Boko Haram and violent extremism

Perspectives from peacebuilders

Uyo Salifu and Martin Ewi

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered in responses to Boko Haram's violence in north-eastern Nigeria:

1 The Nigerian government should prioritise a multifaceted response that employs targeted, intelligence-driven military actions and a robust criminal justice approach.

2 A national criminal tribunal with a mandate to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of terrorism and human rights abuses should be created in Nigeria.

3 The Nigerian government and international development partners should invest in extensive developmental projects in north-eastern Nigeria.

4 President Muhammadu Buhari should sustain the momentum on his zero-tolerance approach to corruption.

Summary

The atrocities unleashed by Boko Haram since 2009 have affected millions of people in Nigeria and the region as a whole. This policy brief presents the results of a field-based study on peacebuilders' perspectives of the drivers of violent extremism; and the underlying socio-economic and political factors that influence individuals to join Boko Haram. The study reveals that peacebuilders consider religious dynamics as the most influential factor in individuals' decision to join the terrorist group. As such, the study reveals that peacebuilders' views regarding the drivers of violent extremism are often markedly different to those expressed by former Boko Haram members themselves.

THIS POLICY BRIEF IS one of three publications that present the findings of an empirical study of Nigerian citizens' perspectives on *Jama'atul Ahlus Sunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad*, or Boko Haram as it is more commonly known. The first two present the findings of a citizen survey and social media analysis about how ordinary Nigerians perceive the Boko Haram crisis. In particular, the publications examine perspectives on the reasons for joining Boko Haram, political participation and sources of Boko Haram funding. This policy brief complements the others by presenting data on the views of peacebuilders who work in communities affected by the actions of Boko Haram.

The main purpose of this part of the study was to understand, from the perspective of 'peacebuilders'; why people join Boko Haram; and,

particularly, the underlying political, socio-economic, and demographic dynamics that influence their decision to join the group. Much has been written on Boko Haram and a number of studies have been dedicated to explaining the vulnerability of certain segments of the population in northern Nigeria to violent extremism.[1]

Very little empirical information, however, is available on peacebuilders, who chose an alternative path to Boko Haram members. This policy brief seeks to achieve three main objectives. Firstly, it presents and analyses the results of a study on the perspectives peacebuilders have on the factors that motivate people to join Boko Haram, as well as who is likely to introduce individuals to the violent extremist group and where.

In considering these factors, the paper also seeks to evaluate the legitimacy of current military operations, which have by far been the dominant response to Boko Haram. Secondly, the brief seeks to present the voice of the peacebuilders and examine the role that they can play in efforts to contain Boko Haram. And thirdly, it offers recommendations for long-term resolution of the crisis.

Research methodology

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) commissioned this study, along with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, based in Helsinki, Finland, and the International Dialogue Centre (KAIICID), based in Vienna, Austria and Finn Church Aid. It was conducted in February 2016 and consisted of two main parts. The first was a quantitative survey involving 50 individuals, who were selected based on their work in civil society organisations (CSOs), in Boko Haram affected areas. These individuals are also involved in various efforts to find acceptable solutions to challenges to peace and security in Nigeria; because of their involvement they are referred to as 'peacebuilders'.

Respondents to the quantitative survey included a sample of 21 women and 29 men. Of the 50 people interviewed, 29 of them (58%) of them were involved in humanitarian assistance, six of them (12%) in community dialogue, six more (12%) in research, five (10%) in education and skills development, and two (8%)

in religious issues. The second part was a qualitative study in the form of interviews with 10 prominent peacebuilders in areas affected by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. Respondents were selected using networks established by the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.

