



HUMANITARIAN AID RELIEF TRUST

NIGERIA VISIT REPORT



The hostel of the Government Secondary School in Chibok, attacked and burnt by Boko Haram.

27th June – 3rd July 2014

Executive Summary

- The brazenness of Boko Haram's escalating violence has created a deeply disturbing escalation of violence including killings, abductions, destruction of homes, schools, churches, attacks on the army and other official personnel.
- There is now widespread fear, intimidation and loss of confidence in political leadership and the security forces.
- The damage and suffering wrought by Boko Haram's Islamist insurgency is devastating. Reports of massacres of civilians in the northeast of the country are now almost daily. Reliable statistics are hard to come by, but fatalities stretch into the tens of thousands and numbers of people displaced into the hundreds of thousands. Estimates for people killed since January 2014 reach as high as 5000.
- In many parts of the region, there is now a reign of terror: with the frequency and ferocity of attacks, people live in constant fear. Villagers increasingly sleep outside their homes, without mosquito nets, so they can run as soon as they hear the attackers coming. Churches have constructed barricades around their compounds, and post sentries outside during services. Many communities have armed themselves.
- Boko Haram boast increasingly sophisticated training and weaponry, having transformed from an ad hoc group launching sporadic attacks into an internationally supported, well-coordinated force targeting civilians with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), ambushes, kidnappings and suicide bombings.
- **Bombing attacks and casualties** so far this year include:
 - Three attacks on Abuja: one in March, killing over 400 people, one in April, killing 30 people, and one most recently on 25th June, killing at least 21 people.
 - Two blasts in Jos, the first killing 120 people and the second killing 5. The first blast in Jos took place at a market, during the busiest time of day, when schools had just finished.
 - Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi and other north-eastern cities have faced regular bombings.
- The majority of Boko Haram's victims are killed during the **almost daily attacks on villages** across the northeast, which receive far less attention. Recent attacks include:
 - June 30: Maihula, Bau Local Government, Taraba State 300 homes were burnt, many people killed, including the Village Head. Everything was destroyed, including the church and all the crops (maize, yams, ground nuts, cassava). Both Fulani and Boko Haram were reportedly involved in the attack.
 - June 30: Nahuta, a Christian community near Gwallaga, Bauchi State, was attacked about 10pm. 1 person was killed and several wounded, and the church was burnt.
 - June 28: Kyshe Community in Fan, Plateau State, which we visited on Tuesday 1st July, was attacked in what local people call a Jihad assault, with 'heavy guns' and trucks. Villagers defended the community and there were no casualties. A previous attack had left several dead.
- Since 2012, Boko Haram have burned more than 300 schools in the north and deprived more than 10,000 children of an education (HRW 2014).
- 173 teachers have been killed so far this year. Teachers in some places now live in such terror that they will not publically carry around anything that marks them as a teacher – such as a pen. There have been a number of brutal attacks on teachers on school property, including incidents whilst security forces standing nearby. Teachers are now terrified of being killed at school, or being followed and killed at home.
- Even before the widely publicised abduction of schoolgirls at Chibok, at least 1800 had been abducted in Maidaguri alone, including 300 men and women in a raid on a market.
- There is deeply felt frustration and anger over the Government's response to the Chibok kidnappings. Local people claim they received a warning a week before the attack, but no protection was put in place. The security forces claimed they knew 4 hours in advance. The local community say they have seen no evidence of the financial support which the government claim to have sent to improve security. They also claim that they have seen no evidence of the use of the international experts offered by other countries, including the United Kingdom, to assist with the search for the girls.
- Many people claim to have evidence that Boko Haram is supported by senior figures in the military and the government.
- It is believed that training camps in Bauchi State are being used as bases from which to launch attacks on Jos, Kaduna and further afield. Despite extensive local knowledge about the whereabouts of Boko Haram's bases in Bauchi state, the government and military have done little to respond. Many people believe that this is allowing Boko Haram to consolidate their presence in Bauchi State.
- According to local people, the Governor of Bauchi allowed around 700 men to come to Liman Katagum (a Boko Haram training camp), allegedly as 'refugees' from Zamfara State – but there were no women and children. It is believed that these men are being prepared to attack targets in Bauchi State, including Tafa Balewa.

Executive Summary (continued)

