

## POLICY BRIEF #20

# THE IMPACT OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY ON NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Nigeria's complex and dynamic religious institutions are deeply engaged in debates about national and local development priorities and in both policy formulation and program execution. Many contributions are positive, but inter-religious tensions and weak links between religious and development actors undermine the ideal of complementary contributions.**

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Some of Nigeria's religious dynamics are well understood with striking applications, for example thoughtful approaches to peacebuilding and interfaith action on malaria. However, much religious experience is deliberately ignored or sidelined. Ironically, religious dimensions are both over-emphasized and over-simplified.
- Christian-Muslim divides color politics and fiscal policy. Sensitivities around religious roles are linked to the country's sheer complexity, with a religious landscape peppered by historical legacies and an environment where every issue is politicized. Religious matters are intricately tied to Nigeria's constitutional and governance regimes.
- Education, fighting corruption, and addressing roots of conflict and strengthening conflict resolution are high on Nigeria's national development agenda and should be a focus of strategic reflection on religious engagement. The complex conflict resolution landscape offers ample scope for better collaboration.
- National approaches are unlikely to be feasible, and state-by-state dialogue and action is more likely to yield practical results.



The brief draws on the WFDD/Berkley Center/PaRD May 2019 report "Faith and Development in Focus: Nigeria" to outline the ways in which religion and development intersect in Nigeria's complex religious landscape.

## NIGERIA'S PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Mixed economic performance and uneven social development have characterized Nigeria's post-independence history. Prosperity and human development vary widely across the country. Given Nigeria's income level and the history of extensive development efforts over the last 60 years, overall social indicators are low. Nigeria ranked 158 out of 189 countries in the UN Human Development Index. Despite rich resources and entrepreneurial verve, Nigeria is one of the world's poorest countries.

Nigeria's development strategy is firmly anchored in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a broad consensus on priorities: boosting economic growth, improving low social indicators, addressing inequality, and diversifying the economy away from heavy dependence on oil. However, political leaders hold significantly different opinions about the respective roles of the private and public

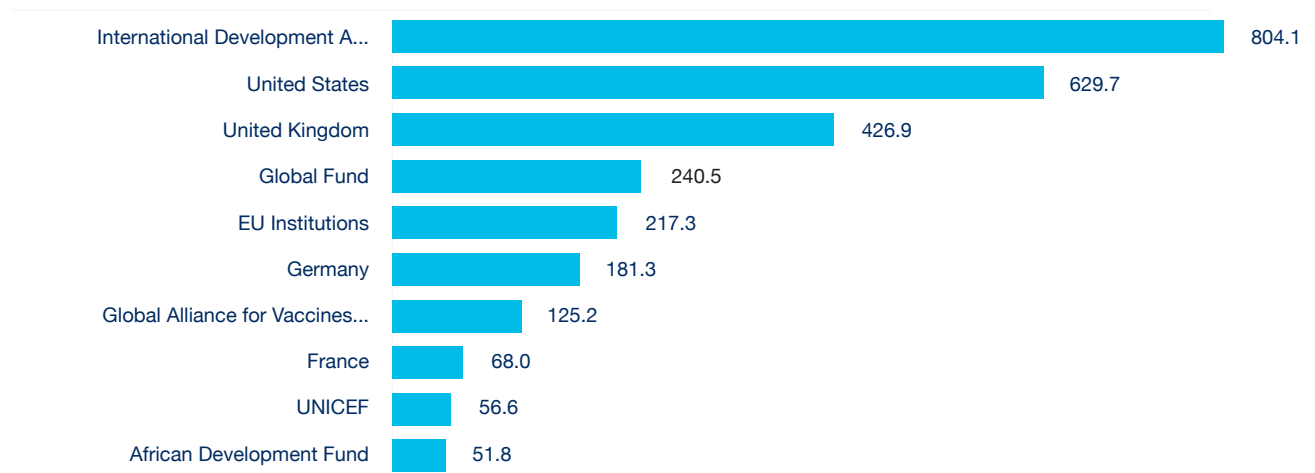
sectors. Widespread, deeply embedded corruption and weak governance affect most sectors and government institutions, including health, education, and security services.

