on this land... And finally we say that these elections that you are planning to do, will not happen in peace, even if that costs us our lives.

Immediately after its release, the security agencies made efforts to allay public anxiety by stating that measures had been taken to ensure that people could vote in security. INEC also issued a statement saying that it would ensure voters were not disenfranchised. Interviewees considered nevertheless that these reassurances did not make all voters feel safe enough to vote.

The politicisation of the IDP situation in Borno State

Both the PDP and APC claimed that the other party took political advantage of the situation in Borno. The APC government in the state was alleged to have told IDPs that they should remember the APC was looking after them when they cast their vote. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was accused of timing the issue of relief supplies to local Borno communities in a manner that benefited the PDP electorally.

Purchase of permanent voter cards from INEC officials by political parties

Although this could not be verified, one interviewee said that both the APC and PDP had illegally purchased PVCs from INEC officials, disenfranchising some voters in the state.

Efforts to mitigate tensions and the potential for violence

Most organisations focused on peace messaging and voter education. Despite the overall difficulties of electioneering in the state, a few organisations took action to reduce tensions and the risk of electoral violence. Religious and traditional authorities did so most obviously, but some civil society organisations, including women's groups, were also active. The Borno Elders Forum urged all parties, including the political candidates, to avoid violence. It convened several town-hall meetings, held one-on-one meetings with political leaders, and visited IDP camps to appeal for calm. It advised voters to support the candidates they preferred, and said they should not be persuaded by politicians to vote along religious or ethnic lines.

Both Christian and Muslim leaders in the state appealed for calm and told people to conduct themselves in a peaceful manner. One interviewee reported that, at an Interfaith peace meeting of Christian and Muslim leaders, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Chairman for the state, Reverend Titus Pona, urged voters to disregard religious affiliations and vote for candidates they believed would improve their living conditions.

Local perceptions of the Abuja Accord

Most interviewees believed that the Peace Accords were useful because the leading candidates publicly declared their commitment to peace and lawful conduct. However, neither the candidates nor the party leaders signed a peace accord in Borno State.

The impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives

Interviewees said that local initiatives had helped to allay voters' fears, especially after Boko Haram's threats, and assisted voters to understand the voting process and how they should behave. Some believed that the interventions of the Borno Elders Forum and traditional and

religious leaders had encouraged voters to vote for candidates they preferred, rather than on religious or ethnic lines.

Given the record of Boko Haram in Borno state, it is important to underline that the elections passed off without major violence. Some interviewees said that this too was an effect of Boko Haram: the authorities in Borno, like the authorities in other North Eastern states, were too involved in their struggle with Boko Haram to engage in electoral mischief.

Reducing violence: the way forward

Conduct voter education and train INEC officials. Interviewees believed strongly that the poll in Borno State would have been improved had INEC and civil society organisations run voter education programmes, especially in IDP camps. They also noted that lack of training meant some INEC staff were unable to operate the smart card readers. Although interviewees acknowledged the security and logistical challenges in Borno state, they felt INEC could have been better prepared to run a seamless electoral process.

Ensure that political parties are internally democratic. Interviewees highlighted the tension generated by PDP's internal dispute over selection of its gubernatorial candidate. They noted that the problem occurred because some members of the party did not respect the outcome of the party primaries, and emphasized that all parties were guilty of similar behaviour. They called on INEC to ensure that political parties respect their own internal democratic processes.

Make fragile societies secure during elections. Interviewees agreed that the security agencies generally conducted themselves in a professional and impartial manner during the election, but felt that better arrangements could have been made in the state to protect the security of voters and electoral officers. They emphasised that tension mounted after Boko Haram's threats, and that some were so afraid they did not vote. Boko Haram killed some 25 people on polling day in Miringa, a town in Bui Local Government Area. While acknowledging that it is difficult to secure an entire region, interviewees said that the whole state should have been made secure to prevent such attacks, and urged the authorities to provide maximum security to insecure parts of the country in future elections.

Increase support for local ADR initiatives. Efforts were made to promote peace and provide voter education in the state, but some interviewees said they would have been more effective if civil society organisations had been adequately supported by the Federal and state governments. Representatives of local community-based and faith-based organisations, in particular, said their work was severely hampered by lack of funding and their inability to access certain parts of the state. They called for increased financial and logistical assistance to enable them to undertake more programmes in the state.

LAGOS STATE

Overview: political history and prevailing conflict issues

Having a vast multi-ethnic and multicultural population, Lagos State, Nigeria's commercial nerve centre, was a potential flashpoint during the elections and was observed closely. Violence was common before elections in Lagos, and included political assassinations, abductions, clashes between supporters of the PDP and APC, and the destruction of lives and property. For example, Mr. Funsho Williams, a prominent PDP politician, was assassinated by unknown assailants before the 2007 gubernatorial election. The 1999 general elections passed calmly, but the elections of 2003, 2007 and 2011 were marred by violent attacks by 'Area Boys', local hoodlums hired by political parties to disrupt and intimidate opponents. In addition, because the PDP had failed to win gubernatorial elections in Lagos state since 1999, the APC regularly accused the Federal Government (under PDP control) of sending security agents to intimidate APC supporters and colluding with INEC officials to undermine electoral processes in the state.

Before the 2015 elections, tensions between the political parties and their supporters were acute because Lagos was perceived to be a key swing state. It was also a vital battleground for the APC and PDP because Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu (a leading APC politician who had been Governor of the state between 1999 and 2007) had made Lagos his base and might determine the outcome of the general and gubernatorial elections. The term of the outgoing Governor, Babatunde Raji Fashola, had been a success on several fronts. To succeed him, the APC had chosen Akinwunmi Ambode, a former Accountant-General of Lagos; the PDP's gubernatorial candidate was Jimi Kolawole Agbaje, an effective politician who had stood against Fashola in 2007 for the Democratic Peoples' Alliance (DPA).

Political analysts described the gubernatorial election in Lagos as a proxy war between the upper hierarchy of the PDP and Tinubu, who was targeted personally, and who sued for defamation when the African Independent Television (AIT) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) aired a notorious documentary about him titled 'Lion of Bourdillon'.

Two key factors, religion and origin, shaped the selection of the two leading candidates. Since Nigeria's Fourth Republic was established in 1999, every Governor of the state had been Muslim: in 2015, accommodating Christian leaders in the state who had lobbied for change, both the PDP and APC settled on Christian candidates.

Tensions before the 2015 elections

Contested primaries

Virtually all the interviewees noted that the gubernatorial primaries of the two leading parties generated tension. In the APC, several candidates alleged that Senator Tinubu had handpicked Ambode, leading to protests and threats of defection. After negotiation, all the candidates eventually declared their support for Ambode. Meanwhile, the PDP's gubernatorial primaries degenerated into a crisis, when the losing candidate, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro, resigned his position as Minister of State for Defence and openly accused two prominent PDP leaders of rigging the primaries in favour of Jimi Agbaje. Alleging that the number of votes cast by

delegates (863) exceeded the number of accredited delegates (806), he sued in the Federal High Court of Abuja to compel the PDP and INEC to cancel the PDP gubernatorial primaries and conduct fresh primaries in the state. In the end, however, Obanikoro accepted the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs and declared his support for Agbaje.

Inter-party skirmishes, incitement and hate speech

During the build-up to the poll, clashes between supporters of the two main parties caused several deaths. Both parties were guilty of hate speech and incitement. The 'Lion of Bourdillon' documentary has been mentioned; Jimi Agbaje was accused of being a serial tax defaulter (even after he presented his tax certificates to the press). Debates about policy were overshadowed by threats of violence and political mudslinging.

Delayed distribution of PVCs

As in most parts of the country, the distribution of PVCs was delayed, raising tensions. Both the leading parties in Lagos state complained that INEC had short-changed them. The APC Chairman of Lagos State, Henry Ajomale, alleged in a press conference that APC supporters in the state were being secretly disenfranchised, and that the PDP and INEC planned to 'capture' Lagos state for the PDP. The PDP National Secretary, Olisa Metuh, accused the APC and INEC of committing 'a crime against the electoral process'³⁰ by colluding to prevent voters who were not native to Lagos state (most of whom he claimed were PDP supporters) from collecting their PVCs. In addition, it was widely alleged that soldiers would be deployed across the state under the pretext of ensuring law and order to manipulate the election results in favour of the PDP.

The Oba of Lagos' statement on the Igbos and the Lagoon

As the elections neared, the PDP in Lagos State was said to be recruiting support from among the state's large Igbo population. The Igbos were engaged in a long struggle with the APC state government over the closure of a major Lagos market, and had also been affected by the state government's ban of 'Okada' (commercial motorcycle) riders, and the repatriation of some Igbos to the south east. The PDP therefore stood to benefit from Igbo dissatisfaction. One interviewee said that Agbaje had promised the Igbos five positions in his cabinet, and agreed to include their traditional ruler in the Lagos Council of Traditional Rulers.

On 5 April 2015, before the elections, the Oba (king) of Lagos, Rilwan Akiolu, was reported to have said: 'if any one of you goes against Ambode who I picked, that is your end'; and again, on 11 April: 'if anyone of you, I swear in the name of God, goes against my wish that Ambode will be the next governor of Lagos state, that person will die inside this water'. These remarks generated much tension, and prompted the APC to issue a press statement dissociating itself from the Oba's position and a letter of apology to Igbos in the state. Dr. Dozie Ikedife, former President-General of the Ohanaeze Ndigbo (an association of Igbos), said that Igbos had been persecuted for too long and should be left to decide who they voted for. The PDP candidate, Jimi Agbaje, urged the Igbos to avoid violence and express themselves at the poll. The PDP Spokesperson in Lagos called for the Oba to be suspended and accused the APC government in the state of being complicit in the matter.

³⁰ 'PVC Distribution: INEC, APC are Committing Electoral Crime'. At: <http://leadership.ng/news/410263/pvc-distribution-inec-apc-committing-electoral-crime-pdp>.

Other issues that generated tension included the removal and defacing of campaign posters across the state, and a rally organized in Lagos a few days before the presidential election by the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC, an ethnic militia) which alleged, alongside other pro-Jonathan groups, that INEC's Chairman, Professor Jega, was against the PDP. The rally led to violence and APC leaders in Lagos state expressed concern that the PDP planned to create trouble in Lagos during the presidential and gubernatorial elections.

Efforts to reduce tensions and the potential for violence

Numerous organisations supported ADR initiatives in Lagos state during the elections, including both Christian and Muslim religious leaders, civil society organisations, national and community-based youth groups, faith-based NGOs, security agencies, traditional associations and leaders, INEC, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC), and members of the international community.³¹

Their interventions targeted a variety of audiences: youth, women's groups, artisans, members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), security agencies, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, journalists, traditional and community leaders, INEC officials, etc. They also took many forms: peace messaging, voter education, awareness-raising for INEC officials and for security agencies, the organisation of debates between candidates, electoral training for the media, and facilitation of peace accords by the candidates at state level. We describe two particular interventions in Lagos State. The first was a collaboration between INEC and the security agencies, supported by the state's traditional rulers and IPAC. (IPAC played a useful role in fostering inter-party harmony in Lagos State, while it did not in the other states reviewed.) The other was an interfaith initiative by the Anglican Diocese of Lagos and the Nasrul-Lahi-il Fathi Society (NASFAT); an interfaith initiative in Mushin Local Government Area also deserves mention.

Collaboration between Lagos State INEC, ICCES, IPAC and other stakeholders

INEC's cooperation with the security agencies in Lagos State, under the auspices of the Inter-Agencies Consultative Committee on Electoral Security (ICCES), provided useful early warning capacity and enabled the authorities to respond quickly to incidents of conflict in the state.³²

INEC and ICCES held formal weekly meetings and several informal sessions with INEC's Resident Coordinator and senior officers in the Police, Army and Department of State Security (DSS). On polling day, the Office of INEC's Resident Coordinator was converted into a Situation Room. An Assistant Commissioner of Police and representatives of other security

³¹ For instance: the Lagos State Civil Society Partnership (LACSOP), the ARISE Nigerian Woman Foundation, which ran the State Accountability Voice Initiative (funded by DFID), the Human Rights Advancement, Development and Advocacy Centre (HURIDAC), the Catholic Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), the Mushin-based Interfaith Forum International (IFI), the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (Lagos branch), the Lagos State Police Command, the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Department of State Security (DSS), the National Youth Council (Lagos state branch), the Office of the United States Consul-General, the IRI, the Lagos State Council of Traditional Rulers, the Sarkin Hausawa of Lagos, and the Eze Ndigbo of Lagos.

³² ICCES membership comprises INEC and Nigeria's military and paramilitary agencies. These agencies include the Office of the National Security Adviser, the Army, Navy and Air Force, the Police, and the Civil Defence Corps, Customs Service, Federal Road Safety Commission, Immigration Service, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, National Intelligence Agency, Prison Service, and Department of State Security.

agencies sat together to receive information from the public and election observers and relay instructions to officers in the field when intervention was required.

INEC also collaborated with other organizations to raise election awareness, and made itself available to the public at workshops across the state which were attended by traditional authorities, religious leaders, market women, youth groups and artisans and community leaders.

Inter-party conflict was rare, apart from a few spats between party leaders. There appear to have been two reasons for this: most tensions were intra-party in nature; and the IPAC in Lagos State functioned well, unlike IPACs in many other states. Both the main parties participated actively; indeed, the legal adviser to APC's Lagos Chapter was the IPAC Secretary. It also helped that INEC directly supported IPAC in the state. INEC's Resident Coordinator observed that 'IPAC is more balanced in Lagos. The members are friends regardless of the political party differences. INEC met with IPAC frequently and they held their state meetings here [in INEC's office].'

Inter-faith interventions

To reduce inflammatory campaign rhetoric and encourage an issue-based electoral debate, the Lagos Dioceses of the Anglican Church of Nigeria organised a televised public debate for the state's 17 gubernatorial candidates. The event gave voters a valuable opportunity to hear and assess the candidates' manifestos.

The Interfaith Forum International (IFI) was co-chaired by Bishop Magnus Atilade, Deputy Vice-Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and Alhaji Ibrahim Abdul-Ganiyu, Chief Imam of the Olorunsogo Mosque, the largest mosque in one of the most populated Local Government Areas in Lagos State. Founded to promote religious harmony and peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim residents of Mushin Local Government Area, it operated at three levels: for individuals it explained what both Abrahamic religions stand for and addressed long-held misconceptions; it facilitated collaboration between the leaders of both faiths; and it promoted cooperation between IFI and Christian and Muslim traditional authorities in the state. For the elections, IFI organised special interfaith prayer events to promote peace that were attended by religious leaders from both faiths.