Understanding peacebuilders

Peacebuilders are defined by the nature of the function they perform. For the purpose of this policy brief, peacebuilders are groups – including organisations – and individuals involved in processes of peacebuilding that aim to transform violent societies into peaceful or non-violent ones.[2] Although no universally agreed definition for peacebuilding exists, the United Nations (UN) recognises the term as 'a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacity at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.'[3]

> Very little empirical information, however, is available on peacebuilders, who chose an alternative path to Boko Haram members

The 2016 United Nations Review of Peacebuilding states that peacebuilding encompasses initiatives conducted at several levels that are employed in an integrated, strategic and coherent approach that incorporates security, development and human rights.[4] As Judy Cheng-Hopkins, UN assistant secretary-general for peacebuilding, put it, 'It is neither a purely political, security nor developmental process, but one that must bring together security, political, economic, social and human rights elements in a coherent and integrated way.'[5] Peacebuilders are therefore peacebuilding practitioners.

According to the UN, various stakeholders can be engaged in peacebuilding efforts, including governments, international partners, civil society and local communities.[6] This distinction is important because it recognises that peacebuilding is not limited to the

processes of international organisations, states or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working to build peace in a country. It recognises that local actors can be peacebuilders in their own right and that locally led peacebuilders play a pivotal role in the peacebuilding architecture.[7] The focus of this brief is on individuals who work in CSOs engaged in peacebuilding processes in northern Nigeria.

Research findings

Peacebuilders in the context of Boko Haram

Efforts to address the socio-economic, developmental, peace and security challenges in northern Nigeria have attracted both peaceful and violent responses on the part of citizens. Despite their intensity, prevalence and spread, only a small number of groups have used violence. Boko Haram, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra, Niger Delta Volunteer Youths, Niger Delta Avengers and other groups have taken up arms against the state. But for every violent group, there may be hundreds of civil society actors campaigning for peace and security in Nigeria. There are several thousand NGOs and CSOs in Nigeria and at least 5 000 of them are part of a coalition of civil society against Boko Haram.[8] This means that the vast majority of concerned citizens have pursued non-violent means to achieve their objectives.

Interviews with peacebuilders in Nigeria revealed the crucial and challenging role they play in mitigating the impact of Boko Haram. The peacebuilders conduct interfaith dialogue and other activities to promote peaceful co-existence in communities either affected by Boko Haram or that the group could use as potential recruitment hubs.[9] The figure below gives an overview of the peacebuilders and their responsibilities.

Figure 1, shows that the majority, constituting 29 respondents (58% of the 50 peacebuilders), were involved in humanitarian issues, including providing food and other supplies. There is a plethora of literature on whether or not humanitarian action constitutes peacebuilding, or the extent to which humanitarian work contributes to peace.[10] Although humanitarian actors

Figure 1: Fields represented in peacebuilder organisations

Types of peacebuilders
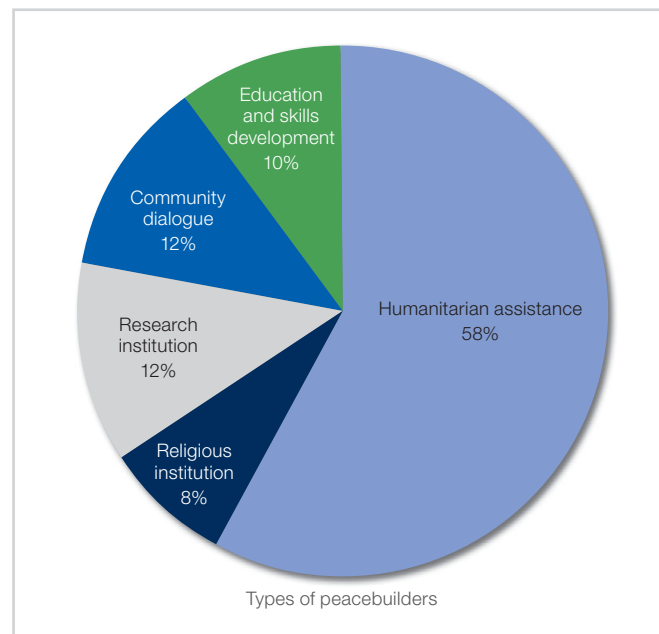
are often neutral in conflicts or when working among belligerents, their neutrality should not, however, be seen as either consent or acceptance of wars. On the contrary, they mitigate the impact of wars by providing livelihoods to victims, and expose the cruelty and horror of wars, through which they can touch the deepest conscience of humanity to reject war. While it is beyond the scope of this policy brief to engage in this debate, the brief draws on a school of thought that says that humanitarian action and peacebuilding converge.[11]

As Figure 1 illustrates, the peacebuilders also consisted of those who worked for organisations involved in community dialogue (12%) and those involved in research work (12%). A smaller sample, consisting of four and five respondents (8% and 10%), respectively, worked with religious institutions and organisations dealing with education and skills development.