- Local people claim that there is significant evidence Boko Haram are receiving international support, including from foreign countries such as Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Iran, and that they count amongst their ranks fighters from Syria and Libya as well as nearer countries.
- Many people now express deep concerns over the possibility of the disintegration of the nation and/or the spread of militant Islam beyond the northern States to other parts of the country.
- There is also widespread fear of violence associated with the forthcoming election, to such an extent that many people are already moving out of their homes in towns such as Jos.
- There is also fear that the President and the Nigerian Government do not have the will or the capacity to withstand the process of Islamisation.
- There are creative initiatives designed to foster reconciliation between communities fractured by violence and to build confidence and dialogue between Christians and Muslims. We visited one of these programmes, working amongst youth as well as women, and we were encouraged by the friendships developed between faith traditions. It is hoped that such confidence-building measures between the faith communities will help to reduce the propensity for renewed violence and may help the Muslim community who do not wish to radicalise to withstand the pressures from extremists such as Boko Haram.
- BUT it remains to be seen whether these positive developments at grass-roots level can receive sufficient support to be sustainable and to make a significant difference for the future of the nation.
- The agenda of Boko Haram includes attacks on Western education, especially for girls, and the eradication of Christians from northern Nigeria.
- We were told that Christian and State Girls' schools were particularly targeted by Boko Haram because, *"Such education encourages women to think for themselves."*
- Conflict between State and Federal Governments may hinder a strong response. Claims of infiltration by Boko Haram, and the presence of their supporters, within the Security Forces and the various governments in Nigeria, likewise. These may go a long way to explaining a poor and inefficient response to their crimes. It is alleged that some in high office were involved in the origin of Boko Haram. The discrediting of President Jonathan, we were told, may fit the agenda of many.
- In any situation where a group or minority wish to take over a State, one of their most important goals and successes is to diminish or destroy trust in government and peacekeeping forces. Boko Haram and their supporters, at whatever level, seem to be achieving this goal.

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Quotations have been anonymised for security reasons.

Introduction

In June – July 2014, a delegation from HART visited northern Nigeria.

Objectives of the Visit:

- To learn about and bear witness to a situation of human rights violations and violence which has afflicted the region for many years but escalated with the rise of the militant Islamist group Boko Haram, whose explicitly stated aim is to establish an Islamic State in Nigeria and to oppose any form of non-Muslim or western influence.
- To visit our partners and their projects in Jos and Bauchi States.

Major Findings:

We found a deeply disturbing and deteriorating situation in which atrocities are being committed by Boko Haram almost every day, with near complete impunity. The security forces are not coping effectively with the scale of the insurgency and the need to protect civilians. There are reports that some are themselves committing human rights abuses, including extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detention and torture. Local people, unable to rely upon the security forces, are arming themselves.

This is a place where chaos and fear reign. Out of the control of the Government and the military, the main players in north-east Nigeria are the traditional Fulani nomadic peoples, believed now to be often working in conjunction with Boko Haram and the vigilante groups which have sprung up to defend their communities, responding to the failure of those meant to protect civilians. Local people feel that *“they [the vigilantes] are the best army against Boko Haram”*.

The impact of the insurgency goes far beyond the numbers killed. For many of those killed, there are families left behind, including a growing number of orphans, and widows struggling to feed their children in a culture in which women have few opportunities for economic self-sufficiency. Many schools are closing – since 2012, Boko Haram has burned more than 300 schools in the north of the country and have deprived more than 10,000 children of an education (Human Rights Watch 2014).

The trauma and tension of lives lived under constant threat of attack cannot be adequately described. One man in Bauchi said to us: *“everyone is suspicious of everyone. The battle has changed. Everywhere is a battleground, and everyone you see is an enemy – because you don’t know who is the enemy. We are in a very dangerous time”*.

Boko Haram’s ideologies, activities and successes have not emerged in a vacuum. Their strength and support is the product of a complex web of local, national and international influences. Across the country, citizens are deeply frustrated with what they see as a succession of corrupt and ineffective governments, who have failed to prove that they can protect civilians and prevent human rights abuses. Meanwhile, international networks of support and funding from extreme Islamist groups and governments are facilitating rapid improvements in Boko Haram’s training, strategy and equipment, which the Nigerian Government cannot apparently contain.

On the local level, northern Nigeria suffers particularly high unemployment and extreme poverty. Nigeria is a country riven with inequality, and the poverty of most Nigerians, particularly in the north, stands in stark contrast to an extremely wealthy minority. There are many ostentatious mansions – the conspicuous wealth of a rich, urban, international elite. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the population (85%) survive on less than \$2 a day. These problems are particularly severe in Northern Nigeria, where 12 States have adopted Sharia Law, which has brought many problems associated with a religious legal system alongside the secular Federal and State laws. These states have lagged behind the rest of the country. 71.5% of the population in the north-east live in severe poverty, and more than half are malnourished. To what extent this poverty is produced from factors within their culture is debatable. Many Muslim parents send their children to Christian schools to obtain a wider and more useful education than they would obtain within their own culture. Opportunities for many young people, to access education, earn skills and earn a living are severely limited.

Christians in the North, as well as dealing with the poverty, face discrimination in access to employment, health care, education, other services and political positions, particularly in the 12 states which have adopted Sharia law. Permission to build or repair places of worship is consistently denied. Gender discrimination and denial of women’s rights is deeply entrenched both in law and in practice. We visited isolated communities in Tafa Balewa (Bauchi State), who live in abject poverty, cut off from social services, infrastructure and communications, and suffering regular attacks by both Boko Haram and Fulani. HART has undertaken work to support a clinic in one of these isolated and vulnerable areas.

This is a ‘perfect storm’ of poverty, inequality, international support, military and government corruption and incompetence and Islamist religious extremism. At the heart of the storm, most deeply affected by the insurgency, are the most vulnerable members of Nigerian society. Those in the northern-most corners of the country, furthest from state support and social services, with little NGO presence and little control by the police or military, are those suffering the most from Boko Haram’s attacks.