The opportunity for religious organizations to contribute to development lies principally with the high degree of religiosity of the Nigerian population and interest among religious leaders in interfaith cooperation. The challenge is to find a way to marry positive dimensions that include relatively high trust levels for religious leaders and their ubiquitous presence with priority development needs.

## A COMPLEX RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

The religious landscape of Nigeria is diverse and dynamic, with numerous distinct communities and religious leadership that has influence well beyond the country's borders. Demographic data on religious

**Top Ten Donors of Gross ODA for Nigeria, 2016-2017 average, USD million**



affiliations of Nigeria's population are limited, unreliable, and contested; questions concerning religion are not integrated into the national census. However, there is enough data to support important claims about Nigeria's religious landscape. Religious affiliation is often, but not always, linked to Nigeria's notable ethnic diversity. There are roughly equal numbers of Christians—mainly in the South—and Muslims—mainly in the North—although some studies indicate a slight majority of Muslims. Small communities of other faiths are active, including Hindu, Baha'i, and Buddhist groups. Indigenous and traditional religious beliefs and leaders are a powerful influence, with much overlap between these beliefs and those of other traditions.

The constitution of Nigeria explicitly guarantees freedom of religion to all. The reality is more complex, and relatively frequent conflicts in recent decades, notably between Christians and Muslims, highlight a varied landscape and links to ethnic tensions. Perceived inequalities between the relatively poorer North and richer South and, in effect, Muslims and Christians, have exacerbated religious tensions throughout the country. The fact that oil production is exclusively in the South highlights the economic inequities. North-South divides and tensions are influenced by many factors, including historical migration patterns, the legacy impact of colonization, and geopolitical trends. In 2017, the U.S. government designated Nigeria a "country of particular concern" for religious freedom.

Religious affiliation plays a role in shaping political and power dynamics in Nigeria; some Christians and Muslims fear demographic and political domination by the other. Nigeria's ethnically diverse

population contributes to the patterns of Christian and Muslim communities. Seeking to balance the interests of the regions and religious groups is an ongoing challenge for the Nigerian government. Various umbrella organizations and initiatives work to promote interreligious harmony, but their capacity and the outcomes of their work are difficult to assess and the record of leadership is mixed, with some strong religious figures at the national or local levels of government but few who garner wide support. Religious tolerance is a matter of national pride, but religious tensions are today an unmistakable aspect of Nigeria's social and political landscape. Looking to the future, climate change and the rapid population increase are likely to accentuate the challenges of forging a strong shared national identity.

## Nigerian Islam

Nigeria's Islamic community includes Sunni and Shiite communities, as well as subgroups such as Sufis and Salafis, and it is difficult to categorize within conventional Islamic classification systems. The six northeastern states, while home to Christian minorities, have predominantly Muslim populations, with diverse forms of Islam. A small minority of Islamic groups supported by neighboring states and international actors are extremist in their orientation and have been involved in violent conflicts; violent extremist incidents have decreased in recent years, due in part to efforts of the central government. The best known is Boko Haram.

*“The Sunni reformist movement is sometimes described as a search for a ‘more authentic’ practice of Islam.”*

Groups affiliated with Sunni Islam predominate in Nigeria, found across all six states in the North, and in other areas in smaller numbers. The Tijaniyya, a Sunni Sufi order across the Sahel region, is influential in Nigeria. Other orders, such as the Maliki and the Muhammadiyah, are not as geographically widespread.

Shiite Muslims lack the numbers and international influence of the Sunnis and are often treated as religious outcasts in northeastern Nigeria. The Shiite Muslim community is comprised of two prominent groups, the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) and the Rasulul A'azam Foundation (RAAF). The IMN is led by a fiery activist, Ibrahim Zakzaky, who converted to Shia Islam after the 1979 Iranian revolution. He and his wife have been frequently imprisoned, and hundreds of his followers, including three of his sons, were killed in conflicts with government security forces. The groups hold contrasting positions regarding government: the IMN does not support the national government, while the RAAF regards it as legitimate.