Other notable ADR initiatives

Several interviewees praised a cooperative initiative by the National Youth Council, the Lagos State Community Development Advisory Committee, the State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI), and the hip hop artist Tuface Idibia ('Election No Be War'). These partners brought together gubernatorial and State House of Assembly candidates and urged them not to use young adults to foment violence during the election. They also ran a nationwide 'get-out-the-vote' campaign which informed young voters of their civic rights and responsibilities, and encouraged them to contribute peacefully and constructively to the elections and their communities.

HURIDAC (a community-based human rights association) participated in an initiative to encourage security agents to wear nametags (for easy identification), and provide hotlines for citizens to report situations that warranted intervention (lack of electoral materials, violent behaviour at polling stations, etc.). It also led a campaign against the so-called 'militarisation' of elections, which pressed the security forces to be legally accountable.

The Catholic Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) convened voter education conferences across the state. On the eve of the poll, it organised two major rallies, attended by over 50,000 people, to alert Lagos citizens to the danger of voting on ethnic, religious or language lines. It partnered with the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) to

make security agencies in the state aware of the importance of creating a non-violent voting environment. This initiative was supported by other security agencies, including the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), the Nigeria Police, the Immigration Service, and the DSS.

Local perceptions of the Abuja accord

The majority of interviewees from Lagos State considered that the National Peace Committee's initiative to convene talks leading to the Abuja Accords had been helpful, but was belated and would have reduced violence more if it had been undertaken earlier. Many interlocutors noted that political actors in Lagos state were aware of the Abuja Accord and that it had influenced the conduct of politicians and their supporters. For example, a prominent APC official said that party leaders constantly referred to the Abuja Accord in their interactions with party supporters, and encouraged them to abide by its terms, because it had been signed by the Presidential candidates and the National Chairmen of the APC and PDP. A smaller number of interviewees believed that the Accord was a symbolic gesture that would not influence the conduct of political actors because it lacked punitive clauses.

The impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives

A peace accord, similar to the Abuja Accord, was signed in Lagos State, brokered by the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and INEC. After the candidates had signed, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police invited them to re-affirm their commitment to it. Similar accords were signed at local and community level, facilitated by community-based organisations. Civil society organisations disseminated these accords across the state.

On 19 February 2015, the Lagos State Civil Society Partnership (LACSOP) and twenty other civil society networks in the state persuaded the gubernatorial candidates to sign a Citizens Charter. Titled 'A Lagos State Peoples' Charter / Social Contract' or 'Our Lagos', it emphasised inclusion and minimum standards of good governance in the state, and called on the parties to meet basic social needs (in education, health, youth and women's development, housing, etc.).

Several civil society initiatives alerted young adults to the hazards of political thuggery, pointing out that the politicians who recruit 'Area Boys' send their own children to schools abroad. Others ran voter education programmes that informed Lagos voters how the voting process worked and explained the functioning of the PVCs, and the role of polling officers and the security agencies. INEC staff were convinced that these programmes, notably the information given on PVC distribution, helped to ensure that Lagos State experienced relatively little violence on polling day.

The establishment of Situation Rooms across Lagos State, where citizens could phone in and report incidents, was very helpful, because their staff were quick to contact relevant authorities (notably INEC or the security agencies). The initiative also created more trust and better working relations between civil society organisations and the security agencies.

Interviewees believed that candidate debates helped to reduce hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric, and focused public attention on the parties' manifestos and questions of policy. They also believed that peace initiatives by religious leaders had helped lower the level of violence in the state. Youth-focused radio jingles and radio and television programmes also had a positive

effect, because young adults were given opportunities to air their concerns and fears, and many accepted responsibilities for maintaining peace in their constituencies.

Finally, the security agencies, under ICCES, collaborated effectively with INEC in Lagos State to ensure a smooth electoral process. Interviewees agreed that, with a few exceptions, security officials conducted themselves professionally and abided by the rules. Contrary to voters' initial fears, the Nigerian Army played a limited role in the state on election day. The Army kept away from polling stations and did not interfere with the electoral process.

Reducing violence: the way forward

Interviewees made a number of specific recommendations for reducing the potential for violence in future election:

Give priority to improving the socio-economic condition of ordinary citizens. Many interviewees believed that Nigeria's socio-economic situation partly explains why politicians are desperate to capture power by all means possible. They claimed that the country's high unemployment rate, including in Lagos state, is partly to blame for the involvement of young adults in political thuggery and other election-related crimes. They argued that politics would become less dangerous and young people would engage less in electoral violence and other crimes if both the federal and state governments worked assiduously to improve the socio-economic condition of Nigerians, giving special attention to youth unemployment.

Adopt ADR mechanisms across the state. The introduction of ADR mechanisms in Lagos State law courts state helped the overburdened justice system in Lagos State to cope.³³ A number of interviewees argued that, if ADR mechanisms were introduced in communities across the state, many issues that now go to court could be resolved without litigation. Many ADR techniques are already applied by traditional rulers and chiefs, but interviewees felt community-based and faith-based organisations could increase their ADR capacity. This would ease the burden on law courts and reduce violence during elections.

Strengthen internal democracy in political parties. As highlighted earlier, the primaries of both the leading political parties became a major cause of pre-election tension in Lagos state. Many interviewees criticised the practice of imposing candidates and conducting primaries that were not transparent. They argued that political parties should develop stronger, enforceable rules to ensure they operate democratically.

Educate the electorate, the security agencies and INEC officials. Most interviewees considered that some of the difficulties encountered during the voting process were due to poor training of INEC staff (notably its temporary staff). Many did not fully understand the rights and responsibilities of voters, or use of the smart card reader. Nor were relevant institutions always clear about the roles and responsibilities of the security agencies. While INEC and a number of civil society organisations ran voter education programmes in the state, many interviewees believed they started too late. In some cases, even INEC staff had not been adequately briefed on all aspects of the voting process.

³³ Negotiation and Conflict Management Group International (NCMG) established the Lagos Multi-Door Courthouse (LMDC) in 2002. LMDC is a public-private partnership between the High Court of Justice, Lagos State and NCMG, a non-profit private organization. The overarching objective of the LMDC is to facilitate dispute resolution within the Nigerian Justice System. It is the first court-connected Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre in Africa.

Enforce laws that limit spending in elections. Many interviewees complained about the volume of money spent by politicians in the state; politicians from the APC and PDP often spent far more than what interviewees believed was the statutory limit. Interviewees said that INEC and the security agencies should establish and enforce effective mechanisms to control spending by politicians and their parties during election campaigns.

Ensure that traditional authorities are more involved in ADR initiatives. Most interviewees felt that ADR mechanisms are generally well embedded in Lagos State, and that traditional authorities are key actors and facilitators of ADR in the state. At the same time they said that traditional ADR structures and mechanisms were not used effectively in election-related disputes. Many thought the partisan behaviour of some traditional authorities reduced their moral legitimacy and capacity to lead peace initiatives. In spite of these limitations, a number of interviewees felt that a combination of peace interventions led by traditional authorities, and ADR initiatives managed by community-based organisations, could reduce violence and improve community relations.

Foster cooperation between INEC and ICCES. Many interviewees commended INEC, the security agencies, and civil society groups for collaborating so effectively across the state during the elections. They particularly praised the INEC-ICCES partnership, which they believed was responsible for the relative lack of violence during the election.

Address impunity and punish electoral violence. A number of interviewees said that electoral violence by political thugs and supporters of political parties will persist for so long as they remain unpunished. They argued that thuggery would have been far lower in 2015 had the authorities regularly prosecuted such crimes in earlier elections, and urged the law enforcement agencies to indict perpetrators of electoral violence.

RIVERS STATE

Overview: political history and prevailing conflict issues

One of Nigeria's largest oil-producing states, Rivers was the epicentre of Niger Delta militancy from late 2003 until 2009, when an amnesty programme was launched. During that period, battles between rival armed groups for control of territory and oil bunkering routes created a climate of deep fear and insecurity. After the 2009 amnesty, violence decreased dramatically but the region still suffers from significant political, communal and gang violence. Before, during and after the 2015 elections, Rivers experienced a spike of violent conflict, as some ex-militants and 'cult groups' rallied behind the two major parties and faced off in the streets.³⁴

Rivers State remains ethnically polarised, and pockets of violence caused by inter-communal tensions, wealth differences and criminality persist. Disputes over land ownership are common and, in recent years, have often turned violent. They are driven primarily by competition to control resources, and involve a mix of actors, including local communities, gangs, militias, oil companies and political interests. Ex-militants have also warned that the end of the amnesty programme in December 2015 could trigger a new crisis in the region. Across the state border, in Bayelsa, ex-militants blocked the Mbiama axis of the East-West road in August 2015 because their allowances had allegedly not been paid.

The geopolitics of oil have shaped the state's political history. Rivers has the highest concentration of on-shore oil fields and reputedly accounts for a large proportion of Nigeria's crude oil production. Wells have been a source of both political disputes and community conflict. The former Governor, Rotimi Amaechi, accused President Goodluck and the Bayelsa Governor, Henry Dickson, of distorting historical records and displacing the Bayelsa/Rivers interstate boundary to claim revenues from the Soku oil wells. After revenues were frozen in an escrow account for several years awaiting a decision of the Supreme Court, the federal authorities released the funds to Bayelsa State anyway, without a ruling, and Rivers pulled out of mediated boundary talks. Locally, most communities host wells or pipelines and suffer from the severe environmental degradation they cause without benefiting from their revenue. Frustrated by poor governance, they have often resorted to violence and insurgency to secure some benefits from oil or offset its costs.

Tensions before the elections

Political tensions have festered for years in Rivers State. The trouble began in 2010, when Governor Rotimi Amaechi argued publicly with Dame Patience Jonathan (the former President's wife) over planned demolitions in Okrika, her hometown. Amaechi considered the areas to be slums that provided a haven for criminal activity. Patience Jonathan urged him to dialogue with

³⁴ Broadly defined, a cult refers to an extreme religious group that is not part of an established religion. In Nigeria, the term denotes criminal gangs which engage in clandestine activities (e.g. kidnapping for ransom) and politically-sponsored violence. Interviewees mentioned several cults in the Niger Delta, including Aromaid, Black Axe, Degbam, Dewell, the Greenlanders, the Icelanders, K 5, the Vikings.

the communities before destroying their properties. The issue soured their relationship, and started a war of words between their supporters.

In 2011 Governor Amaechi became Chairman of the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF) and took positions at odds with those of President Goodluck Jonathan. When the President unilaterally decided to place USD 1 billion in the Sovereign Wealth Fund, the Governors went to court, demanding 'their share'. The President called the NGF a 'trade union' and tried to remove the Chairman on two occasions. The situation deteriorated further the following year, when Chief Godspower Ake (loyal to Governor Amaechi) was removed by order of the Federal High Court in Abuja and replaced by Chief Felix Obuah, PDP Chairman in Rivers State. Observers presumed that Amaechi was not able to control his party and had lost the support of key allies.

In April 2013, 27 pro-Amaechi lawmakers suspended the councillors of the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, angering the PDP (led by Obuah). The lawmakers were in turn suspended from the PDP, as subsequently was Amaechi, for alleged anti-party activities. Amaechi eventually defected to the APC, with a group of elected and appointed officials, deepening the resentment of PDP leaders and supporters. Though Amaechi claimed to have defected because the PDP was internally undemocratic and to defend the interests of Rivers State, his decision to join the APC was heavily criticised by some local stakeholders, who accused him of being a traitor.³⁵

These developments apparently polarised the State House of Assembly into two camps: 27 lawmakers who supported Amaechi and five who opposed him. In July 2013, his opponents tried to impeach Otelemaba Amachree (pro-Amaechi), the House Speaker. Chaotic scenes occurred when the plan was discovered: some parliamentarians were apparently beaten and chased from the building, and the local Assembly was closed for days when efforts by both parties to reconvene the House were blocked by security officials. The police were accused of acting against the governor's wishes. After a court struck down a resolution of the National Assembly to assume the legislative functions of the Rivers State legislature, some Members converged on the House to resume their duties but were reportedly dispersed by the Rivers police with teargas and live ammunition. When lawmakers opposed to the Governor also tried to access the chambers, the assembly came to resemble a battleground. Rival groups and their supporters descended on the House, to be driven off by the police with tear gas.

The judiciary too became entangled. Courts closed down in 2014 after the appointment of a chief judge for the state was disputed and several bombs were placed in court premises. Until proceedings resumed in June 2015, the citizens of Rivers had no judicial redress. Trust in the state's public institutions fell steeply.

In late 2014, Chief Nyesom Wike became the PDP's gubernatorial candidate, initiating a fierce contest between the ruling APC and the PDP. Wike was formerly Amaechi's chief of staff. Some claimed that he had orchestrated the dispute between the Governor and Goodluck and Patience Jonathan. Wike's opponent in the 2015 gubernatorial elections was Dakuku Peterside, Amaechi's 'hand-picked' successor.

The 2015 campaigning period was marked, as many had feared, by violent clashes between loyalists of both parties. Casualties were reported (though the number is disputed), alongside arson attacks, kidnappings, bombings (of campaign offices, rallies and party secretariats), and political intimidation. Okrika was a particular flashpoint area, in which Dakuku Peterside's rallies were accompanied by gunfire and explosions. While the PDP disassociated itself from the

³⁵ Animosity between the supporters and detractors of Amaechi was further inflamed when the APC appointed him Director General of the party's presidential campaign.

violence and called for peace in the state, Amaechi blamed the first lady for the attacks in Okrika (claiming she had decreed that only the PDP might hold rallies in her home town). The Rivers State Chapter of the PDP accused the APC of masterminding attacks on its rallies in the Local Government Areas of Degema and Abua/Odual.

Party leaders in both the APC and PDP blamed each other for what people called an ‘epidemic of political violence’. In April, the Rivers State chapter of the APC claimed that 55 of its members had been killed in political attacks by PDP members. Nyesom Wike responded that over 45 PDP members had been killed for their party affiliation. Both parties denounced the police for being biased and conspiring to harass, intimidate and arrest their members.

An additional issue of concern in the run-up to the elections included the rotation of power and the ethnic identity associated with some zoning areas. For 16 years the province’s governor had originated from the upland area of Rivers, and riverine communities were eager to have their turn; when the PDP primaries produced a candidate from the same ethnic group as the incumbent Governor, this caused resentment among some riverine ethnic groups who felt disenfranchised.

Last but not least, the proliferation of small arms generally heightened insecurity in the region. Weapons and ammunition were reportedly transported by water into the riverine areas, while politicians recruited cult groups to intimidate their opponents. As elections neared, battles for territory and supremacy escalated, to the extent that inhabitants in certain Local Government Areas relocated en masse to neighbouring communities. Interviewees knew of militants who had been arrested a few months before the elections and then released in possession of an AK47. Warlords were allegedly promised seats in the State Assembly House and militants told they could ‘rule’ the Local Government Areas in which they were active.