However, in the midst of an apparently intractable conflict, which looks set to escalate, we encountered extraordinary stories and statements of hope, and visited interfaith projects working to bring both peace and development to the North-East. A detailed account of just one such project can be found on page 14.

We met individuals who are reaching out across the divide between communities, forging dialogue and strong relationships, and countering a narrative of violence and revenge. *“Dialogue is the solution to whatever. Military force will make [Boko Haram] destroy more lives and properties. Dialogue, however, can reduce this, though it may not eradicate it. Boko Haram’s friends will be reduced if we initiate dialogue”.*

These initiatives deserve strong financial support from DFiD and other international donors as they are the only effective initiatives at grass roots level capable of promoting reconciliation between deeply divided communities and reconstruction of devastated infrastructures and prevention of further radicalisation, especially of unemployed and disaffected youth.

But there must be grave doubts as to whether these positive developments at grass-roots level can receive sufficient support to be sustainable and to make a significant difference for the future of the nation, with its allowing the escalation of such dangerous radical extremist movements, apparently with strong support inside Nigeria and from international players such as Al Shabab and nations such as Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

Such international support must create concern over the development of an escalating movement designed to achieve the Islamisation not only of northern Nigeria, but further afield throughout the nation and indeed, the region, with all its implications for the fate of non-Muslims, women and access to education and health.

Summary of Key Issues Raised in Meetings with Local Community Leaders

1. Escalating Violence

“Boko Haram has dominated in the last 6 months – in the brazenness of attacks, the style and approach. The fear of Boko Haram in Maidaguri is so strong, it is almost tangible. People don’t even trust their neighbours anymore”

- Local reporter following a visit to Borno State.

Our partners in Nigeria are linked into a network across the northeast, through which news of attacks is disseminated. Our visit was punctuated with regular phone calls and text messages as news of further attacks filtered through. Every day brings news of a bombing, abduction or, most frequently, a raid on a village. This is accompanied by names and details of those killed and information on the families they leave behind.

Gaining reliable information on attacks, and exact numbers killed and injured, is difficult. Following attacks the military shut down the phone lines in many areas, the reason being that Boko Haram uses these lines to spread information about military operations. The impact of this on Boko Haram is actually marginal, as they predominantly use satellite phones. Meanwhile, the impact on local community is significant – this prevents news of the attack getting out quickly, and prevents assistance from getting in: *“This stops people crying for help. It has become a very big problem”*.

We were told how attacks on villages follow a clear pattern. When Boko Haram attack villages, they send in individuals over the preceding hours who lie low in the forest or, sometimes wearing military uniforms, mingle with the local people. Then, at a prearranged hour, they merge and attack. Sometimes they come *en masse* in the middle of the night, with large trucks, guns and heavy weapons. Boko Haram members approach the village from the outskirts, firing constantly. This heavy barrage of gunfire is designed to create fear and to scope out whether the villagers are armed. Then, selected targets (such as local government buildings, police stations, churches and schools) are attacked and set on fire. In villages with predominantly thatched roofs, fire spreads quickly. If, during their attack, Boko Haram meets resistance, then they will commonly return within two weeks with reinforcements, and raze the village to the ground. In the most north-eastern parts of Nigeria, particularly Borno State, abductions are common; in Bauchi state, we were told that abductions are rare but sexual violence is rife.

Many Boko Haram militants now wear Nigerian Army uniforms, so it is difficult for local people to know whether they are there to protect or attack them. In one attack in early June, Boko Haram militants who were dressed as soldiers killed at least 200 civilians in three communities.¹ When the girls were abducted in Chibok it was seen that Boko Haram first appeared in military uniform and encouraged the girls to emerge, informing them that they had come to rescue them.

Christians are deliberately targeted, with regular attacks on churches. In Jos, churches now have security to protect them from bombings, including heavy barricades to prevent cars from driving up too close to the church building, and sentries who keep watch throughout the church services. On Sundays, additional roadblocks spring up in an attempt to prevent further attacks, making roads almost impassable.

Muslims who do not support Boko Haram are also targeted by them.

In urban centres such as Jos, Kaduna and Abuja, attacks generally take the form of bombings in busy areas.

The impact of escalating violence and civilian displacement

We met representatives of a local Civil Service Organisation (CSO), who work with communities in hard-to-reach areas. Their projects are wide-ranging, but all of their work is founded upon close links with local communities. As a result, they have seen the impact of increasing violence upon some of the most isolated and vulnerable communities in northern Nigeria, and reiterate clearly the point that *“poverty makes a lot of villages more vulnerable to attacks”*.

They are supporting whole communities who have been displaced by fighting, with people too scared to return home. Many of these groups are temporarily absorbed by neighbouring communities, but this situation cannot continue indefinitely – the capacity of neighbouring communities to support an influx of displaced persons is limited.

The burden for supporting these displaced communities falls on neighbouring communities, local organisations and faith groups because there is almost no government support for displaced or otherwise affected groups. This is leading to even deeper frustration; as one NGO worker related to us: *“people’s livelihoods have been destroyed, the government should be responsible and support the victims, give them some money to help them start up again”*. It was unclear whether State or Federal governments were being referred to.