How peacebuilders joined peacebuilding activities

The peacebuilders involved in the study were mainly people who were exposed to the same conditions as those who became militants (e.g. in terms of poverty, religious affiliation and political context). However, they chose to undertake peacebuilding activities either as volunteers, part-time workers or full-time employees in

a cross spectrum of organisations that deal with various aspects of peacebuilding.

For many of them, personal exposure either to violence or conflict mediation processes strongly influenced their entry into peacebuilding.[12] Outreach by religious and community leaders, as well as their upbringing and personality, also influenced their decision to become peacebuilders. Religion was also a major influence in peacebuilders' decision to join their respective organisations; many were themselves religious leaders.[13] This was particularly common among peacebuilders involved in humanitarian and religious issues. For them, religions preach peace and the value of forgiveness, and therefore religion itself is a peacemaking tool that could be used to solve the Boko Haram crisis. This view seems to resonate with the call for an amnesty for Boko Haram militants as a solution to end the crisis, which religious leaders in Nigeria have championed.[14]

To understand the two tracks that people might choose – peacebuilding or violent extremism – the peacebuilder survey asked respondents to indicate how they became involved in their organisations. Figure 2 below shows the findings.

Figure 2 shows that there were several ways in which the

Figure 2: How peacebuilders were introduced to their organisations

Total peacebuilders = 50
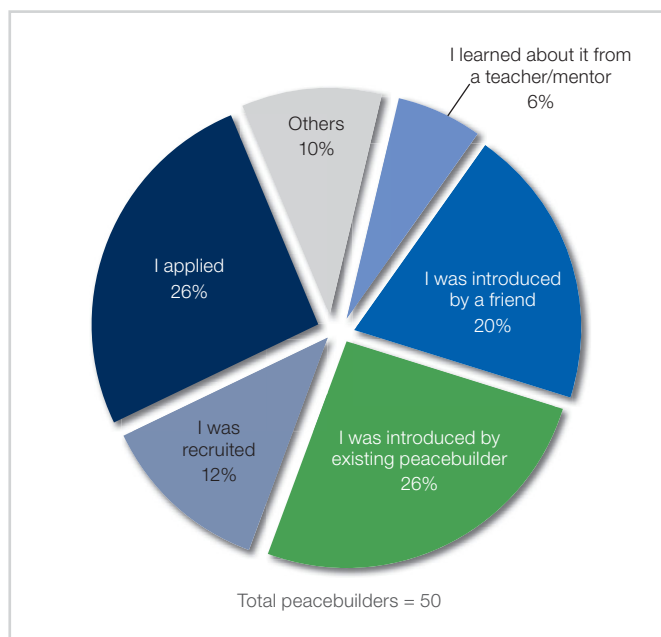
peacebuilders were introduced to their organisations. The majority (52%) were introduced to their organisations by someone such as an existing peacebuilder (26%), a friend (20%), or a teacher or mentor (6%). A considerable number of the peacebuilders (26%) applied of their own volition, while others were identified and recruited by their employers (12%), or gave a different reason (10%).

Peacebuilders' views on why people join Boko Haram

Understanding what drives people to become part of extremist groups is pivotal to efforts to prevent violent extremism. Studies on the topic suggest that reasons for joining are not only numerous but also fluid, changing according to context and individual.[15] When it came to Boko Haram, the peacebuilders were of the view that people who joined the group did so for various reasons. Some of the factors that the peacebuilders cited included monetary and personal benefits, economic and political marginalisation or disenfranchisement, education, and religion.