After the 2015 elections, the state remains a battleground for the PDP and the APC, and animosity endures. Electoral controversy continues. The PDP boycotted elections on 23 May, vowed it would not recognise the result, and attempted to dissolve the local government councils, triggering protests and clashes between party loyalists. To compound the situation, incoming officials have pledged to undo the decisions of their predecessors and recover funds allegedly stolen by the previous administration. These disputes have deepened public anxiety. When the Rivers State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal rules on the result of the gubernatorial election, violence may spike again.

Efforts to reduce tensions and the potential for violence

A local peace pledge

For most interviewees, the electoral process was a battle to the end. But, at the same time, they recalled several attempts to reduce tension and violence. The leaders of the religious communities in Rivers State, supported by the American Ambassador, James F. Entwistle, convened a meeting of the PDP, APC and Labour gubernatorial candidates at which the candidates were asked to speak out against violence and publicly urge others to do the same. The religious leaders called on all Nigerian politicians to renounce inflammatory rhetoric, the recruitment of thugs, intimidation of voters and rivals, and incitement to violence. They also held a private meeting for the candidates, at which they discussed the concerns of their congregations and encouraged the rival parties to air their grievances in a constructive way. The candidates reportedly discussed the use of government facilities for campaign events, and the degeneration of electoral campaigning into physical attacks on opponents. After these discussions, the

candidates were invited to sign a peace pledge before the media, to show their followers in Rivers State that they stood for peace.

A group of organisations, including the Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN), the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), Action Aid, the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND), the Rivers State Entrepreneurs and Investors Forum, and Nigeria Info, facilitated a televised debate between the contestants. The candidates were reminded of the consequences of breaching the peace pact, and encouraged to present their policies, notably on regional development, economic diversification, security, and open governance. Reportedly, the EU Ambassador reminded the candidates privately that they could face travel restrictions if they breached the peace accord.

A conflict management alliance run by NSRP with a range of local stakeholders helped disseminate the peace pact after signature. Civil society and faith-based organisations joined with the security agencies, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to organise a series of town hall meetings at which representatives of the three major parties in all 23 Local Government Areas were briefed on the pact and asked to publicize it.

The influence of religious leaders

Most interviewees said that many religious leaders were divided on political lines, but several also tried to advocate for peace. Religious leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) reportedly added a message of peace to their sermons. They used the media, notably radio Nigeria Info, to address millions of listeners and call for peace. Through local networks, such as Dawn in the Creeks, they also monitored events on the ground. Though they were not able to intervene to stop violent clashes, they tried to prevent their recurrence by forbidding parties to campaign in hot spots like Okrika. In addition, they trained community reporters and key community influencers to collect information on incidents and mobilize public opinion against violence.

Some religious authorities were nevertheless accused of being partisan. The former Governor, Rotimi Amaechi, alleged that the PDP bribed some Christian religious leaders to campaign against the APC and its presidential candidate, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari. Pastors were accused in the media of taking bribes in exchange for circulating a document that warned against the Islamization of the country under the leadership of Gen. Buhari. A public argument erupted over their role in the electoral campaigns, and some of their initiatives were perceived to stoke the fire rather than extinguish it.

The role of traditional authorities

In a similar way, most community chiefs expressed their support for one party or another, under political pressure or to reap a benefit from oil and other deals. According to interviewees, most traditional rulers had been 'bought off' by politicians before the elections. Granting an audience to one of the contestants was usually followed by a promotion or demotion.³⁶ Compromised, traditional authorities were generally ill-equipped to douse tension and could not be trusted by their communities to broker peace. Several interviewees cited an extreme case: when a traditional

³⁶ The current Governor has submitted a bill to the State Assembly which ostensibly, if passed, would diminish the role of traditional rulers in politics. Some commentators in the state have argued that the bill would allow the current Governor to remove all traditional rulers who backed the previous Governor or who withheld support for the former President.

ruler (Eze) in Rivers endorsed a candidate, and promised him his community's vote, the son of the Eze denounced the endorsement, on the grounds that a ruler had no right to pledge votes on behalf of his family and his community, and was then shot by his own father for this act.

Even though they are no longer perceived to be genuine custodians of custom, community and traditional leaders were still co-opted by civil society organisations to support conflict prevention activities during the elections. In some communities they convened general meetings, in which women, youths and other groups were instructed on how to conduct themselves during the poll. They also worked closely with the police force and civil defence corps, passing on information on potential troublemakers and requesting assistance when necessary. One chief interviewed for this report said that his community experienced no violence during the elections because of these interventions.

Initiatives by civil society and non-governmental organisations

The Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) focused its efforts on three flashpoints, the Local Government Areas of Phalga, Abua-Odual and Gokana. These were known to be riven by inter-communal and political competition, conflicts involving cult groups, land disputes, and chieftaincy issues. After an initial stakeholder analysis, ACORD met communities particularly affected by conflict, built consensus around sensitive issues, and held town hall meetings to decide how best to promote peace. Peace committees were established in the three areas, with members from all sections of society, including security forces, community-based vigilante groups, NOA, youth leaders, women, community development committees (CDCs), the council of chiefs, CAN, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Jama'atu Nasril Islam, and other NGOs active at grassroots level.

Acord's interventions were designed to deliver a message of peace and encourage communities to actively prevent unrest. People were informed that the leading candidates in the presidential elections had committed themselves to peace. They were shown pictures of the signing ceremony and copies of the peace pledge. To avoid loss of life during the elections, one community in Abuloma set up road blocks manned by youths to screen outsiders; for the first time, elections in Abaloma were completed without gunshots or bloodshed.

With assistance from the US Department of State, the Support Initiative for Sustainable Development (SISDEV) targeted selected violence-prone communities in three Local Government Areas and held town hall meetings at which women, youths, chiefs and elders were invited to speak out on conflict and governance issues that affected them. Afterwards, the project selected members of the communities to train on early warning, conflict management, electioneering and peace building. They were joined in the training by representatives of the police force, State Security Service (SSS), civil defence corps, NOA and the immigration office. When trained, they formed a peace-building and conflict management council (PBCMC) in each Local Government Area. SISDEV provided PBCMC with administrative and strategic support, assisted it to register with the State Government, and introduced it to key conflict management networks in the region. PBCMC is expected to continue its sensitization campaigns and to intervene in inter-communal conflicts when they occur.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) conducted conflict transformation trainings, targeting youths, ex-militants and other key stakeholders at community level. It collaborated with the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and other implementing partners to organise rallies for peace, educate communities on their rights and inform them about PVC collection. The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) organised a

roundtable conference, which sensitised politicians and other key actors to the risks of overheated campaigning. The Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) opened pilot projects with 18 communities in three senatorial districts that raised awareness of voters' rights, electoral procedures, and how communities could collaborate with government to identify solutions to their problems. The NSRP supported a range of electoral interventions, including those run by SDN, the Human, Peace and Security Network, the Rivers Investors and Entrepreneurs Forum, and Wazobia.

The conduct of the security agencies

Interviewees generally considered the police force in Rivers to be biased, and unwilling or unable to check the excesses of politicians and their supporters. Many indicated that some in the police force turned a blind eye to acts of violence committed by individuals associated with the PDP. No body appeared to have the moral courage and legal authority to prevent or prosecute acts of violence. Interviewees cited several instances when the police force acted as if its responsibility was to protect the highest bidder among the elites rather than the people of Rivers State. In one case APC supporters were attacked and, after filing a complaint, became the accused; in others, police officers allegedly colluded to steal electoral materials or withdrew police protection from key party officials at the demand of political opponents.

Leading figures in the state police force were perceived to be actively hostile to certain politicians, and not independent. Though senior officers were changed, interviewees considered that few of the commissioners who came to Rivers acted objectively. While both the PDP and the APC condemned the police for bias, the APC seemed to be more aggrieved – as one interviewee put it, in Rivers 'it was the police against the sitting Governor'.

While not condoning their actions, some interviewees argued that the environment was such that it was almost impossible for the police to act impartially. Because the former President and First Lady hailed from the state, they were expected to defend Rivers as the last bastion of the PDP. In addition, officers that tried to act objectively were actively discouraged. One Assistant Inspector General of Police was allegedly redeployed to Calabar after he ordered an investigation into reports that PDP supporters were thumb-printing ballot papers in Port Harcourt.

Finally, a number of interviewees also noted police efforts to promote dialogue between the political parties on security issues. Meetings were facilitated by the zonal police chief, the area police chief, and the commissioner of police, and involved PDP and APC campaign directors, gubernatorial candidates, and state secretaries and chairmen. The participants reportedly raised issues which they felt gave an unfair advantage to the opposing party, including issues related to the professionalism of INEC employees.

The presence of the military was not felt in Rivers State during the election period, according to interviewees. However, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps played a constructive role. Before and during the polls, they intervened to diminish communal tensions. In January and February 2015, with support from Search for Common Ground, they organised two town hall meetings for up to 500 local people, to emphasise the importance of holding elections peacefully. The participants included INEC officials, youths, village heads, religious leaders and members of cult groups.

INEC efforts to ensure peaceful elections

With respect to INEC, many interviewees identified a disconnect between the headquarters in Abuja and officials at state and local level. Though INEC had introduced alternative dispute resolution at HQ level, no interviewee could recall any use of ADR in Rivers State.³⁷ In addition, INEC staff in Rivers reportedly chose not to apply INEC national guidelines. Electoral materials were delayed despite the creation of Super Registration Area Centres (RACs), for example; and, ignoring the introduction of PVCs and card readers, some polling units continued to verify manually and apparently used fake result sheets, compromising the vote.

There were mixed views of INEC's professionalism. Interviewees reported that some officials were always prepared to attend civil society meetings and answer questions about the election process. However, they said that others were unwilling or were not permitted to carry out their work transparently and impartially. Ahead of the gubernatorial elections, there were calls to remove the state's Resident Electoral Commissioner on the grounds that she planned to rig the polls in favour of the PDP, while the PDP criticised INEC for allegedly colluding with the APC to manipulate the results of state elections. All in all, suspected malpractice by and mistrust of INEC officials heightened, rather than diminished, tensions in Rivers State.

Women and youth

In the lead-up to the elections, most women's groups and networks campaigned to stop violence against women. The Kebekache Women Development and Resource Centre, and Gender and Development Action, for example, held rallies and campaigned to increase the acceptance of women in political parties. Their multi-stakeholder forums against political violence involved traditional rulers, male candidates, INEC officials, the PDP and APC secretariats, the Anglican Church, youth, and ex-militants. Similarly, the Rivers State Youth Federation campaigned against political violence in their communities.

The media

The media did not generally play a particularly constructive role. Some interviewees said that newspapers grossly exaggerated the scale of the crisis in Rivers State as well as casualty figures. It was alleged that they accepted money to write distorted reports of events and sometimes portrayed inter-communal or cult violence as if it was politically motivated. More positively, other interviewees said that some radio networks had aired programmes in support of peaceful elections, enabling civil society organisations to put across their views and reach larger audiences.

International actors

Interviewees agreed it was helpful to know that the international community was watching developments in Nigeria with interest and concern. A number said that hate speech and incitement declined after Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court, visited Nigeria and issued warnings. Interventions by the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, were also perceived to have been helpful. Many interviewees mentioned the efforts of the US Ambassador to Nigeria, James Entwistle, who brokered a local peace pact in Rivers State involving leaders of the APC, PDP and Labour Party. Other interviewees doubted that external interventions had any impact, however. One said: 'here in Rivers, no one was scared. ICC had gambled too much in Africa.' Another claimed that international observers were usually perceived to favour the APC, and that outsiders could not influence resolute leaders who wanted to stay in power.

³⁷ INEC staff in Rivers State were not available for comment.

Local perceptions of the Abuja Accord

The peace pact signed in Abuja resonated to some extent in Rivers State. It reminded the public that the presidential contestants were not fighting a war, and that the elections were not worth dying for. The media gave extensive coverage to the Abuja Accord, especially as a number of states across the federation replicated it. The Abuja Accord and the Rivers peace pledge were a tool that activists used to communicate the message of peace locally, and to remind candidates of their commitments. The pacts also assisted civil society groups in Rivers to convene debates between gubernatorial candidates, and develop a public discussion of their policies.

This said, the majority of interviewees emphasised that the pacts did not prevent violence in Rivers State. Across the nation, they argued, the elections ended peacefully because the APC won and because the former President had been willing to concede defeat. Despite the media coverage, they did not think the grassroots public in Rivers State knew what the peace pacts said. Those who were more familiar with the content of the Rivers pledge pointed out that the text was light on commitments: as one put it, ‘a lot of form, little substance’. In the Rivers context, where impunity seemed impregnable, interviewees were concerned above all by the lack of an accountability mechanism. The state’s longstanding political battles and rivalries, its entrenched ‘do or die’ approach to politics, overshadowed any peace commitments that politicians made before the elections.

The impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives

Interviewees frequently commented that politicians in Rivers resolutely pursued political and financial advantage in preference to working seriously to solve the issues of the day.³⁸ Whatever conflict prevention and dialogue mechanisms existed, interlocutors felt the vast rewards associated with public office would ensure that politics remained a bloody standoff. Predictably, given the levels of violence recorded in Rivers, interviewees had difficulty discerning the overall impact of conflict prevention efforts in the state. One interviewee described the campaigning period and more generally the electoral process as ‘a mighty tsunami’, adding that ‘it was a miracle that we survived it’.

Other interviewees expressed similar views, noting that CAN, JNI, and the Council of Traditional Rulers were among the few institutions that had the ability to intervene between the political parties and their supporters to lower tensions. At the same time, while individuals associated with these forums were respected by ordinary Nigerians, they could not influence politicians because they were, or were perceived to be, partisan. The majority of interviewees said that all the interventions that sought to help were clouded by allegations of bias, and therefore doomed from the start. Groups that were neutral did not dare intervene for fear that they too would be accused of having taken sides. Furthermore, as the crisis heightened, no one seemed willing to dialogue and listen. It was very difficult, for example, to promote dialogue in the community from which the two leading gubernatorial candidates originated. Each had his supporters and, allegedly, even the leaders could not keep them in check.

³⁸ Some interviewees claimed, for example, that IPAC was a polarised and ineffective platform, in which smaller parties realigned with the larger ones in exchange for financial rewards.

External initiatives like the one spearheaded by the US Ambassador seemed to elicit less suspicion. Nonetheless, the state peace pact focused on the political elites, and no concerted effort was made to reach out to the foot soldiers. The Rivers pledge was read on TV before the signing ceremony, but no copies were apparently distributed to journalists. Continued violence (including a politically-motivated killing hours after the signing) made it achingly clear to the people of Rivers that the pledge was a symbolic act, not a strong deterrent of violence.