¹ The Guardian, “Boko Haram killed hundreds in north-east Nigeria, witnesses say”, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/05/boko-haram-killed-hundreds-north-east-nigeria>

They also report a steady flow of international NGOs leaving the area, as the security situation becomes more and more unstable. Representatives of a local NGO which is not leaving, as well as our own partners, are increasing the reach of their projects, stating *“we don’t have anywhere to run to. They might pull out, but we don’t - where would we go?”*

Communities who are finally returning to their land are so afraid of further attacks that they sleep outside ‘in the bush’, where they can run more easily. However, by sleeping outside, they are far more vulnerable to malaria – thus undermining decades of hard work which has been undertaken across northern Nigeria to reduce the incidence of the disease.

As was reiterated to us time and time again, *“the major challenge in the north has now become terror, the fear of Boko Haram. That has been so pervasive from January to now”*.²

Attacks on education

The attacks on education and the subsequent closure of many public schools is having a huge impact on children of all faith traditions. *“In Maiduguri, you do not go out with a pen, because it marks you out as a teacher. You leave everything, books, anything that marks you as a teacher, at school”*.

We also heard much about the resilience of both teachers and school children, who continue to attend schools despite the threats - *“you cannot stop going to school for what is happening. Life must continue”*. However, with more and more state schools closing, those determined to get an education have to walk increasing distances to get to and from school. On these journeys, they are particularly vulnerable to attacks. We heard how non-governmental and Church schools are more likely to remain open in the face of the violence, the churches supporting them being indigenous.

Abductions

The kidnapping of 273 schoolgirls from Chibok in April attracted unprecedented – and much needed – media attention. However, abductions have been an increasingly common occurrence in north-east Nigeria for a number of years. It is specifically claimed that around 1800 people have been abducted so far this year before the Chibok tragedy and a further 91 (60 girls and 31 boys) since.

The perceived ineffectiveness of the Government's response to the abductions fuels a growing discontent with the Government and a complete lack of trust in their ability to protect civilians.

The community in Chibok received a warning a week in advance of the attack. The security forces report that they themselves were warned of the attack four hours in advance. Despite this, no protection was put in place. This is not uncommon: Boko Haram routinely warns in advance of the attacks and this is rarely responded to by the security forces. (See references to infiltration of Security Forces in the executive Summary and at the end of Section 2.)

Local sources in Chibok observed that Boko Haram *“spent four hours selecting the girls and packing them into trucks. Even after they left Chibok, they broke down and were stopped for two hours.”* Many believe this would have been sufficient time for the security forces to respond to the kidnappings, but *“the government was not there”*.

One local reporter who had recently visited Chibok said:

Abuja said they are hot on the trail of the girls. But Chibok did not see the soldiers that the government said they had sent. There is a disconnection between the military commander in Borno and the presidency. The presidency is not clearly in the picture about what the issues are.

People have lost hope that the Government in Nigeria can do anything. Goodluck Jonathan has done so little to prove he can do anything. The people supposed to [look for the girls] – no-one is ensuring that they are actually doing what they are supposed to do. That is where the problem lies.’

(The same reporter also reflected upon the various forces possibly hampering the Federal Government; for example, infiltration in many areas.)

² Interview, Jos, 29.6.14

CASE STUDY: Tafa Balewa

We visited Tafa Balewa, an isolated, predominantly Christian area in Bauchi State, on the 30th June. The area is close to a locally identified Boko Haram training camp and has suffered almost daily attacks on villages in recent weeks and months. In April, 4 were killed and 5 wounded, in May, 5 were killed and 4 wounded, and in June, in the week preceding our visit, 1 person was killed and 3 wounded. Tensions run high and local people, knowing Boko Haram members are living throughout the area, are deeply suspicious. Local people describe how Boko Haram set up their own roadblocks, dressing as Nigerian soldiers, and requiring passengers to get out of their vehicles. Those who cannot or will not make an appropriate Islamic response are killed.

The Christian community are deeply concerned about the actions of the Governor of Bauchi State, who has reportedly declared his wish to see the Christian area of Tafa Balewa turned into a 'grazing area'. This is believed to be linked to the rapidly escalating attacks on villages in the area. Christian communities in Bauchi state (one of twelve states across northern Nigeria which have adopted Sharia Law), including the inhabitants of Tafa Balewa, have faced discrimination in access to healthcare, education and other services for a number of years.

HART's representatives have visited Bauchi a number of times, and have received regular and ever-increasing reports of attacks. We have also supported various relief initiatives which the Bishop of Bauchi has led in response to violence against communities in the area.

During this visit we visited a Health Clinic in a remote rural village (itself attacked this year with three inhabitants killed). The clinic has been operative for three years, in a deeply neglected area. The staff consists of a nurse, a laboratory assistant and an administrator (who also looks after the building). Their salaries and other running costs are paid by the diocese. There is a birthing room; and ante-natal care is provided. There is no other medical facility nearby and people walk for up to a day to attend.