According to the peacebuilders, religious reasons were the most prominent factor that influenced people's decision to join Boko Haram. This perception may be driven by the fact that Boko Haram claims to be an Islamic group and portrays itself as a sect that denounces the Western style of education as un-Islamic and therefore forbidden.[16]

This religious identity is evident in the group's carefully chosen name, Jama'atul Ahlus Sunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad, which translates as 'the Group Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad';[17] it suggests an affiliation with the Ahlu Sunna doctrine, which in Nigeria is known to be associated with Salafism and the Wahhabi Da'wa order.[18] Boko Haram, a widely used name for the group that means 'Western education is forbidden,' is believed to have originated from 'a religious edict of Mohammed Yusuf', the founding leader of Boko Haram, who declared 'attending government schools (in Hausa boko) and working for the Nigerian government to be forbidden (haram) for Muslims.'[19] The Islamist objectives of the group, however, transcend the mere opposition to Western education or civilization, as

some analysts suggest, but also include a strong desire for a just society governed by sharia, Islamic law. Secular institutions such as the constitution, democracy, scientific explanations of the cosmos and life are seen to be incompatible with the puritanical application of sharia.

The role of religion in contemporary expressions of violent extremism is heavily contested among scholars and practitioners alike. The peacebuilders' perception was that recruits often manipulated into believing that by joining Boko Haram they were adhering to true and pure Islam as prescribed by the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet. For peacebuilders, the use of religion remained a powerful force for Boko Haram's recruitment.
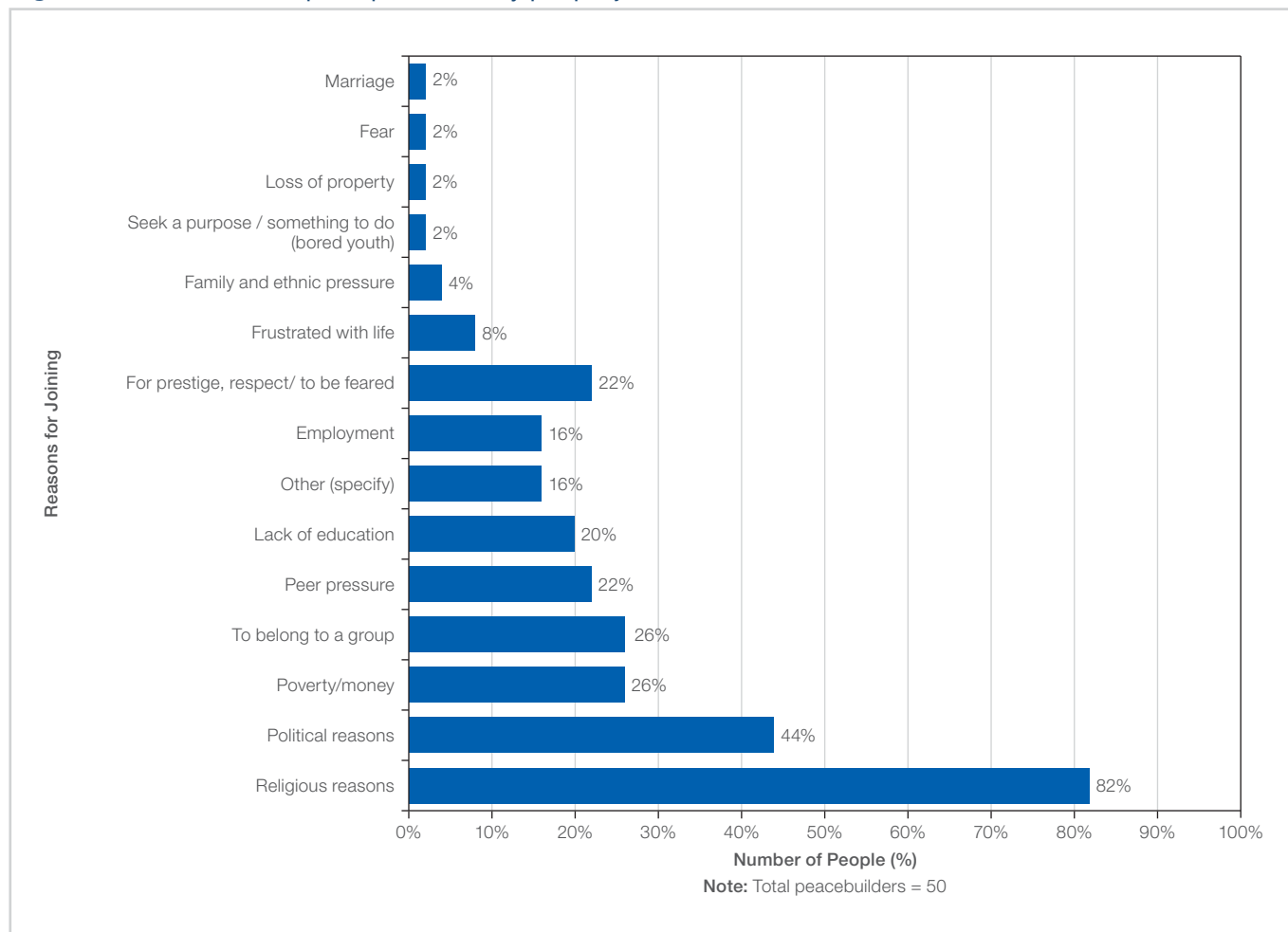
Peacebuilders who participated in the qualitative interviews explained that Boko Haram did not follow the 'true' teachings of Islam, and stated that Boko Haram's propaganda easily indoctrinated those not familiar with the scriptures of the Quran. One peacebuilder said, 'When they know the true teaching of their religion they cannot practice what they are doing in the name of religion; no religion encourages violence'.[20]

