

Nigeria Strategic Conflict Assessment Methodology, Key Findings and Lessons Learnt

The violence and unrest surrounding Nigeria's general elections this April highlighted the ongoing instability that threatens the country's development. Nigeria, with a Gross National Income of below \$300 per capita, is a federation of 130 million people (close to 20% of Sub-Saharan Africa), living in 36 states and 774 local government areas. Out of the forty two years since independence, Nigeria has experienced thirty years of military dictatorship. During this period political and social values have been seriously undermined. Since 1999, when President Olusegun Obasanjo won democratic elections, conflict has resulted in over 10,000 deaths, and the internal displacement of over 300,000 people.¹ Recognizing the need to analyze and address the sources of violent conflict in order to achieve development targets, the Post-Conflict Fund in the World Bank and other donors partnered with the Nigerian government and stakeholders to conduct a national Strategic Conflict Assessment in 2002/3.



The Strategic Conflict Assessment

The need to support a Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) was agreed by donors in December 2001, and supported by President Obasanjo. The central guiding principle was that the SCA process should be led by the national Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), in the Presidency. Local ownership and capacity-building were considered key to achieving credibility and sustainability.

Technical and financial support was provided to IPCR and local stakeholders by some of Nigeria's major international donors: DFID; UNDP; USAID; and the World Bank, who formed an SCA Advisory Group to IPCR. The Advisory Group proved to be

a vital structure for collective decision-making. This approach was chosen over the more traditional single-donor approach to draw upon a wide range of international expertise and experience, to share resource costs and to mitigate political risk to donors. Donor cooperation and collaboration meant that donors were able to cover areas where partners may not have had the capacity or mandate. This was the first time, globally, that a national conflict assessment had ever been supported by a group of donors. Conflict assessments by individual donors are often not shared beyond the sponsoring donor. Where they are shared, they are often edited to remove "sensitive" parts, thus defeating the purpose of the analysis and making it difficult for stakeholders and other donors to benefit.

¹ Global IDP Project, January 2002

Methodology

The Strategic Conflict Assessment process was launched in May 2002, with a national stakeholder workshop with 150 participants, to generate awareness and buy-in from a wide range of Nigerian stakeholders.² IPCR and partners would undertake the SCA in two main phases. Phase 1 would involve a desk study by local consultants to map the causes, actors and dynamics of conflict based on existing literature. Information relating to the country's different geo-political zones would be synthesized into a single report for the first phase of the SCA. For Phase 2, the findings of Phase 1 would be tested with fieldwork, and the focus would be more on responses and policy options.

Donors and IPCR had agreed to use DFID's published and tested 'Strategic Conflict Assessment' methodology, while adapting it to the Nigerian context. There are three stages in the assessment: (i) an analysis of causes, actors and dynamics; (ii) mapping of existing responses to conflict; and (iii) recommending policy options and strategies. Prior to the start of the SCA research process, training on the DFID conflict assessment methodology was carried out for local researchers by a DFID consultant.

The fieldwork involved six teams consisting of IPCR staff, consultants, civil society and donor representatives, each traveling to one of the six-geopolitical zones. Interviews were held with a variety of stakeholders, including representatives of federal, state and local governments; police and the national security service; donors; NGOs; community-based organizations; academic institutions; civil society; traditional leaders; media; and the private sector. Interviewers focused on listening to stakeholders and impartially documenting the variety of perspectives that they were exposed to. Six zonal reports were written by the teams, based on the findings of the fieldwork. IPCR and local consultants then drew together the Phase 1 report and six zonal reports into a draft consolidated report for Phase 2. The SCA consolidated report and the zonal reports were published in one volume in March 2003.³ The

report was launched at a second workshop with a wide range of stakeholders in Abuja that month⁴.

Key Findings of the SCA

The final SCA report is impressively bold in its statements of the failures of governance in Nigeria. After decades of military dictatorship, the country turned toward democracy in 1999, but the immediate effect of democracy has been to generate more conflict. According to the SCA, at the heart of most violent conflict nationwide lies political corruption, and the lack of transparency in the use of the \$15-18 billion annual revenues from oil and gas. This has led to a political crisis in which political actions are often dominated by self-interest and money. It has also contributed to the politicization of ethnic and religious divisions, which are mainly fault-lines along which violence erupts, often when manipulated by elites. The key actors in violent conflict are large numbers of unemployed and disillusioned youth, particularly in urban areas.

The consolidation of democracy and even the survival of the Nigerian State have come to depend on the ability of the center to manage these centrifugal pressures. To date, the response has been mainly the use of military force. Root causes have been allowed to persist. In order to preserve democracy these root causes now need to be addressed and a wider range of policy responses considered. According to the SCA, failure to resolve basic issues relating to resource competition will allow the current cycles of violent conflict to persist.