The clinic is housed in a building owned by the local government. Now the local authority needs to take back the building, requiring the bishop to raise approximately £25,000 to build a replacement in order to ensure the survival of this provision of health care.



Clockwise from top left: the Nurse, Laboratory Assistant and Administrator in the birthday room at Sara; the Administrator and the Bishop of Bauchi in the examination room; the Bishop of Bauchi with his family and the HART team; the clinic at Sara with members of the local community.

2. Security Context: the role of the Nigerian Police and Military

“People don’t trust the police, and the police have proven they are incapable of protecting them. So, the relationship between the police and the public is very wide”.

- Interviewee in Jos

“The military is so rotten, so corrupt, that they have this phobia of international help coming to say here is the problem - it is fear of indictment”.

- Interviewee in Bauchi

(See reference below to infiltration of Security Forces and the goal of Boko Haram to destroy trust in such forces.)

The Nigerian Government and Security Forces have proved themselves incapable of curbing the insurgency, leaving civilians across the regions of north-east Nigeria feeling that they have been abandoned by their government. There are many reports of the security forces being implicated in severe human rights violations including extra-judicial killings, torture, arbitrary, incommunicado detention and disproportionate use of force. *“The military have invaded villages saying they are after Boko Haram, and have ended up killing a lot of civilians. They also arrest people suspected of being members of Boko Haram, and just kill them.”*

A 2014 report by Amnesty International presented evidence demonstrating that *“police and military personnel routinely use torture and other ill-treatment to extract information and ‘confessions’, and to punish and exhaust detainees... the Nigerian authorities display an apparent lack of political will to adhere to their international human rights obligations”.*³

The police are known to harass civilians who approach them with information about Boko Haram, sometimes accusing them of being linked to Boko Haram. As a result, there is now a huge deficit in trust between the police and the public. As a result, *“people don’t take information to the police. The police accuse people who bring in information of being Boko Haram, trying to set them up for an attack”.*

Would-be insurgents have learnt over time that the structures, resources and political will needed to prevent and investigate crimes are simply not in place. Following horrific intercommunal violence in Jos in 2001, which killed at least 3000 people, the Government’s investigation into the causes of the conflict never came to light. The gulf between the Muslim and Christian communities widened. Further violence followed local government elections in Jos North in 2008, and erupted again in 2010. By 2010, many parts of Jos were *“a no man’s land, it was anarchy, the government had no idea how to handle it”.*

Frustrated by the lack of protection afforded to them by the state security forces, some civilians are now taking matters into their own hands. A civilian ‘Joint Task Force’ (JTF) formed by local citizens, and supported by the state, is intended to protect communities and fight the insurgency, but there is little accountability for their actions and they too have reportedly committed human rights violations, which its members commit with impunity. As one man in Jos commented, *“they are not accountable to anybody”.* *“In an attempt to cut all the red tape, they [the government] have ended up empowering generals who have become laws unto their own. They are not answerable to anybody”.*



A checkpoint in Jos

Civilians, suffering near-daily violence, can no longer rely on state protection. As a result of the near-complete breakdown in trust between the public and the police, and the public’s lack of faith that the police are able to protect them in any way, communities across the north-east have learnt to defend themselves, with vigilante groups forming. One community leader said, *“So now we say let people defend themselves – everybody must defend themselves”.*

In some areas, it is local vigilante groups who are providing the most protection to civilians from Boko Haram. One person stated that *“it is the local youths that are in charge... it is the boys on the street with their double barrelled guns and blue uniforms that are doing the jobs”.* However, extra-judicial killings take place and are committed largely with impunity:

‘These boys, what they have done to rid Borno town of Boko Haram, is if they’ve got anybody they just bring them out and kill them. Sending them to the police will mean that some big guy will get them released by tomorrow and they will come back and kill everybody that was involved in arresting them. So this has led to massive extra-judicial killing. And of course, it means if you don’t like somebody, you just say they are Boko Haram, and they get killed.’

³ Amnesty International, NIGERIA: TORTURE IN NIGERIA: IN SUMMARY: STOP TORTURE COUNTRY BRIEFING AFR 44/005/2014

Security infiltration by Boko Haram

'They are within the security system, they are in the army, at the top. Lots of security men are actually Boko Haram, but you don't know which ones they are, it is not written in their forehead. But they are there - in the police, the army, all security agencies. So if anyone wants protection, where do they go?'

- Interviewee in Bauchi

'People are so scared to name anyone – we need a good, safe referral system. At the moment, I don't even know who I am reporting to – I am afraid.'

- Interviewee in Jos

Pervasive reports that Boko Haram members reach up to the highest levels of the Nigerian military are both hard to prove and hard to ignore. Regular reports that Boko Haram members or sympathisers are common within the police means that *"no-one will give them information about Boko Haram, because if you say something, you could end up getting killed tomorrow – no-one knows where the leaks are coming from"* (interviewee, Jos).

There are regular breaches of information, with military operations against Boko Haram being compromised in ways which suggest information has been leaked.