Several Muslim communities do not fall neatly on either side of the Sunni/Shiite divide, including the Maitatsine, the Quraniyyun, the Yoruba Islamic Groups, and "Neutral Muslims," who choose to remain unaligned with any particular Islamic group but who nevertheless are frequently classified as Sunni.

## **Nigerian Christianity**

Four main Christian groups are predominant in Nigeria: Protestant, African Christian, Roman Catholic, and

marginal or unaffiliated Christian. Fairly rough estimates suggest that Protestants represent 26% of the national population, African Christians 18%, Roman Catholics 13.5%, and marginal or unaffiliated groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, 2.1%.

Pentecostal and Anglican congregations make up the majority of Protestants. Pentecostalism has grown rapidly over the last 30 years, a trend attributed to the social and economic crises of the 1970s, as well as to the close associations of more established Protestant figures with reigning elites, which have led many believers to turn to new communities.

Smaller Protestant groups include the Evangelical Church of West Africa and the Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria (TEKAN), as well as Baptist and Methodist denominations. TEKAN, an umbrella organization made up of 13 Nigerian churches, accounts for 2.8% of Nigeria's total population. Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN), the largest national body of the Church of the Brethren in the world, falls under the TEKAN umbrella and expends significant efforts improving education, health, and agriculture in Nigeria. As one of the relatively few Christian denominations with a substantial presence in northern Nigeria, it has been a prominent target of Boko Haram attacks due to their belief that EYN members proselytize and aim to convert.

African Initiated or Independent Christian churches (AICs) include more than 4,200 denominations, among them the Christ Apostolic Church, the Church of God Mission International, the Church of the Lord, Cherubim and Seraphim, and the Deeper Life Bible Church.

Catholic and Anglican Nigerians have dedicated substantial resources to supporting and running private educational systems that provide religious-based alternatives to the public schools.

## THE CENTRAL CHALLENGE: POVERTY

Poverty is measured and perceived in various ways, but it is widespread and growing. Nigeria has the world's largest population of people who are considered poor. An estimated 50% of the population is counted as poor (88 million people), while an additional 18% are near poverty. Many religious and faith-inspired actors and organizations, national and international, focus on reducing poverty in Nigeria, though they often treat poverty as a symptom of broader corruption, injustice, and poor investment of Nigeria's enormous oil wealth. Thus, practical programs and even rhetoric about poverty tend to vary widely.

### FIOs That Address Poverty

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the humanitarian relief and development arm of the United Methodist Church, is among faith-inspired organizations (FIOs) that present combatting poverty as their leading mandate and mission. Areas of focus include anti-trafficking and responding to needs of individuals displaced by election-related violence in 2011. Numerous international FIOs with regional offices in Nigeria provide critical anti-poverty services, including Samaritan's Purse, Tearfund, and

the Salvation Army. Some organizations, for example the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), focus on specific groups such as internally displaced persons.

## HEALTH

National health indicators in Nigeria are among the world's lowest. However, vaccination campaigns, malaria programs, and HIV/AIDS initiatives have been strengthened by partnerships with religious leaders and communities. Promising areas for future work include efforts to reduce tuberculosis and basic healthcare strengthening programs. On other topics, such as family planning, religious leaders have been more likely to take stands that conflict with the goals of international health organizations.

Nigeria's complex health sector includes public, private for-profit, non-governmental, community-based, faith-inspired, and indigenous health care providers. The private sector, which includes faith-inspired facilities, accounts for 3% of all registered healthcare facilities and 80% of all health services. Private for-profit facilities provide mostly curative services. Widely varied faith-based providers are involved in different preventive and health promotion services. Religious institutions have played significant roles in supporting different health care delivery approaches and policies in Nigeria. They thus have both experience and promise in shaping behavior and attitudes of religious communities and Nigerian citizens towards national health care debates, both through examples of delivery and advocacy. Partner organizations—including international



groups like the World Bank, the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—work with religious groups on public health programs.