However, interviewees also conceded that, had peace advocacy efforts not been made, the situation in Rivers State would probably have been worse. People had feared a major outbreak of violence and a collapse of law and order during and after the elections. Some local interviewees thought that their interventions had helped prevent generalised violence, even if targeted assassinations and other attacks persisted. Throughout the electoral cycle, various initiatives brought communities and their representatives together with candidates to discuss how the elections could be held peacefully. In Okrika, for example, considered one of the most volatile areas before and during the election, several organisations worked with communities to maintain peace and stability: the elections passed without recorded violence, no doubt partly due to this collective effort.

Reducing violence: the way forward

Looking ahead, many local interviewees seemed to think that there is still room for constructive engagement in Rivers. While they condemned attitudes to violence and impunity in the state, they also believed the former President set an example of responsible leadership that has helped to promote peace. They argued that Rivers urgently needs interventions that will build a non-violent democratic culture, restore confidence in modern and traditional institutions, and address the underlying causes of conflict.

Rebuild confidence among local stakeholders. Lack of trust is one of the issues that needs to be addressed most urgently. The vast majority of interviewees expressed serious misgivings about traditional chiefs, religious leaders, the security forces, and most of the civil society organisations in Rivers State. As one explained, ‘we’re too suspicious of ourselves over here’. Years of outright abuse of the rule of law, coupled with violence and corruption, have left the social fabric in disrepair. Neutral convenors are required, with a transparent agenda and the right knowledge and skills, to help rebuild confidence and trust between local stakeholders. In the process, traditional institutions should be strengthened, and religious authorities encouraged to exercise their influence more positively. In the long-run, this could contribute towards increasing the effectiveness and credibility of home-grown mechanisms for dispute resolution and reconciliation.

Ensure equality before the law. Some interviewees said that, to encourage the public to remain loyal to democratic politics, ADR must be coupled with institutional reform. As long as the police, judiciary and INEC seem not to act impartially, conflict resolution will always be putting out fires, offering temporary solutions at the last minute. The incentives for electoral violence would shrink sharply if incumbents no longer enjoyed unfair advantages and all parties were given equal protection under the law.

Coordinate action and reach out to women’s groups. The formal and informal coordination of conflict prevention initiatives should be strengthened. Some interviewees thought that failures of civil society coordination explain much of the violence in places like Rivers State and why some conflict prevention programmes had little effect. They also said that civil society organisations should do more to involve women. In some communities in the South, women’s

groups have disbanded because their male peers felt threatened. Building women's skills in early warning, advocacy, negotiation, and conflict resolution would encourage cohesion across communities and increase the potential for peace.

Promote comprehensive approaches. Interviewees said that conflict prevention strategies should be more comprehensive. Political candidates cannot always control their followers, so there is no guarantee that pledges by them will produce peaceful conduct. Also, many Nigerians do not follow federal or state politics closely and some of them are up in arms at the first whisper of rumour. Conflict resolution programmes therefore need to relate their visions of peaceful co-existence and social justice to the hard and distressing realities on the ground. Activists should mobilise political will at the top but also foster a culture of prevention and inclusion at the base.

Think long-term. A large number of interviewees were in favour of adopting a more incremental approach and a longer time horizon. Some representatives of civil society organisations admitted that, by the time they launched their conflict prevention interventions in February 2015, most key local actors had already taken sides and had lost their ability to guide an already divisive and manipulative campaign. Conflict prevention programmes should therefore start earlier in the electoral cycle, when attitudes are more open and it is possible to influence the political environment. Activists should also allow more time for change to take root. Preparations for the 2019 electoral cycle should commence now, and start with a healing process. Many were victimized during the 2015 campaign, and the effects of violence continue to ripple through communities in Rivers State. Political and other actors, and the public, should be encouraged to ask themselves what went wrong, and what could be done differently in the future.

Change patterns of political and community interaction. Interviewees said that local authorities and civil society organisations in Rivers State should work to reform and repair social and political habits and patterns. Civil society organisations should work more closely with the political class to organise public forums and informal meetings, foster more cooperative relationships, implement participatory democracy, and counter a political culture that considers 'politics is war'. In parallel, local and state governments should provide more support to NGOs that promote community empowerment. Communities in Rivers are willing to dialogue and address their grievances peacefully, but they need to see tangible benefits that add value to their lives.

AKWA IBOM STATE³⁹

Overview: political history and prevailing conflict issues

Since the Fourth Republic was established in 1999, Akwa Ibom State has been considered PDP territory, first under the administration of Obong Victor Attah (1999-2007), then Godswill Akpabio (2007-2015) and now Governor Udom Emmanuel. Even the principal opposition candidates in the gubernatorial elections of 2011 and 2015, Senator James Akpanudoedehe and Umana Okon Umana, had defected from the PDP.

The principal gubernatorial candidates in 2015 were Udom Emmanuel (PDP) and Umana Okon Umana (APC). Udom Emmanuel was widely perceived to be the anointed candidate of outgoing Governor Akpabio, having served in his cabinet as Secretary to the State Government (SSG). Umana Umana had once held the same post under Akpabio, and was a leading PDP politician until he and the Governor fell out.

Most professional observers considered that Akwa Ibom was unlikely to experience widespread electoral violence, given the PDP's dominance. The state was nevertheless interesting for several reasons. First, Governor Akpabio was one of President Jonathan's staunchest allies and financiers. Second, the election was a plebiscite on Akpabio's popularity and performance as Governor. Third, it was a test for the APC, whose growing support in the state made it increasingly competitive. On the eve of the elections, more PDP leaders defected or pledged their support for the APC, including former Governor Attah and former Minister of Petroleum, Donald Etiebet. Though the PDP candidates remained clear favourites in the state elections, the outcome was not a foregone conclusion.

Apart from the gubernatorial election in 2011, when thug attacks were reportedly orchestrated by both main parties, most previous elections in Akwa Ibom had not been particularly violent. The most violent clash in 2011 took place after a campaign rally, and left several dead and many injured. The presidential campaign office of Goodluck Jonathan/Namadi Sambo was destroyed as were some alleged 500 private and official vehicles. Unprecedentedly, the opposition candidate, Senator James Akpanudoedehe was arrested and charged with treason.

Tensions before the elections

Ethnicity and religion

The three largest ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom state are the Ibibios, the Annang, and the Oron. Since 1999, an Ibibio (Obong Victor Attah) and an Annang (Godswill Akpabio) have been Governors, which led the Oron to hope that one of their own would be elected in 2015. People from other ethnic groups did not oppose this expectation, but all hoped that the new Governor would not be imposed.

³⁹ Rivers State is the main case study in the South South geo-political zone. Given the level of tension and violence witnessed in Rivers, the researchers decided to review a second state in the region. It should be noted that the researchers visited Akwa Ibom for a shorter period and therefore conducted fewer interviews.

The non-locals (settlers) who were interviewed said that many locally-born residents considered them opposition supporters. They were often threatened on this ground by local politicians and their supporters, usually from the PDP. A leader of the Hausa-Fulani communities in the state said that over 90 per cent of Hausa-Fulanis fled Akwa Ibom on the eve of the Presidential election because they were afraid of being attacked by locally-born residents who supported the candidacy of President Jonathan, who came from the South South region. He added that the scale of the exodus was clearly revealed by the fall in attendance at the Friday Jumat Service in Uyo Central Mosque.

Contentious PDP primaries

As mentioned above, several interviewees noted that Umana Umana (the APC's candidate for governor) had been the PDP's preferred candidate until Umana and Governor Akpabio fell out. When primaries finally took place, a group of 22 PDP gubernatorial candidates (the G-22, led by Nsima Ekere) accused Governor Akpabio of selecting the delegates in a manner that guaranteed the victory of his new protégé, Udom Emmanuel. The ill-feeling generated by this incident made the gubernatorial election particularly contentious in the state.

Pre-election violence and intimidation of the opposition

Several violent attacks occurred during the 2015 campaign. According to one local source, a former Deputy Speaker of the State House of Assembly seeking re-election, Obong Okon Uwah (APC), was assassinated by suspected PDP thugs, while Chief Sunny Udom, (Campaign Manager for the APC's gubernatorial candidate) and Senator Helen Esuene (the Labour Party's gubernatorial candidate), were fortunate to survive assassination attempts. In the run-up to the elections, an order was apparently issued that no opposition candidate should attempt to campaign in Essien Udim, Governor Akpabio's Local Government Area. It was also reported that Gen. Buhari was refused the use of Uyo Township Stadium when he visited Akwa Ibom as President-elect.

Efforts to reduce tensions and the potential for violence

Compared to neighbouring Rivers State, fewer civil society organisations operate in Akwa Ibom. Interviewees agreed that civil society activism in the state is often a path to government appointment. As a result, few NGOs or community-based organisations attempted to engage on the issues that generated tension during the campaigning period. Despite these limitations, some interventions were made, particularly by religious leaders.

The state chapter of the National Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) ran several peace campaigns and encouraged imams, during Friday prayers, to urge the faithful to act peacefully and lawfully and avoid violence during the elections. The state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) hosted a public meeting at which gubernatorial candidates of the main parties presented their manifestos.

The state chapter of the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) also held a seminar for church leaders at the Catholic Secretariat in Uyo to encourage priests to preach in favour of non-violence and peaceful conduct during the elections. The secretariat also produced and distributed posters on non-violence across the state.

The Nigeria Police Force supported the signing of a Peace Accord by candidates in the state. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) produced and aired radio jingles calling on youth and other citizens to act peacefully. Interviewees said that traditional authorities were either passive

or partisan, and that very few traditional rulers did not side with a particular candidate or party; the few attempts they made to engage with the public were either half-hearted or designed to drum up support for the candidate of a particular ethnic group.

Local perceptions of the Abuja Accord

The Abuja Accords were regarded as a good symbolic gesture that had little or no real effect on the conduct of politicians in the state. The Assistant Inspector-General of Police for Zone 6 (South-South), Tunde Ogunshakin, facilitated the signing of a Peace Accord by gubernatorial candidates in the state. Violent acts were committed afterwards, so interlocutors felt that the initiatives did not bring about peace dividends or tangible benefits.

The impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives

It is equally difficult to assess the impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives. First, traditional rulers who oversee traditional ADR mechanisms were politically partisan, which seriously limited their ability or willingness to apply ADR to electoral disputes. Interviewees said that virtually no initiatives were taken by traditional rulers. Second, the state experienced more violence before and during the elections than had been anticipated. As a result, interviewees hesitated to say that official or civil society ADR initiatives made much impact. Third, most ADR initiatives elsewhere in Nigeria are undertaken by community-based and faith-based civil society organisations, few of which operate in Akwa Ibom, making it difficult to compare ADR and conflict reduction initiatives and their impact with those elsewhere.

The conduct of security agencies and INEC officials during the elections

The elections in both Akwa Ibom and Rivers state suffered from electoral irregularities and malpractice, and in both states the opposition APC and some election observers called for the results to be cancelled. The European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) to Nigeria also asked INEC to investigate allegations of rigging, intimidation and violence against the opposition during the elections in both states. Other observer missions encouraged those aggrieved by the outcome of the elections to seek legal redress.

Contrary to expectations, Akwa Ibom experienced several violent incidents. In Uyo, thugs snatched ballot boxes at various polling stations. Systematic disenfranchisement of voters was reported, especially in areas where the opposition had support. In these areas, it was alleged that voting materials were not distributed or arrived late. In several Local Government Areas (Uruan, Ikot Ekpene senatorial district, Essien Udim, Ikot Ekpene), APC's logo was said to be missing from ballot papers, disenfranchising APC supporters. In Ibesikpo Asutan, it was reported that INEC did not deliver election materials. Several people were allegedly killed across the state during the electoral period. A reporter of the Radar Newspapers was abducted and released the next day by suspected PDP thugs. An Election Observer for the Catholic Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) had her mobile phone confiscated for two days after taking pictures of political thugs perpetrating violence in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area.

An election observer at a polling station in Ibesikpo village (Ibesikpo Asutan) witnessed a serving Commissioner under the Akpabio administration and policemen enter the polling station and seize all the election materials at gunpoint; the observer reported that an understanding obviously existed between INEC and the police that INEC officials should surrender the materials. In

Ibiono-Ibom, two observers reported that INEC officials explained to non-PDP voters at the start of accreditation that the polling unit was strictly for PDP voters; a voter who contested their request to leave was allegedly arrested.

Most interviewees in Akwa Ibom believed that abuses of the electoral process were perpetrated by the PDP, INEC and security agencies (especially the police). Following allegations of bias against the police in Akwa Ibom during the presidential election, an Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Baba Adisa Bolanta, three Police Commissioners and a Special Police Unit were deployed to the state before the gubernatorial and State House of Assembly elections. This was said to have irked leading PDP politicians in the state because rigging became more difficult.

Reducing violence: the way forward

The majority of interviewees in Akwa Ibom lamented the near-absence of credible civil society organisations in the state. They suggested that previous administrations had deliberately stifled civil society activity and regretted that, as a result, few civil society organisations were available to prevent or mitigate electoral violence before and during the elections.

Promote a civic culture. Given the low level of civil society activity, most interviewees recommended that the state government and other relevant bodies should take steps to promote civic culture in the state. They said that civil society organisations operating in the state should be supported by the state government and encouraged to develop electoral governance programmes.

Start ADR early. Interviewees said that, in the future, electoral ADR interventions should begin earlier, so that all relevant stakeholders can be involved. They said that the National Peace Committee's intervention set the tone for similar interventions across the country, but came too late. The Abuja Peace Accord might have reduced violence more, and stimulated a larger number of peace initiatives, if it had been signed before the election campaign began. They emphasised the importance of disseminating peace messages as widely as possible.

Foster a culture of peace. Interviewees called for the institutionalisation of a culture of peace in the state. Specifically, they said the state government should include peace education in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools so that students appreciate the benefits of peace from an early age. They felt the public would be receptive to programmes that promote peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution, and methods to transform violent and divisive cultural practices and beliefs, and believed that such programmes would ultimately reduce electoral violence. They urged the state and federal governments, and development partners, to sponsor such initiatives.

Deal with impunity. Respondents were unanimous in saying that impunity is the major cause of recurrent electoral violence in the state. They said that, had the perpetrators of electoral violence in 2011 been prosecuted, it would have deterred others and reduced electoral violence in 2015. Specifically, they said that the security agencies should be firm and impartial in arresting and prosecuting perpetrators of electoral violence. If this is not done, interviewees believed, electoral violence is likely to worsen in the future.

Involve religious and traditional leaders in ADR initiatives. Although they said that traditional authorities were partisan and had played little or no part in ADR efforts in the state, interviewees believed that their authority and influence is such that civil society organisations and other actors should involve them in ADR initiatives. For similar reasons, they said that the peace messaging initiatives of religious authorities were very important. The interviewees felt that

religious leaders probably have more potential than any other actor to reduce electoral violence in the state, and recommended that the state government and development partners should encourage and support initiatives that faith-based organisations and religious bodies undertake.