3. Political Context

'The International Community should make the Nigerian government more responsive and responsible. The Security forces don't know what is going on. The Government don't want to open up to the fact that they don't have capacity, and that they don't know what's going on.'

- Interviewee in Jos

The Nigerian Government's ineffective and lacklustre response to Boko Haram insurgency and its failure to protect citizens has triggered anger and disenchantment within Nigeria and criticism internationally. Its role in prolonging and exacerbating the crisis goes far deeper than its immediate inability to protect civilians. Decades of inequality, rampant corruption and a near complete failure to transform the country's vast oil wealth into any kind of tangible improvement in the lives of the vast majority of Nigerians has created a fertile ground for extremism. Insufficiently developed infrastructure, poorly trained and corrupt security forces and police and a lack of accountability for crimes contribute to a state infrastructure ill equipped to protect civilians and prevent instability.

The Government has failed to seriously tackle corruption, thus bolstering Boko Haram's narrative of the Government as weak and corrupt, who have for a long time used Government failings in support of their Self-avowedly ideologically Islamist campaign. In the states in the north of the country, where Muslim Governors have imposed Sharia, and where it has proved impossible to calculate accurately the ethnic and religious mix and determine who is actually in the majority, development and opportunity lag far behind the relatively wealthier south. Poverty levels are 40% higher in the north than in the south, and unemployment in the northern states is three times the levels of the southwest.⁴ The literacy rate in Lagos (in the southwest) is 92%, whilst in Kano, the commercial capital of northern Nigeria, it is 49%. In Borno State, it is 15%.⁵

There are also widespread and credible reports that Boko Haram has received support from some of the highest levels of state government in northern Nigeria. In some cases, individuals allegedly began funding Boko Haram (before they were officially known as such) during their own campaigns for election, effectively using them as bodyguards.

The Governor of Bauchi State has attracted considerable criticism for his perceived support of Boko Haram. He is often blamed for the failure of the state government and security forces to stem the growth of Boko Haram within the state, despite reliable local knowledge about where Boko Haram strongholds in Bauchi are located, and who is involved.

In one particularly worrying incident, on April 20th, the Governor of Bauchi allowed five trailers, each containing 100 men, to travel to Liman Katagum (a Boko Haram training camp). The governor said that the men were refugees from Zamfara State; however, this aroused significant suspicion, as there were no women or children amongst the group, and Bauchi is no safer than Zamfara State. In May, a further 200 men arrived. It is believed that these men are being prepared to attack targets in Bauchi State, including Tafa Balewa.

While it is difficult to assess the truth in the many allegations of political complicity with Boko Haram, one thing is very clear – the levels of trust between the Government and the people is extremely low, with rampant corruption, a failure to provide services, and to deal with the insurgency, all contributing to pervasive anger and growing tensions.

⁴ MINTs and Mayhem

⁵ Leena Koni Hoffmann, July 2014, 'Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria'. Chatham House, Africa Programme. http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20140703NorthernNigeriaHoffmann.pdf

4. International Support for Boko Haram

The insurgency in Nigeria, whilst locally grounded is also fuelled and developed by international supporters. The international dimension of the insurgency should not be underestimated.

Boko Haram's transition from ad hoc, relatively uncoordinated group to an increasingly effective, deadly, well-coordinated and well-funded militant quasi-army (interviewees emphasised that *"they [Boko Haram] are getting more sophisticated by the day"*) is driven to a very significant extent by international support and funding.

The borders between Nigeria, Mali, Cameroon and Chad are porous. Boko Haram has close links with communities on both sides of the border. The area around Lake Chad is described as a *"no man's land"*, where Boko Haram can gather and grow in strength.

Support from further afield reportedly comes in the form of personnel, weapons and, most significantly, funding. Widespread reports indicate that in the ranks of Boko Haram are fighters from Libya, Egypt, Niger, Chad, Mali and Sudan, amongst other countries. In Bauchi, huge sums of foreign currencies – allegedly particularly from Saudi Arabia – are being converted into Naira by individuals known to be part of Boko Haram. Many of Boko Haram's arms are believed to have come from Libya. There are reports that Boko Haram operatives also travel to other countries to develop expertise and use local resources - such as to Egypt to prepare foreign passports.

Boko Haram owes its success in no small part to these international links: much of the local popularity and political influence which it enjoys are because of the vast wealth behind it. The impact of a huge influx of wealth into a deeply impoverished part of the world is immense. With access to large reserves of wealth, Boko Haram can offer rewards that few others could match. To attend their training camps, young men are reportedly offered 200,000 naira. 500,000 naira can be paid for the delivery of a bomb. 3 – 5 million naira may be paid to suicide bombers, as well as support for their families. In addition, recruits are offered, skills, meaning, training and international connections. It is not hard to see why Boko Haram is increasingly popular amongst young men from very poor communities, with few opportunities or options in life. These practical pulls are complemented with ideological and political propaganda; such as the widespread claims in Jos that genocide is being committed against Muslims.

Further recruits are provided by abduction. When Boko Haram undertake attacks, they typically kill elderly people, abduct girls and women and forcibly recruit young men into their ranks.