According to another, 'They join for a religious aim, yes, but only because they do not know the teaching of peace and have been indoctrinated by bad ideology'.[21] These perceptions support the view held by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation that there is a separation of some Muslim young people from Islamic principles,[22] which denotes that they are not knowlegeable about Islamic principles. There is thus a vacuum for Boko Haram to recruit vulnerable, less knowledgeable young Muslims.

To assess the main drivers of violent extremism, the peacebuilders were asked to rank the top three factors that they believed motivated individuals to join

Figure 3: Peacebuilders' perceptions of why people join Boko Haram

Reasons for Joining

Reason	%
Marriage	2%
Fear	2%
Loss of property	2%
Seek a purpose / something to do (bored youth)	2%
Family and ethnic pressure	4%
Frustrated with life	8%
For prestige, respect/ to be feared	22%
Employment	16%
Other (specify)	16%
Lack of education	20%
Peer pressure	22%
To belong to a group	26%
Poverty/money	26%
Political reasons	44%
Religious reasons	82%

Number of People (%)

Note: Total peacebuilders = 50

Boko Haram. These results were then tallied and are summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3 illustrates the overwhelming perception among peacebuilders that religious reasons constitute a major influence on people's decision to join Boko Haram (82%), ranking it as the most important factor. Figure 3 indicates that peacebuilders also noted political reasons as the second most likely reason behind the decision to join Boko Haram (44%). The qualitative interviews with peacebuilders corroborated the findings from the quantitative survey. These political issues were associated with bad governance.

Aimlessness caused by unemployment was a major factor influencing decisions to join Boko Haram

According to peacebuilders, bad governance leads to corruption, poor service delivery, lack of education, conflict, poverty and lack of infrastructure. As the figure above indicates, economic factors including poverty, need for money, and employment constituted the third most likely reason for people to join Boko Haram (26%). This was equalled by the proportion of respondents who felt that the urge to belong to a group also played a significant role in influencing people's membership of Boko Haram (26%). Also not to be ignored is the influence of peer pressure (22%), the need for prestige or to be feared (22%) and lack of education (20%), which respondents felt also had marked influence on people's decision to become members. Only a very marginal sample of the peacebuilders thought that frustration with life (8%) and family pressure (4%) were accountable for membership in Boko Haram.