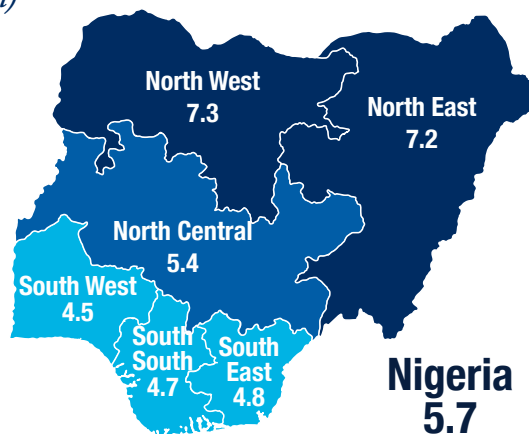
Demographic factors have great impact on Nigeria’s health system. Nigeria has Africa’s largest population, (over 190 million people in 2017 and a projected population of 410 million by 2050). Family planning policies are a topic of fractious debate among religious leaders. Data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey show wide

differences in fertility rates and knowledge about and use of contraception between northern and southern states (population of the northern states is growing far more quickly than those of southern states). It is not clear how far these numbers are related to religious affiliation or other factors, such as education and economic development. They reflect clearly the large disparities between northern and southern Nigeria.

Nigerian governments have recognized rapid population growth as a serious issue since 1962, but interreligious competition compounds difficulties in developing a comprehensive demographic policy. Both Muslims and Christians view having children as an important duty, in part to maintain the size of their respective communities. A 2015 assessment report, the National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development (NPP), noted that respondents perceived difficulties preventing discussion of sex and contraception arising from religious objections as well as broadly patriarchal restrictions on women’s independence throughout Nigeria.

Nigeria has made limited progress in addressing HIV/AIDS, with an estimated 220,000 adults and children newly infected with HIV each year. There has been a slight

*Total Fertility Rate by Zone  
(births per woman)*



*Source: Bolatito Ogunbiyi, “Nigeria: Population and Demographic trends,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, April 25, 2012*

**BOX**

**Christian Health Association of Nigeria**

The Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN), an umbrella organization for some 358 entities that operate Nigeria’s 4,400 church-based health centers and hospitals, is a well-established and active player in national health care. CHAN provides support to member institutions with an explicit goal of reaching more people, especially marginalized communities, with good quality, affordable, and patient-friendly health services. CHAN coordinates advocacy to governments at local, state, and national levels. CHAN is a key implementation partner for many NGOs and other international organizations and has received substantial support and sponsorship from PEPFAR and USAID, among others.

decline in AIDS-related deaths from their peak of 180,000 in 2005/2010, leveling off to about 150,000 in recent years. Religious leaders and communities and faith-inspired institutions can play both positive and negative roles in addressing HIV. Both Christian and Muslim leaders have contributed to the often-expressed belief that HIV is punishment for sin and immorality. At the same time, Nigeria's National HIV/AIDS Stigma Reduction Strategy has recognized the moral authority of religious leaders and pointed towards positive roles that they can play. A key objective for those working to eradicate HIV/AIDS is to build the capacity of religious leaders and institutions to promote attitudinal and behavioral changes in their communities and to encourage their involvement in national dialogue.

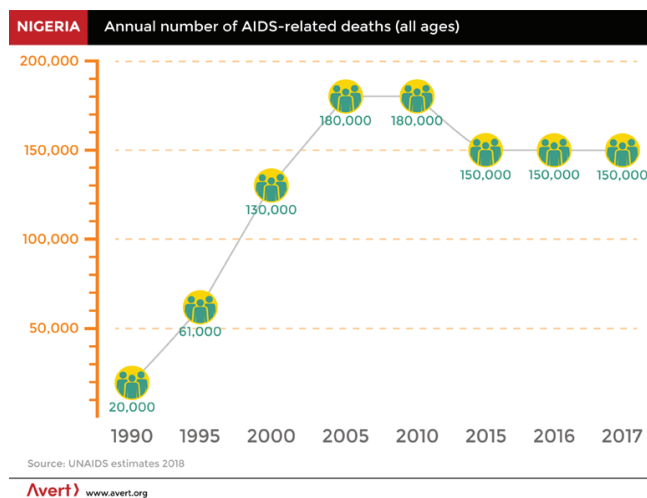
## CORRUPTION

A study by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace cites corruption as the single greatest obstacle preventing Nigeria from achieving its enormous potential. Corruption drains billions of dollars a year from the country's economy, stymies development, and weakens the social contract between the government and its people. Nigerians view their country as one of the world's most corrupt and struggle daily to cope with the effects. Corruption in Nigeria is not always clear-cut or limited in focus, but rather different facets are interconnected, involving a range of behaviors that cleave across virtually every sector in society: government, the economy, education, media, political parties, defense and policing, the judiciary, health care—in short, every aspect of life.