Promote inter-ethnic harmony, appreciate diversity. To protect residents who were not born in the state, such as the northern Muslims in Akwa, from attacks and persecution during elections, interviewees said that the federal and state governments should support initiatives that foster inter-ethnic and inter-religious co-existence and harmony. Specifically, they called on the state government, religious bodies and civil society groups to develop programmes that increase public appreciation of diversity and promote harmonious relations between locally born residents and settlers, irrespective of their states of origin or religion.

ABIA STATE

Overview: political history and prevailing conflict issues

Abia State was carved out of the former Imo State in 1991. Five years later, it was divided into three senatorial districts: Abia North, Abia Central and Abia South. In 1999, Chief Orji Uzor Kalu from the Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA) became the first civilian Governor. He was succeeded in 2007 by Chief Theodore Ahamefula Orji, then of the PPA and later the PDP, who secured a second term four years later with 82.33% of the vote. The PDP won all 3 senatorial seats in 2011 and all the State House of Assembly seats and maintained a firm grip on Abia's administrative structures.

Historically, though rich in natural resources,⁴⁰ the state experienced less violence and insecurity than other states in the Niger Delta. Tensions started to rise in 2010, when the existing local government administrations were dissolved and the Governor appointed a caretaker committee to run the Local Government Areas. This caused frustration because residents felt they lacked political representation in the new Areas.⁴¹ A spike in criminality and abductions occurred at the same time, increasing vigilante justice in reaction.⁴² The number of incidents decreased in 2011, though kidnappings, political intimidation and cult violence remained a concern in 2012 and 2013. A CLEEN Foundation report (2012) listed Abia as one of the three states with the highest incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria. The political temperature continued to rise as candidates and their supporters geared up for the 2015 elections. In 2014, politically-motivated shootings and killings occurred and local newspapers reported connections between criminal gangs and political parties. Notable incidents included the killing of the State Commissioner for Agriculture in Abia and the vandalism of an APC office.

For the first time since Abia's creation, the 2015 elections were strongly contested. Four parties fielded candidates: the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), the APC, the Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA) and the PDP. The principal candidates for Governor in 2015 were Dr Okezie Ikpeazu of the ruling PDP, and Dr Alex Otti of APGA, the main opposition party in the state. The results of the gubernatorial election are in dispute. APGA challenged PDP's victory before Abia's Election Tribunal, while INEC's Returning Officer cancelled the results from three local government areas (because of 'incontrovertible evidence of violence') and later reversed his decision. While justice takes its course, PDP and APGA loyalists have clashed over the inspection of election materials used in the April 11 governorship election.

Tensions before the elections

Some interviewees described the period before the elections as the 'usual tussle' between political elites, and suggested that similar infighting is a feature of any democratic contest. They said PDP and APGA candidates tried to intimidate each other, but no major incidents occurred and Abia

⁴⁰ Abia State produces an estimated 27 per cent of Nigeria's crude oil and has significant reserves of natural gas.

⁴¹ See: <http://library.fundforpeace.org/electionscenario-abia-1501>.

⁴² <http://library.fundforpeace.org/library/conflictbulletin-abia-1407.pdf>.

suffered fewer casualties of electoral violence than other states. In the words of one interviewee, ‘there was more noise than actual violence’.

However, a much larger number of interviewees said that intimidation, harassment and political violence were widespread during the 2015 campaign. They described a largely unaccountable political system and repressive electoral environment in which candidates, journalists, civil society actors and observers were threatened and sometimes attacked. APGA officials also cited numerous incidents of political violence, which included attacks on their members, premises and campaign material. In Ikwuano Local Government Area, APGA supporters were allegedly assaulted by thugs with machetes and guns. The APGA gubernatorial candidate and his team were physically prevented from attending a town hall meeting, though they had obtained a permit from the police. Thugs were reportedly mobilised to prevent them from accessing other venues in Umuahia North, Umuahia South, and Isiala Ngwa North. Throughout the campaigning period, APGA was reportedly unable to access most public facilities (such as stadiums and schools).

In the city of Aba, an APGA stronghold, coffins were placed in the street, carrying warnings to residents that they would be killed if they did not vote for a Ngwa governor (the PDP candidate). Leaders of both PDP and APGA condemned the stunt and accused each other of being responsible for it. APGA claimed it was a deliberate PDP ploy to intimidate and disenfranchise APGA voters, while the PDP argued that desperate APGA politicians were smearing PDP.

APGA officials submitted several petitions to the police, the DSS, the army, and INEC, denouncing intimidatory tactics against them. The PDP also alleged that its staff had been attacked by APGA supporters on several occasions while campaigning. One of INEC’s offices appears to have been targeted by an arson attack⁴³ and a local NGO, which was monitoring the election, was ransacked by armed men who claimed to be investigating the alleged printing of fake PVCs. After these incidents, no arrests were made.

According to some interviewees, the persistent security problems stemmed from a dysfunctional political system in which a small elite exercised unrestrained power. The friction between APGA and PDP was largely caused, they said, by PDP rival factions battling each other. Dr Alex Otti, for example, had initially declared his intention to contest the 2015 Abia governorship election for PDP, but then decided to join APGA, along with scores of other PDP members. Many locals believe that he had defected because the PDP had zoned the gubernatorial seat to the South zone. Dr Otti himself claimed to have joined APGA for political reasons and to rescue Abia State from collapse.

The primaries seemed to make matters worse. As in other states, some candidates and their supporters felt that the victorious candidates had been placed or imposed by party chieftains. Alleging breaches of procedure, aggrieved party members launched protests but were eventually persuaded to accept the outcome without resorting to litigation.

The origins of candidates were also a source of tension and controversy during the pre-electoral period. Because Governor Orji came from Abia Central, and his predecessor from Abia North, some believed that the next Governor should be from Abia South. But whereas the PDP and APC fielded candidates from the South zone, the other parties did not, triggering accusations in some quarters that their selection process was not equitable or fair. Other local stakeholders argued that boundary adjustments had promoted incompetent candidates and discouraged good

⁴³ Because INEC shared the building with other organisations, police investigators were unable to determine definitively which organisation was targeted.

ones. The nomination of APGA's candidate, Dr Otti, was particularly contentious, since he claimed to have grown up in the South zone but his parents were from the North.

Efforts to reduce tensions and the potential for violence

A local peace pledge

After the Abuja Accord was signed, the Inspector General of Police instructed Assistant Inspector Generals of Police across the country to undertake similar initiatives. The Abia State Commissioner of Police organised a peace pledge by candidates contesting the gubernatorial and national assembly seats in the state, and by chairmen of the principal political parties. However, the two main candidates in the gubernatorial elections did not attend the signing ceremony in person and were represented by their deputies.

In addition to provisions that replicated the letter and spirit of the Abuja Accord, the local pact included an 'Abia-specific' commitment to refrain from damaging or removing campaign materials of other candidates. As local observers expected, violent incidents and intimidation continued to occur after the signing ceremony. Party members and supporters of the main political parties frequently accused each other of breaching the accord.

The influence of religious leaders

Many interviewees said that most religious leaders were biased and lacked moral authority to influence the conduct of candidates or their supporters. They said also that some had advocated for peace and advised their congregations to vote wisely, for candidates that would represent their interests. Many churches include both APGA and PDP members, and some religious leaders seem to have attempted to remain neutral and to sensitise their members to the value of democracy, and the need for good governance and accountability. They prayed for peaceful elections, released press statements promoting reconciliation, and engaged with the political parties.

The role of traditional authorities

Most interviewees said that traditional rulers found it difficult to remain neutral in political matters. The Abia State government perceived them to be an extension of the administration. If they endorsed a candidate of the ruling party, they were not accused of being partisan; but, if they preferred an opposition candidate, they would be accused of meddling in politics, their staff would be withdrawn, and their titles might be revoked. Interviewees recalled that the traditional ruler of the Ezianya community was disowned and investigated after he bestowed a chieftaincy title on Muhammadu Buhari.

A number of traditional leaders did try to ensure that peace reigned during the 2015 elections. After briefings from security organisations, some rulers convened town hall meetings with the political parties and youth, urging them to deliver credible, violence-free elections. A few traditional authorities also promoted peace using traditional ADR mechanisms, outside the electoral cycle, through the *Ama Ala* (the highest traditional decision making forum), the *Umunna* (a forum of male heads of families or clans), and age grades (which took responsibility for law, peace, order and security in many communities). Town unions often dealt with community disputes in more cosmopolitan areas. These various traditional conflict resolution mechanisms filled a critical need during the period because Abia State's courtrooms were closed from December 2014.

Initiative by civil society and non-governmental organisations

Overall, very few civil society organisations were active in Abia State, and most lacked the resources, capacity and credibility to influence the conduct of politicians or the public. As noted, some civil society organisations were deliberately intimidated or attacked. Others appeared to be ‘briefcase NGOs’, which did very little at the grassroots or on policy.

Some NGOs nevertheless ran voter education and awareness campaigns. As the elections approached, the Justice, Development and Peace/Caritas Committee of the Catholic Church (JDPC) organised a peace rally and debate, titled ‘Abia people decide’. PDP, APGA, APC and PPA candidates were invited to present their manifestos and discuss a range of topics with the electorate, including good governance, economic development, and education. It also trained and mobilized 50 electoral observers before the election who reported to the JDPC’s Secretariat.

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), supported by the MacArthur Foundation, organised town hall meetings in the 17 Local Government Areas of the state, to raise voters’ awareness of their rights and responsibilities. It urged traditional authorities, the political parties, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) to promote peaceful elections. The CLEEN Foundation and the Foundation for Environmental Rights, Advocacy and Development (FENRAD) urged the security agencies to conduct themselves professionally and hold perpetrators to account for any abusive behaviour. Other NGOs also helped disseminate materials associated with the ‘Vote not fight’ campaign, and facilitated discussions with local people on the topic ‘Ballots without bullets’.

The conduct of the security agencies

Interviewees evaluated the conduct and performance of the security agencies in different ways. Some claimed that police officers intimidated political opponents and members of the public (civil society representatives, journalists, electoral observers) in order to influence the outcome of the elections. At times, they said, security agents acted like ‘party men, rather than policemen’, and they alleged that some engaged in electoral fraud (locking up a local observer until the gubernatorial elections were over, retrieving electoral materials after inconclusive polls, etc.).

Other voters and observers reported that the police had helped maintain a peaceful atmosphere and had appeared to act impartially. Several interviewees said they had witnessed no incidents of harassment or abuse of power, but some heavy-handedness, during the elections. Soldiers, for example, appear to have prevented accredited observers and journalists from passing some security checkpoints.

All the security agencies participated in ICCES strategy meetings and briefings by INEC’s Resident Coordinator. The state police command reassured citizens that they could vote for the candidate of their choice, free of intimidation and politically-motivated violence. The police reportedly investigated attacks perpetrated during the pre-election period, but no arrests were made for lack of evidence. In this context, APGA’s leadership continued to accuse the police of not doing enough to protect its members. The PDP too complained that the military were biased and did not allow its agents to enter the counting centre. Adding to these mixed messages, the military is said to have detained INEC staff who were transporting result sheets and card readers from INEC’s office to a hotel that belonged to a government official. The individuals were eventually released by the police and the whereabouts of the materials remained unknown.

The conduct of the NSCDC seemed to inspire more public confidence. It trained residents of Abia State on dispute resolution, as an alternative to litigation, notably in local communities. It

also advocated peaceful conduct during the election, especially in remote parts of the state. NSCDC ran its sensitization campaigns in association with traditional authorities, youth, and civil society organisations.

INEC efforts to ensure peaceful elections

Before the elections, INEC focused on educating voters, providing information on the electoral process, and encouraging voters to cast their votes peacefully. Civil society organisations, religious leaders, traditional rulers, market women, and traders participated in its campaigns.

At the same time, many interviewees criticised INEC for partisanship, electoral fraud, and malpractice. Some INEC staff were accused of selling PVCs, failing to follow INEC guidelines during the voting process, compromising the credibility of the elections by mishandling sensitive materials, accepting bribes, and conspiring to rig the elections. Interviewees spoke, for example, about events during the April 11 gubernatorial elections. After votes had been counted in 11 of the 17 Local Government Areas, APGA had acquired a significant lead. At this point, allegedly, the figures were doctored in favour of the PDP. When local and international observers presented evidence of malpractice, INEC's Returning Officer reportedly cancelled the results in Obingwa, Isiala Ngwa North and Osioma, but then reversed his decision after alleged interventions by the Governor, the PDP National Secretary and other PDP figures. (According to a PDP official, it was INEC's chairman who instructed INEC's Resident Coordinator to let the results stand and allow the issue to be settled in court.)

Meanwhile, INEC officials in Abia said that misinformation was a significant problem during the election. They said that some individuals had claimed that voting had not taken place in certain polling stations, and that INEC had provided fake results sheets. These claims had caused confusion, prompting voters to detain INEC staff and crowds to protest in front of INEC's offices. According to electoral officials, the sheets were in fact genuine and voting had taken place. The delay served only to disenfranchise some voters. INEC officials deplored the absence of fora in which they could sort out such claims and misunderstandings in a frank and transparent way.

Political parties and IPAC

As expected, interviewees believed that political parties were mainly responsible for violent incidents and intimidation. Political leaders denounced violence in public, they said, but did not hold their supporters to account. Some interviewees noted that APGA's gubernatorial candidate had urged followers not to take the law into their own hands, to avoid the bloodshed in other states. At the height of campaigning, the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) was informed of incidents and hotspots, but it was unable to deal with disputes or reduce tension and was largely dysfunctional because its members were in dispute over the post of chair. Poor attendance, disrespect for procedures and wrangling prevented IPAC from having a positive influence.

Local perceptions of the Abuja Accord

Abia's political elites and the public at large had strikingly different attitudes to the Abuja Accord. Political leaders professed adherence to the Abuja Accord and said that instructions had been passed down to party members at state and local level, requesting them to conduct themselves in an orderly manner. Ordinary citizens described the exercise as a ceremony in Abuja which had little influence on local politicians, who displayed their usual intolerance. Rising

political violence across the state (and federation) strengthened their scepticism. Several interviewees said that it was not enough to make pronouncements about peace: leaders had a duty to act proactively to create a peaceful electoral environment, by calling their supporters to order, preventing them from making divisive, inciting, or threatening comments, condemning those who threatened to form a parallel government if they lost the elections, and ultimately assuming responsibility for violent actions by their members and supporters.

The impact of local ADR and conflict prevention initiatives

Interviewees suggested that efforts to resolve political disputes and mitigate electoral violence in Abia State were, by and large, fragile and shallow. Residents appeared discouraged by a mixture of fear, apathy, and disillusion. While many in the country turned their attention to high-profile incidents in states such as Rivers and Akwa Ibom, Abians faced a steady stream of intimidation and violence, much of which went unreported. Given the impunity that perpetrators seemed to enjoy, few dared to ‘speak truth to power’, and most let events run their course.