The overwhelming impression among the peacebuilders that religion and political factors were responsible for membership seems to detract slightly from the widespread theoretical view that poverty plays a major influence in terrorist recruitment.[23] According to the findings of this study, poverty is one of the major factors but not the primary influence. The strongest appeal of the poverty thesis resonates in the fact that Boko Haram

is said to lure recruits with offers of cash, loans and donations to poor traders.[24]

The group is also believed to make cash payments to locals in return for information on movements of security forces. Peacebuilders' views in the qualitative interviews confirmed that in some cases people were promised a loan or job and were so desperate that they failed to consider the consequences of joining. In the words of one peacebuilder, 'they are frustrated; they either have no education and no job or they have a degree but cannot find a job. They see the successful and rich people and resent them. They want to kill them.'[25]

Peacebuilders' perspectives on the link between 'the need to belong' and joining Boko Haram in the quantitative survey is in line with psychopathological analysis, which posits that at an individual level psychological or mental factors are important in understanding why people join violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram.[26] Contrary to the findings from the literature review, only a marginal sample of the peacebuilders (2%) believed that coercive recruitment was a major factor influencing Boko Haram membership.[27] As Figure 3 above illustrates, joining Boko Haram based on fear accounted for merely 2% of the reasons peacebuilders gave.

The qualitative interviews with peacebuilders showed a strong perception that lack of purpose in life or aimlessness caused by unemployment was a major factor influencing decisions to join Boko Haram. The qualitative interviews stressed that these individuals had nothing to do, felt vulnerable and were easily recruited to a perceived 'cause' as a result. Here the promise of a role, as well as that of money to support family members, held the strongest appeal. There was also a general perception that some people join Boko Haram without realising what they were signing up for.

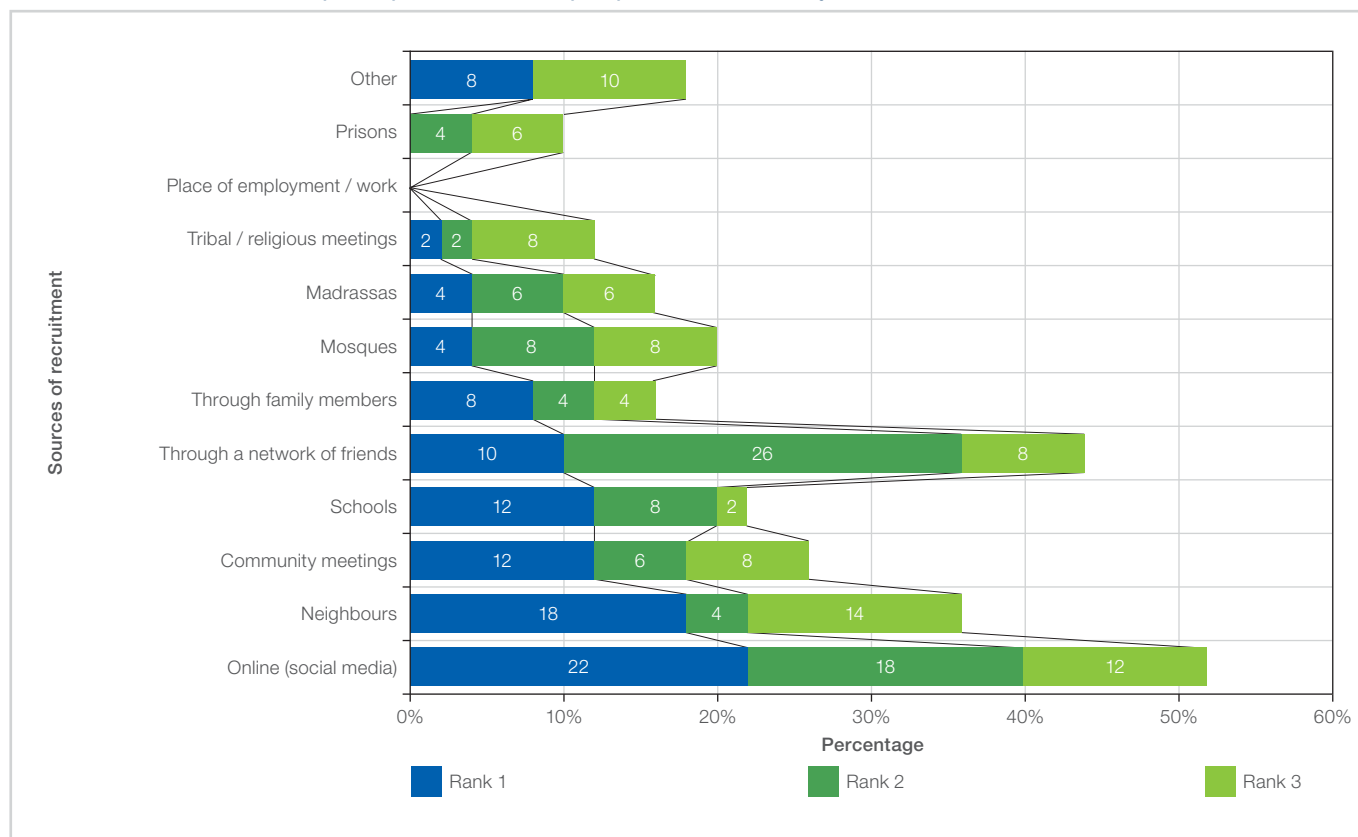### Where people are likely to be introduced to Boko Haram