## BOX

### Examples of Religious Roles in Health Care

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has partners in 32 of Nigeria's 36 states, as well as in the Federal Capital Territory. Alongside work with farmers and support for orphans and vulnerable children, it is heavily involved in health services, including HIV/AIDS prevention, anti-malarial efforts, nutrition, routine immunization, and polio eradication. Many Catholic programs address broad priority areas in Nigeria. HIV/AIDS prevention, for instance, is a focus of the Community of Sant'Egidio (a lay Catholic movement). Numerous FIOs support maternal and child health care; notable examples are United Muslim Relief, Latter-day Saints Charities, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.



Source: Avert, "HIV and AIDS in Nigeria," <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/sub-saharan-africa/nigeria>

The government of Nigeria and its development partners have identified fighting corruption as a leading priority, although evidence of positive impact is limited. Because religious leaders have an extensive presence, relatively high levels of trust, and a common concern to exert moral, ethical leadership, they are plausibly an important group that can make an important impact on corruption. The U.S. State Department’s Office of Religion and Global Affairs and the Consulate General, for example, has explored purposeful religious roles in anticorruption work, seeking to mobilize Christian and Muslim leaders to take active roles in combating corruption. Both Christian and Muslim leaders assert that they favor a multifaceted approach to anticorruption efforts involving actions ranging from collective advocacy and public education campaigns to public asset declarations and anti-bribery pledges. To date, relatively few extended initiatives led by religious leaders or organizations have sought to combat corruption in systemic ways.

## WOMEN’S RIGHTS

The Nigeria Global Gender Gap Index indicates that Nigeria has declined since 2006 in world rankings of women’s educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. The approaches of religious communities towards women’s rights vary widely in areas such as employment and political participation. Many faith-inspired organizations focus on addressing specific problems facing women, such as widowhood or trafficking.

Several faith-inspired programs in Nigeria focus specifically on domestic violence and, more broadly, gender-based violence (GBV). Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) supports programs that aim to reduce and prevent gender-based violence among conflict-affected populations as part of its Gender-based Violence Sub-Sector Working Group. The NCA working group aims to provide gender-based violence response services and work with community stakeholders to initiate and build upon GBV prevention and empowerment activities. The precarious situation of women in conflict settings in Nigeria was highlighted by the 2014 kidnapping of girls by Boko Haram. The event motivated various religious communities and institutions to advocate for action to address root causes of conflict and the appeal of extremism more broadly, which include interreligious and ethnic tensions, approaches to Western economic interests, and rampant corruption across Nigerian society, particularly the government and security institutions.

*Nigeria: Global Gender Gap Index*

	2016 Rank (of 144)	2016 Score	2006 Rank (of 115)	2006 Score
<b>Overall</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>0.643</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>0.610</b>
Economic participation and opportunity	52	0.700	59	0.612
Educational attainment	134	0.814	104	0.816
Health and survival	135	0.961	99	0.966
Political empowerment	109	0.097	99	0.049



## Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria

The Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) works to advance the role and standing of Muslim women. Members live in all Nigerian states, and FOMWAN is affiliated with over 500 organizations. Its advocacy work seeks to promote the viewpoints of Muslim women, improve education for Muslim girls, and raise the status of Muslim women and children throughout Nigeria. FOMWAN focuses on education issues and sponsors programs to increase retention rates of girls at school, allow married women continued access to education, and integrate literacy programs into the curricula of established Quranic schools.

