



USAID | NIGERIA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GOVERNING JUSTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

OVERVIEW

PROFILE

Date of Independence: 1960
Population: 148 million (2008)
Languages: English, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani, Kanuri
GDP per capita: \$716 (2008)
Source: U.S. State Department

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BACKGROUND

Development in Nigeria is heavily constrained by poverty and unemployment. These conditions breed disaffection in youths, provide an entry point for Islamic extremism, entice corruption, and promote ineffective governance. In its development partnership with Nigeria, the United States seeks to strengthen social stability through improved social services, support transparent and accountable governance, promote a more market-led economy, and enhance Nigeria's capacity as a responsible regional and trade partner. These goals support the Government of Nigeria's National Economic and Empowerment Strategy, the Seven-Point Agenda, and Vision 20:2020.



DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMS

Among the most significant governance challenges facing Nigeria is the dominance of its politics by an oligarchy—a small elite spread across the country—which excludes the majority of Nigerians from civic participation. The incumbent administration has not fully implemented electoral reforms to which it had committed. In addition, the increasing militarization of politics nationwide raises growing concern that political conflict will become ever more violent and beyond the control of national and local government. Such negative trends are occurring in the context of poor social and economic indicators across the country.

RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Basic constraints continue to plague the Nigerian court system: court cases are not properly recorded; judges have no law clerks and few reference materials; and backlogs, continuances and adjournments inflict human rights abuses on persons who have been neither tried nor convicted. Upon taking office in 2007, former President Yar'Adua embarked on a campaign to improve the rule of law. This campaign overhauled law enforcement agencies; processed electoral reforms; and limited external interference in the court system. Building on this progress, USAID supports federal courts to promote rule of law and assists with management reforms to improve the efficiency of the federal courts and public perception of the judiciary. These institutions have already shown a willingness to reform and operate effectively and transparently. To continue these achievements, USAID programs aim to establish constitutional changes needed for judicial independence, and build public demand for the autonomy of the courts.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Poor governance lies at the heart of Nigeria's development challenges. The modalities to disburse resources transparently from state to local governments are not in place and many sub-national governments are not equipped to carry out their functions. In response, USAID programs work to improve governance by engaging state and local governments, as well as civil society and private sector stakeholders. Activities include building capacity in key government agencies to strengthen fiscal and



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administrative responsibilities; reinforcing policies and systems to improve transparency; mobilizing civil society and the private sector to participate in community planning and budgeting, monitor financial flows, and assess the quality of service provision; and assisting civil society organizations to hold elected officials accountable.

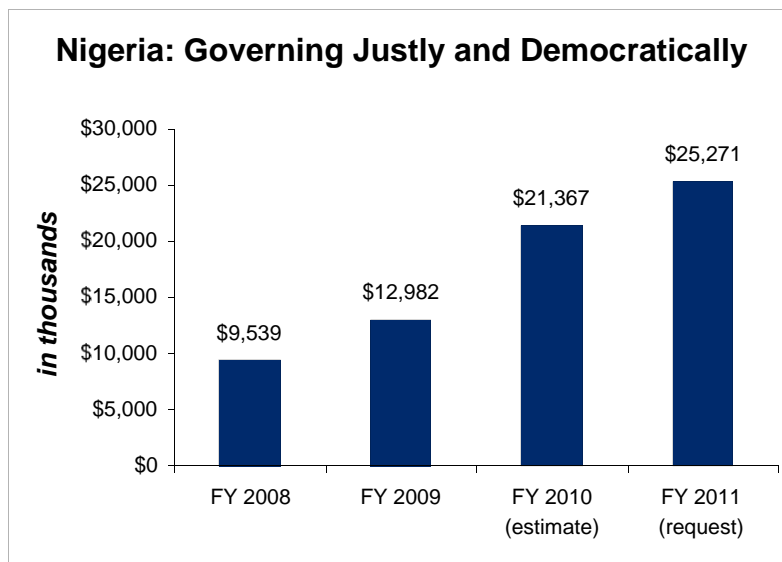
POLITICAL COMPETITION AND CONSENSUS-BUILDING

Nigeria is still recovering from the trauma of the severely flawed 2007 elections, with growing uncertainty over what the 2011 polls may bring. Violence and intimidation, flawed voter registers, theft of ballot boxes, and opaque tabulation and premature announcement of results severely undermined the credibility of the 2007 elections. Early 2010 assessments found that while key administrative actions under the current legal framework provide for the possibility of future credible elections, the crisis of confidence in the Independent National Elections Commission must be addressed. Accordingly, USAID will work to support credible national elections in 2011 by helping political parties to build coalitions, providing and training domestic and international observers, civic education, political party strengthening and parallel vote tabulation. Current assistance also includes strengthening Nigeria's electoral commission to develop a new voters' register and prepare for the 2011 elections.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Although political elites are entrenched in political structures that exclude the majority of citizens from meaningful democratic participation, civil society organizations have become a powerful voice for democratic reform and their efforts to push for inclusive governance have been successful in many ways. Even so, civil society organizations still lack both capacity and resources to carry out their functions fully. USAID's programs provide capacity building and support civic advocacy and media professionalism, focusing on membership organizations and larger civil society groups as targets for advocacy work, particularly on anti-corruption reforms. USAID also promotes stronger and broader collaboration between government and civil society to reduce sources of communal tension and violence in selected States and build robust conflict early-warning systems.

FUNDING



On behalf of the American people, the U.S. government has provided humanitarian assistance and economic development to those in need around the world since the Marshall Plan.