Some religious leaders, civil society organisations, traditional rulers, security agencies, and INEC staff promoted peaceful elections; however, their efforts did not substantially lift public confidence in the electoral process, deter fraud or intimidation, or resolve disputes and conflicts. Civil society organisations are often impressively good at promoting peace and preventing conflicts. Abia, however, has few organisations on the ground that possess the will and skills to champion, and implement, effective conflict reduction programmes.

Interviewees considered that the presence of observers did inhibit violence to an extent. As one explained: ‘People were looking over their shoulders and it was a lot more difficult to bribe INEC officials’. More precisely, observers did not prevent some parties from subverting the electoral process, but did probably dissuade some citizens from responding violently. Some traditional authorities and religious leaders used their influence and conflict resolution mechanisms to solve land and domestic disputes in the community; but neither were especially effective at inhibiting political abuses or violence associated with the elections.

Reducing violence: the way forward

Provide effective judicial redress. Several interviewees claimed that the state elections were fraught with irregularities and did not reflect the will of the people. According to these interlocutors, this was a widely-held view in the state. They added that the residents of Abia are bound to become more disillusioned with the electoral process if injustices are not addressed, and that effective judicial redress is therefore necessary, both to right the wrongs of the past and diminish violence in the future. Interviewees also urged advocacy groups and NGOs to do more to empower communities, so that Abians can better understand and defend their rights. Programmes focused on unemployed youth would make it harder for ‘god-fathers’ to make use of them to carry out political violence.

Institutionalise multi-stakeholder forums. Some interviewees called for the creation of institutionalised multi-stakeholder forums, where state and non-state actors could share information, dispel rumours, and take responsibility for electoral security. Interviewees emphasized that elections should be a process that is collectively designed and implemented, not a window-dressing exercise that serves the interests of the few.

Address political and structural violence before and after elections. Many interviewees agreed that more initiatives should actively manage and defuse tensions before and after elections. Conflicts build up well in advance of polling day, and the effects of violence persist long after it. Public office is a prized possession and it gives rise to a violent political culture, which will not be removed by short term interventions during electoral campaigns. Civil society organisations and other actors should address political and structural violence over a longer period, using policy dialogue, monitoring, and advocacy campaigns to make government structures more responsive. This is necessary to overturn the growing disconnect between Abia's political elite and the public. Establishing structured mechanisms for regular dialogue between political competitors, and between the state and civil society, could also help to temper confrontational political behaviour and perhaps reduce violence.

Restore government accountability. Some interviewees argued that it is essential to make government properly accountable to the people and thereby increase the commitment of Abia's political elites to sustainable democratic development. All too often, conflict prevention and mitigation strategies appeal to the 'better angels' of party leaders, instead of curbing and regulating political ambitions that produce and sustain violence.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned at the outset, this assessment provided a detailed account of the formal and informal mechanisms established at state and national level to prevent and address disputes and violent conflicts during the 2015 elections. Its findings suggest that a fairly large-scale national civic education campaign took place, promoting wide peaceful participation in the elections. Respected figures at national, state and local level urged peaceful behaviour, through public statements, radio addresses, town-hall meetings, peace rallies, etc. Multi-stakeholder forums with political actors, religious leaders, traditional authorities, women's and youth groups helped convey messages of peace.

However, in many cases, well-structured alternative dispute resolution (ADR) interventions during the elections were more of an aspiration rather than an established or widespread practice. Across the states under review, few mechanisms for consensus-building, dialogue and dispute-resolution are well-entrenched. Tensions emerged at various points during the 2015 electoral cycle, and escalated as the polls approached, but ADR was not applied effectively in response. In the states that were assessed, few if any bodies possessed the mandate, desire and capacity to intervene directly between the competing parties. INEC created in-house ADR units to resolve pre-election disputes, but hardly any interviewees described specific cases in which INEC officials provided this type of assistance. In Lagos, INEC convened 400 party agents for training, and further interacted with party leaders to allay their fears, especially about card readers. INEC itself acknowledged that most disputes still went to the Lagos courts for adjudication and were not handled by its ADR unit. Presumably this was because most of the problems that arose concerned internal party democracy.

The political parties have also created mechanisms to deal with disputes. In practice, however, complaints and grievances were not resolved by dialogue and mediation. ADR mechanisms appear to exist only on paper, and appeal committees were ineffective at best. When 'godfathers' determined the outcome of primaries, for instance, those who felt cheated had no recourse within the party structure. Political leaders who tried to mediate in such cases were often accused of interference or incitement. A political insider who was interviewed said that he and several colleagues had been dismissed as 'busybodies with no legally defined structure' and that party strongmen had refused to engage with them. From national to local level, parties seem not to regulate unaccountable and predatory behaviour by political elites.

By and large, the practice of political leaders did not match their public commitments to peace. Serious gaps endure in terms of the understanding, capacity and readiness of national stakeholders to actively mitigate tensions and prevent or resolve conflicts. Even more proactive initiatives (NPC, Council of the Wise) were ad-hoc, event-driven interventions rather than planned and considered programmes that built an infrastructure to sustain peace. Rivers State, for example, has witnessed serious violence, intimidation and fraud throughout the years. If the same tactics continue to be used to this day, with the same results, it stands to reason that adequate, sustainable measures have not been put in place to deal more effectively with the drivers and triggers of violence.

In some cases, the assessment shows that peace initiatives had a limited impact, or that their impact was undermined by neo-patrimonial agendas that sought victory by any means, including violence. Entrenched impunity in the South South and South East largely explain their high

levels of political intimidation and violence. In this region, as in other parts of the country, the failure to prosecute electoral crimes has fed a cycle of crime, conflict and corruption. Successive governments have tended to establish commissions of inquiry and then often ignore their recommendations: this does nothing to allay public mistrust of political institutions or anger at their avoidance of accountability.

This is not to say that valuable efforts were not undertaken. Notwithstanding structural weaknesses, the peace initiatives described in the assessment have laid the civic foundation for more robust and effective conflict prevention strategies. The 2015 elections provided an entry point for comprehensive interventions that have the potential to transform the political culture, strengthen civil society (especially in areas where civil society is weak), reinforce the rule of law and the delivery of justice, and create more opportunities for political dialogue and conflict mitigation.

Many interviewees said that alternative dispute resolution is part of Nigeria's DNA. It reflects the country's cultural and historical character more than the court system. Despite deep public disillusion with the political class and its ability to provide a safe environment, the 2015 elections galvanized much of the country into action and convinced many Nigerians that they can demand and effect change. Going forward, Nigerians are in a position to address many of the country's systemic and recurrent causes of disputes, during election periods and at other times.

The recommendations below are based on 115 interviews conducted in seven states across the federation after the 2015 elections. They are designed to encourage reflection and successful implementation of future ADR initiatives in Nigeria.

Recommendations to INEC and the security agencies

➤ Provide timely instruction for the electorate, security agencies and INEC officials.

Most interviewees said that the difficulties encountered during voting, and the accompanying tensions, could have been avoided if INEC's temporary staff had been better trained, especially in use of the smart card reader.

Lack of clarity about the rights and responsibilities of voters and the roles and duties of security agencies also complicated matters at times. In future elections, INEC should allocate more time and resources to train staff at polling stations, who are key to the integrity of the electoral process.

➤ Continue to professionalise election management.

Interviewees said that INEC should make further efforts to professionalise the management of elections, to ensure that their outcomes are legitimate and widely accepted. To this end, they urged INEC to continue to produce and distribute PVCs during the new electoral cycle.

Interviewees also requested INEC to devise a more robust communication strategy that reaches beyond urban areas, makes use of local languages, and corrects misinformation on electoral preparedness and voting procedures. They wanted INEC to improve its logistics management and to make contingency plans before future elections.

➤ **Foster cooperation between INEC and ICCES.**

In some states, particularly Lagos, interviewees commended the collaboration between INEC, the security agencies, and civil society groups during the election period. In particular, they commended the INEC-ICCES partnership in Lagos, which pooled and coordinated resources to ensure electoral security. In other states, however, cooperation was less evident and interviewees wanted more frequent interaction and a more meaningful partnership.

➤ **Enforce laws that limit election spending.**

Respondents in some states condemned the way politicians spend money in elections, exceeding statutory limits. They were particularly critical of both the APC and PDP in this respect. They recommended that INEC and the security agencies should take additional measures to enforce the rules that govern party financing and electioneering.

➤ **Ensure security in fragile regions during elections.**

Most interviewees said that the security agencies across the federation generally conducted themselves in a professional and impartial manner. However, interlocutors in the North East region felt that more could have been done to ensure the security of voters and electoral officers. Tension was acute after Boko Haram issued threats to disrupt the election, and some of the electorate were too afraid to vote.

While acknowledging that it is difficult to secure an entire geo-political zone, interviewees believed that some of the attacks that had occurred were preventable. In future elections, they urged the authorities and security forces to put special mechanisms in place to protect the security of communities that are particularly vulnerable.

➤ **Enforce equality before the law.**

A majority of interviewees, particularly in the South South and South East, said that, to maintain public support for democratic practices, ADR must be coupled with institutional reform. Where the police, judiciary and INEC do not act impartially, conflict resolution will merely extinguish fires, providing temporary solutions at the last minute. The incentives for electoral violence would fall sharply if incumbents did not benefit from unfair advantages and all parties enjoyed equal protection under the law.

➤ **Deal with impunity.**

Respondents in the South South and the South East were especially unanimous in saying that impunity is the main cause of recurrent electoral violence in their states. The perpetrators of electoral violence in 2011 were never prosecuted, and as a result those with political ambitions had no reason not to use the same tactics in 2015.

Bearing in mind that electoral tribunals do not deal with cases of criminal violence, interviewees urged law enforcement agencies to arrest and prosecute individuals who commit criminal offences during elections.

Recommendations to the Federal and state governments

➤ **Give priority to improving the socio-economic condition of the youth.**

Many interviewees believed that the socio-economic situation of the country partially explains why politicians are desperate to capture power by all means. High youth unemployment is also partly responsible for the involvement of young adults in political thuggery and election-related crimes. They argued that, if the federal and state governments improved the living standards of Nigerians, paying particular attention to youth unemployment, politics would become less dangerous and youths would engage less in electoral violence and other crimes.

➤ **Improve governance to reduce zoning arguments.**

Zoning considerations are a constant source of argument. They compound public grievances, increase competition over resources, and complicate the administration of elections. Introduced to provide stability and address complaints of marginalisation, they often have the opposite effect. Rightly or wrongly, officials are often perceived to favour a particular senatorial district when they take office.

To prevent zoning from generating ethnic insecurities, state authorities should accommodate the needs of different ethnic groups equitably, *inter alia* by developing consensual decision-making mechanisms. If this is not done, communities that feel they suffer discrimination will exploit future elections, at times violently, to redress perceived grievances.

➤ **Foster collaboration between state governments and peace practitioners.**

Across the federation, many peace practitioners and other interviewees believed that the ‘missing link’ in efforts to achieve sustainable peace is political will, and that the authorities should provide more support to ADR initiatives led by civil society organisations. In particular, local and state governments should strengthen community empowerment programmes spearheaded by NGOs. Interviewees argued that, by and large, communities in flashpoint areas are willing to dialogue and address their grievances peacefully, but need to see tangible benefits that improve their lives.

➤ **Increase support for local ADR initiatives.**

Interviewees recognised the value of programmes to promote peace and voter education during the elections, but many said these efforts would have had more impact if they had received more support from the Federal and state governments. Interviewees from local community- and faith-based associations, in particular, said they felt helpless to act because they lacked funding and were not permitted to access certain areas of the state for security reasons. They requested increased financial and logistical assistance, to enable them to undertake more programmes at state and local level.

➤ **Foster a culture of peace among the citizenry.**

Interviewees called for a culture of peace at state and local level. They believed that programmes that drew on local values to promote peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution would have public appeal and ultimately reduce electoral violence, and said that the Federal and state governments, and development partners, should support such initiatives.

They also suggested that state governments should include peace education in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, so that students would acquire the skills and learn the principles of conflict resolution from an early age.

➤ **Follow up previous peace initiatives.**

Interviewees said that dormant peace committees should be reactivated. Interviewees in Kaduna, for example, wanted these committees, working inclusively, to monitor and document abuses, capture public views on security, share their findings, and bridge the gap between government and the public. In Plateau State, several interviewees said that the recommendations of previous commissions of inquiry into major crises should be revisited and implemented.

Recommendations to political parties

➤ **Strengthen internal democracy.**

Interviewees emphasised that tensions were generated across the nation by intra-party disputes during the primaries. Too often, popular and competent candidates won primaries only to be replaced by the protégés of party ‘godfathers.’

The 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) requires political parties to nominate candidates for elections democratically; the parties have laid out formal procedures that comply with this legislation. Political elites nevertheless seem to constantly flout these rules, and INEC is not able to prevent improperly appointed candidates from standing. Many of the experts who were interviewed said that, unless this first line of defence is strengthened, Nigerian elections will continue to trigger crises and political violence.

Peace practitioners suggested that local cadres should press their parties to implement agreed rules and internal disciplinary mechanisms, and refuse to participate in party patronage networks.

➤ **Amend Nigeria’s Constitution to clarify the status and rights of locals and settlers.**

To help address tensions between so-called indigenous and settler communities, some interviewees recommended that the National Assembly should remove ambiguities in Nigeria’s Constitution. Certain sections of the Constitution (Sections 25(1) and 42) affirm a single citizenship and forbid discrimination against Nigerians based on birth, whereas Section 318(1) of the amended 2011 Constitution, which defines membership of a state within the country, confers special privileges on those ‘born of the soil’. Interviewees were divided on how the Constitution should be revised. Some said that it should confer on every Nigerian the right to citizenship wherever he or she decides to reside. Others said that it should confer special rights and privileges on indigenous groups relative to settlers.

Recommendations to the judiciary

➤ **Provide effective judicial redress and assistance to victims.**

In the South East, interviewees referred to a presumably widespread perception that the state elections were fraught with irregularities and did not reflect the will of the people. In Abia, they believed voters would become increasingly disillusioned with the electoral process if perceived injustices are not addressed. Effective judicial redress is necessary, both to right past wrongs and to reduce the potential for violence in the future.

Interviewees also said that assistance to victims should be a critical element of ADR strategies. In Kaduna, many lives have been lost and properties destroyed in recurrent crises. As long as culprits walk away free and victims remain unassisted, reconciliation and bridge-building will not be perceived as genuine and will not last.

➤ **Institutionalize ADR mechanisms across the states of the federation.**

Given the pressure on the formal court system and the time it requires to reach decisions, some interviewees urged civil society organisations across the country to develop ADR programmes, following the example set by Lagos and a few other states. This would ease the burden on courts, and enable less privileged groups (especially in local communities) to seek redress for their grievances fairly and affordably.