### EDUCATION

Approximately 50 million Nigerians are of school age—25% of the population—although as many as 40% of these young people are not in school. The Nigerian government spends \$1.2 billion on education, or 5% of its annual budget. Compared to its neighbors or countries of similar size (such as Indonesia), Nigeria's performance is lagging. Longitudinal studies show negative trends. Poor learning results in basic subjects, especially science, math, and vocational subjects, include a failure to develop positive citizenship values and national cohesion. The poor quality of the government educational system in Nigeria has encouraged an increase of private schools, many run by religious institutions. The system's fragmentation and concerns about quality contribute to decreasing social and national cohesion.

The majority of Nigerian religious communities support education for all. Many religious groups run schools or are deeply involved in advocacy for public school reform. Nationally, there is general consensus that religion should play a role in education, notably in promoting core

values. There are, however, sharp differences over the roles that the state should play in defining religious curricula. Muslim and Christian communities can differ on priorities and goals for education. Some Islamic groups complain that national educational standards are unduly shaped by Western and Christian influences. Significant educational gaps between northern and southern states present major national challenges. Historically, Christian missionaries in Southern Nigeria introduced formal, Western-style education. In Northern Nigeria education traditionally concentrated on learning about Islam, with limited attention to math and science, making it more difficult for children to enter technical or university-level institutions.

Christian schools today, run by different Christian denominations, are private. They make independent decisions regarding approaches, fees, curriculum, and faith observance. The Catholic Church runs the greatest number of schools, ranging from primary education through university levels. Catholic schools, once free, are generally the least costly educational option outside of public schools but are still too expensive for the very poor. Though other Christian

denominations run significant numbers of schools, aggregate and evaluative data on numbers, enrollment, and approaches is limited. There are ongoing discussions regarding the focus and reengagement of Christian denominations in educational policy in some states.

Islamic schools have deep historical roots in Nigeria. Today they face significant problems, linked to weak regulation, limited employment opportunities offered to students educated in Arabic, lack of proper funding, and corrupt and often poor management. Government involvement in Islamic schooling has grown over time, mainly through at least some direct funding and support for teacher training. Northern states have yet to develop common and meaningful responses to Islamic educational challenges and the issue has been sidelined politically, while growing in urgency and importance. The absence of a clear policy framework has resulted in unregulated schools, ineffectual reforms, and neglect, with few credible points of contact between Islamic schools and the state-driven education agenda. Several variants of Islamic schools operate in Nigeria today, with most falling into one of three categories: Islamiyya schools, madrasas, and traditional Quranic schools. Islamiyya schools combine elements of the traditional Islamic curriculum with an overlay of math, science, and vocational education. Madrasas focus on education in Arabic and on Islamic scholarship, with an emphasis on Islamic studies that differentiates them from both the older Islamic educational institutions and Nigeria's public schools. Quranic schools follow more traditional approaches and tend to serve Muslim communities that doubt the merit of Western education, seeing it as a threat to their own traditions.

Boko Haram's influence is less today than some years ago, but its signature issue (Western education is forbidden) has lasting impact on debates about education. Boko Haram's attacks on schoolchildren and lack of security and stability discourage school attendance. Risks associated with attending school are compounded for girls and young women, contributing to lower female educational attainment. The prevalence of *almajiris*, or children (especially boys) sent to Islamic schools that have insufficient funding, training, or capacity to provide a quality education is problematic; schools send the children to beg in the streets for funding, placing them in vulnerable positions and increasing their susceptibility to extremist groups. A recent report estimated that there were over 10 million *almajiris* on the streets of northern Nigeria. The government has devoted significant funds and efforts to reforms to address the specific needs of *almajiri* students, but bringing *almajiri* children into the formal educational system has been difficult, with few teachers capable of blending national and Quranic curriculums.

Both Christian and Muslim organizations support efforts to improve education opportunities for young girls, including programs for young mothers. Various partner organizations have invested in improving education in Nigeria. However, the scale of the challenge and political tensions involved have limited the impact of programs to date.