Given the increasing scale of operations by Boko Haram and the massive support which make these possible, including the international connections, there is widespread concern that this is part of an international agenda of Islamisation of Nigeria and other nations in West and East Africa.

There is also widespread fear that the President and the Nigerian Government do not have the will or the capacity to withstand the process of Islamisation; rather, that they are either complicit or intimidated into acquiescence and support.

5. Inter-faith Projects

"Boko Haram's friends will be reduced if we initiate dialogue with other Muslims".

- Interviewee in Bauchi

"What we need to do now is to reconstruct some of the peace that has been destroyed, instead of going and fighting and creating more destruction. So now we work on small scale business, so that we keep life going. If [people] are busy doing something, they will forget about retaliation".

- Interviewee in Bauchi

At the heart of a seemingly intractable conflict, with Boko Haram apparently growing uncontrollably and communities increasingly divided, we found many impressive stories of reconciliation and grassroots projects promoting peace, which were powerful sources of hope.

One of our partners explained how, through dialogue with his own community, he urged them not to retaliate. He described what he would say: *"yes, you are aggrieved. But if you retaliate, what if these people went for reinforcement, and come and destroy whatever you have? That cannot help us. Nobody that has gone for revenge has produced any positive result".* He tries to make them see that *"the only way is to forgive, and that is how we can live in peace with one another, we can accommodate one another".* With this, many people calmed down.

There are many creative initiatives designed to foster reconciliation between communities fractured by violence and to build confidence and dialogue between Christians and Muslims. One such project is discussed in detail in Appendix 1 on page 14.

Whilst Nigeria's Christian and Muslim communities have co-existed, largely peacefully, for decades, the tensions between groups are growing and intercommunal violence in recent years has claimed many lives. Rumour and misinformation abound, with a significant impact on inter-community relationships. *"Rumours build when there is no information. The Government doesn't say anything, so people create their own interpretation."* The insurgency is fuelling suspicion between communities: *"When we were small, we didn't have these issues – we grew up together. But now I am suspicious"*.

Projects which promote interfaith dialogue and understanding are urgently needed. Projects facilitating better education, skill development and access to education are also crucial: *"if [people have skills], they are less likely to go and join Boko Haram. If they have business they are doing."* We heard a number of times the importance of providing Nigeria's youths with alternative activities, skills training and potential sources of income, to reduce the temptation of joining Boko Haram and to enable fighters to leave: *"many want to leave Boko Haram, but how can they sustain their families?"*

Clearly such initiatives are of immense importance and may prove of great value in promoting reconciliation, reconstruction and the prevention of radicalisation to local communities.

Although their effectiveness in combatting the escalation of violence associated with Boko Haram's escalating activities, built on the pre-existing problems of intercommunal conflict in the Sharia States and the Central Belt, we strongly commend their work and wish to support their applications for funding to enable them to sustain and extend their work.

We present the initiative which we visited in Jos as one example which we hope DFID will support. (See Appendix 1.)



A woman in Jos, where inter-faith projects are bringing divided communities together.

Conclusion

We returned from this visit more worried than on any previous occasion. Our concerns are included in this report and underpin our fears that the escalation of Boko Haram's activities, together with the apparent degree of support from many significant sources in Nigeria and from abroad; the repeated failure of the Army and security personnel to protect civilians; the lack of effective intervention by the Federal and State Governments and the scale of suffering of civilians may pose a serious threat to the stability of the nation and the spread of Islamism further afield. We hope very much that the British Government and the international community will respond more effectively to this gravely deteriorating situation.

Baroness Caroline Cox, CEO
Reverend David Thomas, Project Logistics Officer
Alice Robinson, HART Advocacy and Communications Manager

12th July 2014.

About HART:

HART (Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust) was established in 2004 to provide aid and advocacy for victims of oppression and persecution, often trapped behind closed borders and 'off the radar screen' of international media; whose governments deny access by aid organisations and/or who are not being served by other aid organisations for security or political reasons.

HART relies on first-hand evidence of human rights violations, using this as a basis for a twin-track programme of international advocacy in arenas such as Parliament and the media; and targeted aid, focusing on local partnerships, sustainable community development, and regional networks of support. Through advocacy in national and international arenas, we can be a voice for those who have no voice and strive to present their problems with integrity and sensitivity.

Contact HART:

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust
3 Arnellan House
144-146 Slough Lane
Kingsbury
London NW9 8XJ

T: +44 (0) 20 8204 7336
E: office@hart-uk.org
W: www.hart-uk.org

For questions or further information, to arrange interviews, or access further audio-visual materials, please contact:

Caroline Cox, HART CEO, at caroline.cox@hart-uk.org
David Thomas, HART Projects and Visits Coordinator, at david.thomas@hart-uk.org
Alice Robinson, HART's Advocacy and Communications Manager, at alice.robinson@hart-uk.org.



Above, left and right: health and development studies at the Christian Institute, Jos.