Recommendations to civil society organisations

➤ **Understand power structures in the various states.**

A number of interviewees emphasized that peace practitioners need to have a firm grasp of the power structures in different states, if they are to secure sustainable peace dividends. They also argued that it is vital to engage with the instigators of violence and injustice, not just their foot soldiers. Interviewees agreed that powerful figures were often behind both political and inter-communal clashes, and that these would continue until these powerful figures were stopped or deterred.

➤ **Start ADR interventions early and think long-term.**

Many interviewees argued for an incremental approach, and a longer time horizon. Conflict prevention and resolution programmes should start early in the electoral cycle, when attitudes are more open and it is easier to change the political environment. The Abuja Accord would have had more effect if it had been signed earlier and disseminated more widely at grassroots level.

Advocates should allow enough time for change to take root. Preparations for the 2019 elections should start now, with a healing process. Many were victimized during the 2015 campaign, and the effects of violence continue to ripple through communities. Politicians, organisations and communities in areas that experienced violence should be encouraged to ask themselves what went wrong, and what they could do differently in the future.

➤ **Target the grassroots.**

Looking forward, interviewees underlined the importance of community-based approaches. They said that politicians are widely perceived to be part of the problem, whereas grassroots communities are the key to avoiding violence. Local interviewees said that ADR mechanisms should work through individuals and organisations that have real influence on the ground.

They should also target less privileged groups in rural areas, rather than city elites, because these experience armed violence most often, and most directly. For this reason, civil society organisations that are present in rural areas should be frontline partners in ADR programming.

➤ **Change patterns of political interaction.**

Civil society organisations should work more closely with the political class to organise public forums and informal meetings, foster more cooperative relationships, implement participatory democracy, and counter a political culture that thinks ‘politics is war’. An alternative platform for

interaction would also help to maintain communication when IPACs, at federal or state level, do not deal with issues of concern constructively.

➤ **Promote comprehensive approaches.**

Interviewees said that conflict prevention strategies should be more comprehensive. Political leaders cannot always control their followers; their pledges alone cannot ensure peaceful conduct. Also, many Nigerians do not follow politics closely and some are up in arms at the first whisper of rumour. Conflict resolution programmes therefore need to link their visions of peaceful co-existence and social justice to the hard and distressing realities on the ground. While mobilising political will at the top, activists should foster a culture of prevention and inclusion at the base.

➤ **Reach out to women's groups.**

Civil society organisations should also do more to involve women. In certain communities in the South, women's groups have been disbanded because their male counterparts felt threatened. Building women's skills in early warning, advocacy, negotiation, and conflict resolution would encourage cohesion across communities and increase the potential for peace.

➤ **Rebuild confidence among local stakeholders in the aftermath of the elections.**

In the South East and South South, lack of trust is a serious issue that needs to be addressed urgently. The great majority of interviewees in the region were critical of traditional chiefs, religious leaders, the security forces, and most civil society organisations. Years of outright abuse of the rule of law, coupled with violence and corruption, have left the social fabric in disrepair.

Neutral convenors, with transparent agendas and the right knowledge and skills, are needed to help rebuild confidence. In the process, traditional institutions should be strengthened, and religious authorities encouraged to use their influence positively. In the long-run, this would increase the impact and credibility of local dispute resolution and reconciliation mechanisms.

Recommendations to religious and traditional leaders

➤ **Involve traditional authorities and religious leaders in ADR initiatives.**

While acknowledging that ADR is embedded in cultural practices across the federation, the majority of interviewees felt that traditional ADR mechanisms were not used effectively to address election-related disputes. Many interviewees argued that the partisan behaviour of some traditional authorities reduced their moral legitimacy and capacity to lead peace initiatives. In spite of these limitations, many still felt that a combination of peace interventions led by traditional authorities, and ADR initiatives managed by community-based organisations, could reduce violence and improve community relations.

Interviewees in the South East stressed that the peace messaging initiatives of religious authorities during the elections had been important and should be encouraged. They felt that religious leaders probably have more potential than any other actor to reduce electoral violence in the state, and recommended that state governments and development partners should encourage and support initiatives that faith-based organisations and religious bodies undertake.

➤ **Promote the impartiality of traditional and religious leaders.**

Had all traditional authorities and religious leaders remained neutral during the elections, interviewees felt they would have been in a stronger position to persuade candidates and their supporters to avoid violent behaviour. Their influence and moral authority, added to the voices of those advocating peaceful conduct, would have reduced the incidence of electoral violence. To influence the conduct of politicians and youth, and act as impartial arbiters where needed, traditional and religious leaders should be neutral and impartial throughout election periods.

➤ **Pursue inter-faith dialogue.**

Given Nigeria's religious fault lines, inter-faith dialogue is likely to be a key component of efforts to foster a culture of peace. Despite accusations of bias, religious leaders in the state have the ability to defuse existing and potential tensions, especially in cases where socio-economic competition appears in a religious guise. They can help communities to achieve some consensus on divisive issues and restore a shared sense of justice. Dialogues between communities and between communities of faith are a long-term investment in the country's social cohesion.

Recommendations to the media

➤ **Defuse rather than fuel tensions.**

The media were constantly involved in the electoral process. On one hand, they provided voters with information and helped communicate peace messages from a broad range of actors. On the other, some media organisations did not respect the National Union of Journalists' Code of Conduct, and their biased reporting encouraged divisions and confrontation and helped to spread rumours and misinformation. Several interviewees alleged that newspapers had been bribed to publish false political stories.

Interviewees emphasised that the media play a vital role in ensuring that elections are transparent and credible. They said that in future elections the media should make a more concerted effort to defuse rather than fuel tensions, and to air the public's views rather than the defamatory or inflammatory rhetoric of politicians.

General recommendations

➤ **Capture and integrate lessons learned into programming and practice.**

After the elections, many reports have been written and 'lessons learned' meetings held. Going forward, an in-depth comparative reflection might prove valuable, to capitalise on these reviews and integrate their insights in current and future peacemaking practice. Interviewees wanted to move beyond analysis and chart a way forward that will mobilise the support of the legislative and executive branches.

➤ **Address political and structural violence before and after elections.**

Interviewees agreed that more initiatives should actively manage and defuse tensions before and after elections. Conflicts build up well ahead of polling day, and the effects of violence linger long afterwards. Public office is a prized possession and it gives rise to a violent political culture, which will not be removed by short term interventions during electoral campaigns.

Civil society organisations and other actors should address political and structural violence over a longer period, using policy dialogue, monitoring, and advocacy campaigns to make government structures more responsive. This would help remove the growing disconnect between the public and political elites. Establishing mechanisms for regular dialogue between political competitors, and between the state and civil society, could also help to temper confrontational political behaviour and perhaps reduce violence.

➤ **Make a concerted effort to increase coordination.**

The initiatives surveyed here show that Nigerians broadly support credible, smooth, and peaceful elections. At the same time, interviewees in some states felt that conflict prevention efforts could have been better coordinated, formally or informally. In Rivers State, for example, they said that lack of coordination between civil society organisations helps to explain why they had little impact and why there was so much violence. In other states, interviewees said that peace efforts were a bit ‘scattered’, small in scale, short in duration.

Interviewees recommended that key actors at all levels should interact more often and leverage their technical, legal, financial and organisational resources more strategically. Well ahead of elections, they should share information, map resources, assess risks, analyse progress together, strategise next steps and, when appropriate, develop and implement joint action plans. This would increase the impact of individual initiatives and make possible a multifaceted response that meets the needs and demands of the electorate (rather than the capacity of individual organisations).

➤ **Institutionalise multi-stakeholder forums.**

Some interviewees called for the creation of institutionalised multi-stakeholder forums, where state and non-state actors could share information, dispel rumours, and take responsibility for electoral security. Interviewees emphasized that elections should be a process that is collectively designed and implemented, not a window-dressing exercise that serves the interests of the few.

➤ **Foster inter-ethnic harmony and an appreciation of diversity.**

To protect residents who are not local (non-indigenes) from persecution, interviewees said that federal and state governments must take steps to foster inter-ethnic and inter-religious co-existence and harmony. Specifically, they called on state governments, religious bodies and civil society groups to run awareness programmes that celebrate diversity and foster harmony between settlers and local residents, irrespective of their states of origin and religion.

➤ **Restore government accountability.**

A number of interviewees argued that it is essential to make government properly accountable to the people and thereby ensure that political elites work to achieve sustainable democratic development. All too often, conflict prevention and mitigation strategies appeal to the ‘better angels’ of party leaders, instead of curbing and regulating political ambitions that produce and sustain violence.

This assessment provides a sound basis for further analysis, discussion and reflection. It captures the views of stakeholders from Nigeria's six geo-political zones, maps out the major challenges associated with the 2015 elections, and lays out recommendations on how to address them in preparation for the upcoming electoral cycle. Additional scrutiny and action is needed, to fill in the remaining gaps and remedy the shortcomings associated with dispute resolution and violence prevention around the elections. Capacity constraints, coordination issues, planning horizons, the prevalent political culture, long-standing grievances and latent community tensions etc deserve careful consideration, with an eye to developing more sustainable ADR mechanisms. The analysis above is but one step of many towards developing a solid programme of action that will establish a strong and enduring infrastructure for managing Nigeria's ethnic diversity and political competition. Along with many other initiatives, it is hoped that this assessment will help guide and mobilise efforts to continue improving the electoral process and reduce the likelihood of violent contestation for power.

Annex I

LIST OF RESPONDENTS INTERVIEWED FOR THE ASSESSMENT

PLATEAU STATE

1. Commissioner of Police N. D Oki, Plateau State Police Command
2. Mr Adekunle Ajanaku, State Director, Department of State Security, Plateau State Command
3. Mr Osaretin Imahireyereobo, INEC State Deputy Director, Jos Plateau State
4. Da Jacob Gyang Buba, Gwom Rwei of Barkin-Ladi, Plateau State
5. Sheikh Lawal Adam, Deputy Chief Imam of Plateau State/Area Court Judge, Plateau State Judiciary
6. Alhaji Garba Abdulkadir, Turakin Jos, Plateau State
7. Mr Onimisi Alao, Daily Trust Newspapers State Correspondent, Plateau State
8. Mr Jude Onu, Punch Newspapers State Correspondent, Plateau State
9. Professor John Dung-Gwom, HD Jos Forum Adviser, Plateau State
10. Barrister Alice Asaija, Member, State House of Assembly, Plateau State
11. Hon. Peter Shyepsuk, State Publicity Secretary, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Plateau State
12. Rev. Soja Bewarang, Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), Plateau State
13. Mr Godwin Okoko , Chief Executive Officer, Plateau Peace Practitioners Network (PPPN), Plateau State
14. Professor J.E.C Obilom, Eze Ndigbo, Plateau State
15. Mr Bashir Musa Sati , All Progressives Congress (APC) State Secretary, Plateau State
16. Dr. Sumaye Hamza, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Plateau State Government
17. Mr Chima Onwe, Communication and Learning Manager, Search For Common Ground (SFCG), Plateau State
18. Mr Chris Ogbonna, Programme Manager, Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace Centre (DREP), Plateau State
19. Mr Celestine Ukatu, Coordinator, Peace in Jos Project, Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR), Plateau State
20. H.E Professor Sonny Tyoden , Deputy Governor, Plateau State, Jos, Plateau State
21. Dr. Yakubu Sankey, Adviser, Jos Forum, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Plateau State
22. Barrister Bankole Falade, Yoruba Community Leader, Plateau State
23. Rev. Father Akpe Stephen, Assistant Coordinator, Justice Development and Peace/Caritas (JDPC), Plateau State
24. Ms Fatima Suleiman Abdullahi, Founder/Executive Director, Islamic Counselling Initiatives of Nigeria, Plateau State
25. Mr Timothy Baba Parloug, former Special Adviser on Peace Building to the Plateau State Governor
26. Ms Khadija Hawaja, Member of Advisory Committee, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Plateau State

KADUNA STATE

27. Reverend Emmanuel Dzigau, President, HEKAN Church, Kaduna State
28. Hajiya Bilkisu Yusuf, National Leader, Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Kaduna State
29. Reverend Sunday Ibrahim, Secretary, Kaduna State Chapter, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
30. Commissioner of Police U.U Shehu, Kaduna State Police Command, Kaduna State
31. Dr. Khalid Abubakar Aliyu, Secretary General, Jama'atu Nasir Islam (JNI), Kaduna State
32. Dr. Mrs Lydia Umar, CSO Activist, Kaduna State
33. Mrs Comfort Fearon, Women's Interfaith Council, Kaduna State
34. Pastor James Wuye, Co-Executive Director, Interfaith Mediation Centre, Kaduna State
35. Imam Dr. Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa, Interfaith Mediation Centre, Kaduna State
36. Mr Tukur Abdulkadir, Department of Political Science, Kaduna State University, Kaduna State
37. Executives of the Southern Kaduna Peoples' Union (SOKAPU) and the National Youth Council, Kaduna State
38. Gen. (Rtd.) Zamani Lekwot, Chairman, Southern Council of Southern Kaduna, Kaduna State
39. Dr. Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, Former APC State Chairman, Kaduna State
40. Sheik Halliru Abdullahi Maraya, Former Special Adviser to the Governor of Kaduna State
41. Mr Garba Muhammad, Regional Editor, Newswatch Newspapers, Kaduna State
42. Revd. Hayab, Baptist Theological Seminary, Kaduna State.
43. Mr Toyin Alabi, General Manager, Liberty Radio, Kaduna State
44. Pastor Yohanna Buru, Peace Revival and Reconciliation Foundation of Nigeria
45. Imam Sanni Isa, Peace Revival and Reconciliation Foundation of Nigeria, Kaduna State
46. Alhaji Idris Chikazau, Traditional Ruler, Kaduna State
47. Hon. Ben Bako, Former Commissioner for Information, Kaduna State
48. Member, Kaduna Peace and Reconciliation Committee
49. Dr Lydia Umar, Executive Director of Gender Awareness Trust (GAT), Kaduna State

ABUJA, FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY

50. Mr Pascal Holliger, Human Security Adviser, Embassy of Switzerland in Nigeria, Abuja
51. Mr Jasper Veen, Resident Country Director, national Democratic Institute (NDI), Abuja
52. Mr Francis Oke, Principal Programme Officer (PPO), Electoral Assistance Division, Directorate of Political Affairs, ECOWAS Commission
53. Dr Arthur-Martins Aginam, Director, Kukah Centre, Abuja
54. Mr Kehinde Bolaji, Team Leader, Governance, UNDP, Abuja
55. Ms Idayat Hassan, Director, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Abuja
56. Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, Fellow, CDD, Abuja
57. Mr Jude Ilo, Director, Open Society Initiative West Africa (OSIWA) Nigeria Office, Abuja
58. Ms Kemi Okenyodo, Executive Director, CLEEN Foundation, Abuja
59. Ambassador Abdullahi Omaki, Executive Director, Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development, Abuja
60. Mr Kole Shettima, Director, Africa Office, MacArthur Foundation, Abuja