## **VIOLENCE/CONFLICT AS LEADING ISSUES FOR PARTNERSHIPS**

Different forms of violence and conflict affect many regions of Nigeria. Causes

are disputed, including notably different views on the roles that religious beliefs and identities and religious leaders play both in fueling tensions and in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The patterns of violence have ricochet effects, for example with violent attacks against Muslims in the south presented as retaliation for violence against Christians in the North. Climate change, ethnic and interreligious tensions, poor governance and corruption, and limited employment opportunities are other likely culprits. Conflicts over natural resources, such as between farmers and herders in Nigeria's Middle Belt and over management of oil resources in the Niger Delta, present mounting challenges.

Many foreign and Nigerian organizations see religious actors as carrying particular responsibilities and opportunities for addressing conflict and facilitating reconciliation. A long history of commissions have sought to bring together religious and traditional actors at all levels to work toward peacebuilding and conflict resolution. There are examples of success, notably of religious leaders mediating disputes and taking initiatives to dampen tensions and identify positive solutions. Religious actors were influential in recent negotiations to secure the release of many of the kidnapped Chibok girls. A promising avenue is the work of local groups of women, many drawing on religious inspiration and networks of religious communities.

Various longer-term efforts to advocate for peace in local and national contexts are organized and sponsored by both the Nigerian government and transnational organizations, for example within West Africa, and global Islamic organizations. Initiatives work to diffuse tensions around

## BOX

### Boko Haram

Boko Haram was formed in 2002 in Borno State by Muslim cleric Mohammed Yusuf. Its focal points have been Northeast Nigeria and surrounding regions, and a stated aim has been to create a fully Islamic state in Nigeria. Boko Haram, whose name is often translated as "Western education is sin," began as a religious movement; it became violence after 2009. Its idealized Islamic state in parts of Nigeria and the neighboring states of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, would implement sharia criminal courts throughout the areas under its control.

Boko Haram opposes Western approaches to education, especially for girls. It has been responsible for the widespread destruction of schools and the kidnapping of girls, many forced into marriage with their attackers whose children they bear. Attacks targeting schools and school-going children have had devastating impacts on affected regions, including blocking school attendance and massive displacement and refugee flight. The result is a serious humanitarian crisis. Attacks on schools are both a rejection of the education itself and of the presence of the state government. Boko Haram often targets students with more privileged backgrounds, choosing to kill young male students rather than recruiting them and seeming to take special pleasure in kidnapping girls from wealthier families who would otherwise go on to universities. Religious tensions contribute to Boko Haram's appeal, as do Nigeria's geographic, religious, and economic inequalities. Interfaith coalitions and other actors are working to bridge gaps of understanding and prejudice through education and outreach to religious leaders, in the hopes that doing so will lessen incentives for young people to join organizations like Boko Haram.



### About the Author

Katherine Marshall is a senior fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, where she leads the center's work on religion and global development, and a professor of the practice of development, conflict, and religion in the Walsh School of Foreign Service.

She helped to create and now serves as the executive director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue. Marshall, who worked at the World Bank from 1971 to 2006, has nearly five decades of experience on a wide range of development issues.

religiously contentious issues, facilitate cooperation to achieve common objectives, increase communication between communities, and implement structured processes to address specific grievances. Discussions have touched on wide-ranging issues including the proper role of military response and potential for community prevention approaches to violent extremism.

The numerous organizations dedicated to interreligious dialogue and conflict resolution share a common focus on promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue to encourage greater understanding and tolerance. Assessing the impact of different approaches is problematic. Further, lack of a shared strategy and competition for resources undermine well-intentioned programs. Sharp polarization and stratification along religious, ethnic, and regional lines remain threaten security and stability. A plethora of disputes, misperceptions, and resentments based on religious differences contradict a common narrative of tolerance as a core element of national identity.



### The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD)

is a not-for-profit organization working at the intersection of religion and global development. Housed within the Berkley Center in Washington, D.C., WFDD documents the work of faith inspired organizations and explores the importance of religious ideas and actors in development contexts. WFDD supports dialogue between religious and development communities and promotes innovative partnerships, at national and international levels, with the goal of contributing to positive and inclusive development outcomes.

**BERKLEY CENTER**  
*for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

### The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and

**World Affairs** at Georgetown University is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. Two premises guide the center's work: that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.