In the past, civil society (with support from international donors) has been active in research and local peacemaking initiatives, but it lacks capacity, strategic vision and engagement. The media have not yet played a constructive role, and have sometimes served to heighten tension. Business leaders and investors have been ignored, yet are major players in some of the conflicts. Closer collaboration between these parties, led by government's strategic vision, could unite significant forces to limit violent conflict and support the development of democracy as the best long-term protection against the spread of violence in society.

The SCA findings are valuable for informing and influencing future interventions. Producing reports

² See Report of Stakeholders Workshop for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja 14-15 May 2002.

³ "Nigeria: Strategic Conflict Assessment, Consolidated and Zonal Reports", published by IPCR, March 2003.

⁴ The report of this workshop is currently being prepared by UNDP Lagos.

for each of Nigeria's six geo-political zones, as well as a consolidated national report, has meant that the SCA brings out issues of concern at both macro and meso levels. While certain issues such as political corruption can be generalized at the national level, others such as the politicization of *shariah*, and herder/farmer conflict, are more relevant to certain regions, which can be reflected in government and donor policies and programs.

Lessons Learnt

Looking back on the process that led to the publication of the final Nigerian SCA report, it is clear that it has been a great success. The Nigeria SCA represents the first ever multi-donor supported and country-led conflict analysis, and it is the first national conflict assessment the World Bank has been associated with.

The main lesson learnt from the SCA process and outcome relates to the rewards of donor partnership in support of a national institution. A multi-donor approach requires a high level of co-ordination and commitment to partnership. Breaking the mould of more traditional approaches also require high levels of trust. Physical presence on the ground is essential for a donor to be fully engaged in the process and to take the lead where other donors may lack capacity. Recruiting additional and shared donor human resources to coordinate input and reduce the burden on core staff should be considered when embarking on a multi-donor conflict assessment. This delicate balancing act is further complicated by the need for donors to offer technical advice and support, while not compromising local ownership. Where local institutional capacity may be weak, this requires particular care.

Producing a national SCA report for a country the size and complexity of Nigeria can be a challenging process at times, but donors must stick to agreed principles, such as local leadership and ownership. This may include following a locally-driven timetable, when local perceptions of time pressures may differ from perceptions of international organizations. Local protocol must be respected, and donors need to take care to offer guidance rather than impose externally-conceived structures or processes. Conflict assessment methodologies require flexible application including the development of local capacity as the process unfolds, and broad participation.

Supporting an SCA requires significant human resources input, is time-intensive, and inevitably takes longer than expected. In Nigeria, donor agreement to support a conflict assessment led by IPCR occurred in December 2001 and a draft final report was ready by September 2002.

But the work does not stop there. The SCA report is the basis and justification for follow-up work—it is not a one-shot process, but must be ongoing.

Next Steps

At the March 2003 workshop to launch the published SCA report, representatives of Nigerian and donor governments, civil society, and the private sector, worked together to formulate a National Action Plan (NAP) for conflict reduction, based upon the findings of the SCA.⁵ The NAP focuses on six themes: (i) early warning and preventive action; (ii) addressing the economic and social causes of conflict; (iii) mainstreaming conflict prevention into government and donor programs; (iv) improving formal and informal/traditional mediation mechanisms; (v) the political process; and (vi) security sector reform/ small arms and light weapons reduction.

The donor Advisory Group has been widened to encourage participation in follow-up by a larger number of donors ('open architecture'). Donors are offering support in areas where they have comparative advantage, and where plans fit with their mandates and country strategies. For example, DFID is likely to take the lead on security sector reform, and USAID on mediation and support to civil society. A number of donors have also made a commitment to use the SCA as the basis for improving the conflict-sensitivity of their strategies and development programs, and their responses to conflict in Nigeria.

The Strategic Conflict Assessment and National Action Plan will inform future World Bank assistance to address economic and social sources of conflict through a focus on governance, private sector-led growth and empowerment of communities. Specifically, together with DFID, the Bank is supporting IPCR's work with the Nigerian PRSP team to integrate conflict sensitivity into the Interim-PRSP. A project to address unemployment among urban youth is being planned, as is support for a peace-building television drama series

⁵ IPCR is currently working on a draft of the National Action Plan as discussed by workshop participants.

targeting urban youth. Training of editors and journalists on balance and tolerance in reporting is also ongoing. Conflict management is already being integrated into the planned Fadama II project for wetlands development, using the SCA reports from the northern zones as background, and all relevant new projects in the Nigeria lending portfolio will undergo conflict risk screening as part of social analysis.

SCA Nigeria key partners

Partners in the SCA Nigeria process so far are too many to mention here, but include: the Nigerian Federal Government, in particular IPCR staff; donor staff in Nigeria and overseas; and representatives of Nigerian civil society. Special thanks and acknowledgement must go to the following people for their hard work and dedication:

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