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT RECOMMENDED FOR SUPPORT: PEACE, RECONCILIATION AND PROGRESS IN MAI ADIKO (RAYFIELD)

Rayfield, a neighbourhood in the city of Jos, was particularly affected by the Jos Crisis of 2008 and from 2010-12, when inter-communal violence killed thousands of people and led to a dramatic deterioration in relations between the Christian and Muslim communities. It remains an area deeply divided along religious lines, and vulnerable to extremist and intercommunal violence.

The Anglican Diocese of Jos, HART's partners in northern Nigeria, identified a number of major contributing factors to the conflict, including the breakdown in relationships between the two communities, and the poverty and lack of opportunity affecting both communities – and young people in particular. Monitoring the situation, they felt that the animosity between Christians and Muslims in Rayfield was dangerously high, and that there was an urgent need for a grassroots approach to seek genuine peace.

In 2012, the Diocese gave rice, vegetable oil, salt and other items to the Muslim community for the breaking of fast at the end of Ramadan. In response, the Muslim community bought a cow and presented it to the church on Christmas Eve, 2012.

The crises in Jos had left both communities economically vulnerable, with a great many Muslim women widowed. Many Muslim families in the area had withdrawn their children from the St George Primary School. The Diocese therefore directed that all the Muslim children in the school should be given scholarships. By July 2013, this came to 150 pupils.

Following a meeting between the Anglican Diocese and the leader of the local Hausa Muslim community, an interfaith income generation project was initiated. This project brought together Christian and Muslim women and young people from the local community to learn entrepreneurial skills. The District head of Du, Da Philip Kim, the traditional chief of the Berom community, and his community leader, Da Hwere and Da Gyang were enthused by the move to bring the warring religions together and gave their blessings.

The first meeting was held in March 2013, beginning with 40 women and young people, 25 of whom were from the Muslim community. The meetings continued on a weekly basis and, by June, the number of participants had grown to 118 (80 Muslim and 38 Christian). 40% of the participants are young girls aged between 16 and 22.

There are now around 150 participants, who have formed a number of small groups working on different income generation projects. Projects include:

- Computer classes;
- Learning to read;
- Learning knitting and sewing (both hand and machine);
- Learning how to make confectionaries, baking cakes and bread, and how to cook different dishes;
- Making jewellery;
- Making liquid detergent and soap.

The products are made in groups, and are taken to local shops and markets for sale. Interest free loans were provided to some of the groups to acquire equipment. Women with different skills have been encouraged to share and to teach others.

Some basic healthcare services and training have also been provided. Nurses were invited to give health talks at the meetings from time to time, covering basic healthcare for mothers and children. A free medical outreach was organised by the Church. Over 250 people consulted doctors and all of the drugs that were needed were provided for free. Free eye tests, glasses and dental surgery were also offered.

To explore how the project can best move forward, to both support and bring together the two communities, the diocese brought together a group of Muslim and Christian youths to consider the future of the project. They agreed upon the following priorities:

- Skill acquisition, with a focus on basic and advanced computer training;
- Media skills
- Learning to do phone and computer repairs
- Bringing together small youth groups who wish to start small enterprises in meat packaging and sales
- More educational opportunities, including expanding extramural classes to assist those who did not achieve the entry requirements needed for university
- Providing designing machines for tailoring for young people with an interest in sewing
- Providing 4 deep freezers for 5 youth groups who want to set up a cold room to sell frozen foods.

The biggest barrier to overcome, according to Canon Hassan John, is that *“The needs and challenges keep increasing as many more people join on a weekly basis, especially widows that lost their husbands in the crises and children that are orphaned.”*

When we met some of the participants during our visit, they described the impact the project has had on their lives. The skills taught, cooperatives formed, profits made and health services delivered have helped to break down reservations from amongst the communities, as the women's families increasingly see and feel the benefits of the project. The women unanimously agreed that it had brought huge improvements to their lives and the lives of their children. One of the Muslim women reported: *"our husbands are very excited about this. There has been a lot of improvement in our homes and our families."*

Canon Hassan John succinctly highlights the project's greatest success as follows:

In the last year we have been able to bring Muslims and Christians together in an unprecedented way that from both divides we have built trust. The Muslim and Christian are working together and helping one another. They eat together and visit one another in the Rayfield community.

The Muslim women teach the Christian women some basic skills like the making of 'masa' and 'Dakuwa' which are foods traditional to the Hausa Muslim communities and the Christian women teach the Muslim women hair dressing and making of pastries.

The peaceful and mutual respect for one another is exemplary.

Their working together every week has created a platform for interaction and understanding which has eroded most of the animosity previously existing between the Christian and Muslim groups.

This was reiterated by one of the women from the Muslim community:

I thank God for the opportunity that has come – both Muslims and Christians talking together, sitting together, and working together all the time. It has removed the anxieties. There used to be this massive divide and distrust, so nobody entered anybody else's community. Now both Christians and Muslims must pray that this is over and unity is re-established.

Another woman highlighted the gains that have been made, and how far they have come:

At the heat of the crisis, we never thought anything like this was possible. But because we've been brought together, the impossible has become possible. Now we produce a lot together.



Top left and right, and bottom right: participants in the Mai Adiko interfaith projects, bottom left: some of the products made by the groups, including a range of detergents and other cleaning materials.