61. Ms Catherine Weiss, Deputy Team Leader and Political Governance Adviser, Department for International Development (DFID), Abuja
62. Mr Sentell Barnes, Country Director, International Replication Institute (IRI), Abuja

LAGOS STATE

63. Mr Nelson Ekujumi, Committee for Protection of Peoples' Rights, Lagos State
64. Hon. Wale Oshun, Chairman, Afenifere Renewal Group (ARG), Lagos State
65. Alhaji Sani Kabiru, Sarkin Hausawa of Lagos, Lagos State
66. Barrister Ademola Sadiq, APC Legal Adviser, Lagos State
67. Mr Chude Achike, Media Director, Justice Peace and Development Commission (JDPC), Lagos State
68. Mr Akin Orebiyi, Resident Electoral Commissioner, Lagos State
69. Head of Legal Department, ADR Coordinator, Lagos State
70. Ms Abimbola Junaid, Director, Arise Nigerian Women Foundation, Lagos State
71. Mr Jimi Kolawole Agbaje, Gubernatorial candidate, PDP, Lagos State
72. Mr Femi Egbewole, Negotiation and Conflict Management Group (NCMG), Lagos State
73. Mr Kehinde Aina, Director, Negotiation and Conflict Management Group (NCMG), Lagos State
74. Mr Ademola Oyinlola, Executive Editor, TELL Magazine, Lagos State
75. Mr Shina Loremikan, Director, Capacity Building Programmes, HURIDAC, Lagos State
76. Mr Ken Nwosu, Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Lagos State Police Monnad, Lagos State
77. Commodore (Rtd) Ebitu Ukiwe, Former Chief of Defence Staff/National Peace Committee member, Lagos State
78. Eze Ndi Igbo of Lagos, H. M. Nwabueze Ohazulike, Lagos State
79. Mr John Bamidele Avoseh, Vice President, National Youth Council, Lagos State Chapter
80. Dame Priscilla Kuye, Former Nigerian Bar Association President/National Peace Committee Member, Lagos State
81. Mr Emmanuel Oladesu, Political Editor, The Nation Newspapers, Lagos State
82. Mr Raymond Mordi, Political Editor, The Nation Newspapers, Lagos State
83. Bishop Magnus Atilade, Vice President, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), South-West Zone; Founder, Interfaith International, Lagos State
84. Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulganiyu, Chief Imam, Mushin Central Mosque, Lagos State
85. Alhaji Prince Olofa Talfik Adedokun, Secretary General Inter-faith Forum International
86. Mr Osewele Nat Beifoh, Deputy Editor, The Sun Newspapers, Lagos State

RIVERS STATE

87. Comrade Celestine Akpobari, Human Rights/Environmental Activist, Rivers State
88. Mr Chris Finebone, APC State Publicity Secretary, Rivers State
89. Mr Anyakwee Nsirimou, Executive Director, Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law; Coordinator, Niger Delta Civil Societies Coalition, Rivers State
90. Mr Bob Manuel, President, Rivers Entrepreneurs and Investors Forum, Rivers State
91. Dr Emmanuel Ogbonna, Head, Peace and Conflict Resolution Department, NSCDC, Rivers State Command, Port Harcourt, Rivers State
92. Mr Anicetus Atakpu, Senior Programme Manager, Accord for Community Development (ACORD), Rivers State

93. Mr Patrick Emmanuel, Deputy Director, Accord for Community Development (ACORD), Rivers State
94. Arikpo Arikpo, Accord for Community Development (ACORD), Rivers State
95. Chief Charles Woke Olawoka, Traditional Ruler and Member, Port Harcourt City Council of Chiefs, Rivers State
96. Mr Chika Emeh, Project Manager, Search for Common Ground, Rivers State
97. Mr Paul Nyulaku, Lecturer, Centre for Ethnic and Conflict Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State
98. Eze Dr Godspower Onuekwa, JP, Traditional Ruler, Emoha Council of State, Rivers State
99. Ms Chinedum Adebomi, Programme Officer, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), Rivers State
100. Ms Achu Wynyfred, Programme Officer, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), Rivers State
101. Alhaj Nasir Awhelebe Uhor, Rivers State Leader and Vice-President General, National Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), Rivers State
102. Ms Florence Kayemba Ibokabasi, Programme Manager, Stakeholders Democracy Network (SDN), Rivers State
103. Mr Oyebamiji Olumide Ola-Olu, Senior Project Officer, Stakeholders Democracy Network (SDN), Rivers State
104. Reverend Father Edward Obi, Executive Secretary, Niger Delta Catholic Bishops' Forum (NDCBF), Rivers State
105. Gender and Development Action Network (GADA), Ministry of Women Affairs, Port Harcourt, Rivers State
106. Chief Walter Ibibia, PDP State Secretary, Rivers State
107. Mr Oludare Oresanya, Performance Management Manager, Dawn in the Creeks, Rivers State
108. Ms Emem J. Okon, Executive Director, Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, Rivers State
109. Mr Philip Kalio, Executive Director, Support Initiative for Sustainable Development (SISDEV)

ABIA STATE

110. Comrade Nelson Nnanna Nwafor, Foundation for Environmental Rights, Advocacy and Development, Abia State
111. Revd. Dr Greene Eleagu, Executive Director, Helping Hands Initiative, Abia State
112. Mr Edwin Enabor, Head of Voter Education, Publicity, Gender and Civil Society Liaison, INEC State Office, Abia State
113. Mr Michael Akpara, Finance Director, Alex Otti Campaign Organization (APGA), Abia State
114. Mrs Uche Eme-Uche, Deputy Gubernatorial Candidate, APGA, Alex Otti Campaign Organization, Abia State
115. Dr Benito Eze, Commandant, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Abia State Command, Abia State
116. Mrs Nnena Ude, State Coordinator, Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Abia State
117. Barrister Charles Esonu, State Secretary, PDP, Abia State
118. Mr Chuks Onuoha, State Correspondent, The Sun Newspapers, Abia State
119. Revd. Fr. (Dr) Pascal Opara, State Coordinator, Justice Peace and Development Commission (JDPC), Abia State

120. Mr Joshak Habila, Commissioner of Police, Abia State Command
121. Comrade Innocent Nkwocha, Society for Economic Rights and Social Justice (SERSJ)

AKWA IBOM STATE

122. Mr Joe Effiong, State Correspondent, The Sun Newspapers, Akwa Ibom State
123. Mr Okon Bassey, State Correspondent Thisday Newspapers, Akwa Ibom State
124. Mr Aniekan Umanah, Commissioner for Information, Akwa Ibom State Government
125. Revd. Fr. Cletus Etim, State Coordinator, Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), Akwa Ibom State.
126. Barrister Mohammed, General Secretary, Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Akwa Ibom State
127. Alhaji Hassan Sadauki, Sarkin Hausawa, Akwa Ibom State
128. Mr Franklyn Isong, Publisher, Radar Newspapers, Akwa Ibom State

BORNO STATE

129. Mr Mohammed Bolori, Principal Partner, Compact Solutions Limited, Borno State
130. Mr Mallam Hussein Monguno, Civil Society Activist, Borno State
131. Mr Wuyo Mohammed, Civil Society Activist, Borno Coalition for Democracy and Progress, Borno State
132. Ambassador Baba Hamed Jidda, Former Secretary to the Borno State Government (SSG)
133. Former military officer (anonymous contributor)

Annex II

Report on the 'Validation' Workshop

12.10.2015

On the 12th of October 2015, the HD Centre hosted a 'validation' workshop in Abuja. The primary objective of the meeting was to review, discuss and validate the preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in the draft "Post-elections assessment of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms in Nigeria," which was conducted by the HD Centre, with the support of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Australian High Commission in Nigeria. The workshop further aimed to outline the actions needed to strengthen the electoral process in the country and to reduce the likelihood of violent contestation for power.

Participants included 40 conflict resolution practitioners and electoral experts from Abuja and the states where the post-elections assessment was conducted (see the List of Participants in Annex III). This addendum report represents a summary of their general reflections and observations, whereas the omissions and factual errors detected by the participants in the workshop were corrected in the final version of the post-elections assessment.

After a brief overview of the findings by the researchers, the attendees commended HD for its initiative, calling for a wide dissemination of the final document among relevant stakeholders at the federal, state and local level. Participants then discussed the data and recommendations submitted in the draft report, stressing a number of critical priority areas and gaps in conflict prevention efforts that needed to be addressed going forward.

Several practitioners called for the institutionalisation of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms across the electoral cycle, to relieve socio-political tensions and deal with politically contentious issues in a more timely and strategic manner. There was general agreement among the discussants that conflict prevention activities should start early in the electoral cycle, mobilizing the electorate over the long-term for non-violent action, and guiding political parties towards non-confrontational politics.

Relatedly, one contributor noted that some structural conflict prevention initiatives were actually launched well before the 2015 elections (e.g. media trainings; Electoral Act reform; women empowerment; facilitating access to justice), arguing that these efforts contributed to confidence building. At the same time, there was some concern among other participants that many of initiatives had concentrated heavily on the urban areas in Abuja and the state capitals. A number of discussants felt that outreach to the rural areas of the country remained a gap in conflict prevention efforts.

Members in the audience in the workshop further highlighted the need for balanced conflict prevention/resolution approaches that made use of both formal and informal mechanisms. They emphasized the role of traditional structures and religious authorities in solving disputes which were triggered or aggravated during the electoral cycle by socio-economic and ethno-religious cleavages. They also underscored the need to strengthen inter-party dialogue in Nigeria through appropriate mechanisms. One participant explained that most African countries had set up inter-party advisory councils, as stipulated in their Constitutions and/or Electoral Acts. Whenever these bodies had proved unable to tackle inter-party tensions or disputes, parallel avenues for dialogue were introduced, at times facilitated by an impartial third-party. The discussant in question urged his peers to follow suit and to reflect carefully on the types of measures that could help improve the effectiveness of IPAC in Nigeria.

Looking forward, some participants reminded the audience about the need to increase political inclusion in Nigeria. One of them noted the controversy surrounding the 30,000 additional polling units, as well as the rather tenuous situation of the IDPs who could only vote in the officially designated camps. He emphasized the need to debate these issues in a more constructive manner, achieve some degree of consensus nation-wide and take collective action to address exclusionary practices during the new electoral cycle. Another contributor remarked that women and youth were critical stakeholders in conflict prevention, and that they should be given more opportunities to organise themselves, voice their opinions, and engage with the political class during the electoral process.

One of the practitioners queried some of the findings of the post-elections assessment, especially as they related to the conduct of the security forces. Referring to the electoral environment in the north-east, he argued that the capacity and commitment of the security agencies were beyond question and that the incidents recorded there were not preventable. One other discussant added that, by and large, the conduct of the police force had improved considerably as compared to the 2011 elections. He encouraged national stakeholders to take note of best practices recorded across the country, and to also identify the areas where improvements could be made to embed higher professional standards more effectively. Still, despite the advances made, one of the practitioners contended that the relationship between the security agencies and the opposition, at the federal and state level, remained a major source of tension.

The previous elections had also offered some important lessons as to the value of collective conflict prevention efforts and their cumulative impact. Several participants felt that the civil society organisations (CSOs) active at the federal level had been able to liaise further and better with each other during the recently concluded electoral cycle than in the past. Referring to their non-programmatic work and the examples of informal coordination outlined in the draft report, one participant argued that these practices had to be sustained and replicated in the future. In her view, informal coordination in terms of information-gathering, analysis, planning and response throughout the electoral cycle had facilitated a credible and peaceful electoral process in Nigeria, beyond simply addressing technical issues. Furthermore, the various peace initiatives conducted ahead of the 2015 elections seemed to have had more visibility and leverage with political actors. One of the discussants wondered whether the CSOs were more active at the federal level, scaling

up their activities, getting more recognition, or whether they were merely getting better at what they were doing.

As the event concluded, participants uniformly agreed that the key lessons, recommendations and the success stories identified in the draft report had to be disseminated further and discussed with state and non-state actors, to help inform future policy responses and instil a culture of doing the ‘right things’ all throughout the electoral process.

Annex III

List of Participants, Validation Workshop, Abuja

Dr Babatunde Afolabi, Consultant, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Mr Ben Agande, National Democratic Institute (NDI)
Mr Arthur Aginam, Director, The Kukah Centre
Ms Catherine Kyenret Angai, Programme Coordinator, Democracy and Accountability, OSIWA
Imam Dr. Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa, Interfaith Mediation Centre
Mr Joseph Atang, Secretary, Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies. University of Ilorin
Ms Sabina Avasiloae, Project Officer, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Mr Damilare Babalola, Programme Coordinator, Deepening Democracy in Nigeria 2, DFID
Mr Baba Bala, Adviser, Jos Forum, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Plateau State
Mr Kehinde Bolaji, Team Leader, Governance, UNDP, Abuja
Barrister Daramola J.B. Esq, Assistant Secretary General, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
Mr Femi Egbewole, Negotiation and Conflict Management Group (NCMG)
Revd. Dr Greene Eleagu, Executive Director, Helping Hands Initiative,
Revd. Fr. Cletus Etim, State Coordinator, Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)
Mr Nengak Daniel Gondyi, Program Manager, CLEEN Foundation
Mr Guy Hammond, Consultant, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Mr Pascal Holliger, Human Security Adviser, Embassy of Switzerland in Nigeria
Amah Iember, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)
Mr Franklyn Isong, Radar Newspapers
Ms Abimbola Junaid, Director, Arise Nigerian Women Foundation,
Mr Philip Kalio, Executive Director, Support Initiative for Sustainable Development (SISDEV)
Mr David Lambo, Senior Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Amb Layiwola Laseinde, former Director, Policy & Strategy, Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA)
Ms Nafisa Mamman, Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA)
Mr Machill Maxwell, Senior Program Manager, Citizen Participation, National Democratic Institute (NDI)
Mr Matthew Mechan, Second Secretary, Australian High Commission
Ms Caroline Nyaga, Project Officer, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Reverend Father Edward Obi, Executive Secretary, Niger Delta Catholic Bishops' Forum (NDCBF)
Colonel AA Odoba, Nigerian Army
Evelyn Okwara, Programme Officer, Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD)
Mr Oyebamiji Olumide Ola-Olu, Senior Project Officer, Stakeholders Democracy Network (SDN)
Mr Chuks Onuoha, State Correspondent, The Sun Newspapers
Dr. Yakubu Sankey, Adviser, Jos Forum, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Plateau State
Faith Thomas, Assistant Programme Officer, Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD)
Mr Jasper Veen, Resident Country Director, National Democratic Institute (NDI)
Ms Catherine Weiss, Deputy Team Leader and Political Governance Adviser, Department for International Development (DFID)
Pastor James Wuye, Co-Executive Director, Interfaith Mediation Centre