To understand the complexities relating to recruitment to Boko Haram, the question of where people are likely to join Boko Haram can be as important as why people join the group. Understanding where people come into

contact with recruiters can strengthen targeted strategies to prevent and cut off Boko Haram's recruitment stream. Literature on channels by which people join extremist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have pointed to social media platforms as growing tools for recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters.[28] In recruiting local fighters, however, there are indications that recruitment strategies may differ.[29]

In the quantitative survey, peacebuilders were asked, 'In your opinion, where are people most likely to be introduced to Boko Haram?'. They were specifically asked to rank the top three sources of Boko Haram's recruitment or where individuals were likely to be introduced to the group. According to peacebuilders' perceptions (Figure 4), Boko Haram primarily recruits via social media and personal networks, most notably through neighbours and networks of friends.

The perception that Boko Haram uses social media for recruitment aligns with the opinion of prominent Nigerian leader Muhammadu Sanusi, the emir of Kano, who noted that young people who join Boko Haram have been influenced by social media into doing so.[30] However, the literature review was not as categorical about the role of social media, which some analysts believe is a growing but not yet a major source of Boko Haram's recruitment. Indeed, some of the analysts who reviewed this policy brief were of the view that Boko Haram's use of social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook

Figure 4: Peacebuilders' perception of where people are most likely to be introduced to Boko Haram

has been limited, and has not been as robust and skilful as other terrorist groups such as ISIS.[31] Figure 4 below illustrates places where people are most likely to be introduced to Boko Haram.

Figure 4 shows the popularity of online recruitment, which was viewed as a significant medium of recruitment or where individuals are likely to be introduced to Boko Haram, which the majority of peacebuilders ranked first (22%; 18% ranked online second and 12% third). It is evident that neighbours were also viewed to be influential in introducing people to Boko Haram (18% ranked neighbours first, 4% second and 14% third) and friends (10% ranked friends first, 26% second and 8% third).

> Despite the availability of other options, the Nigerian government has relied heavily on the use of its military in fighting the group

It is worth pointing out that the quantitative survey also noted that recruitment takes place in communities. This is consistent with findings in Nigeria that Boko Haram preaches in local communities and obtains recruits following these sermons. The Borno state governor's decision in August 2016 to establish watchdogs across the 27 local government areas in the state to monitor sermons and report extremist messages is a response that supports this perspective.[32] Literature on terrorist recruitment also supports peacebuilders' perceptions given here on the role of friends and family in recruitment, with the exploitation of kinship in radicalisation and examples of family members being involved in extremist acts together.[33]

Peacebuilders' perceptions of the impact of the military response to Boko Haram

Despite the availability of other options for addressing the Boko Haram crisis, such as the criminal justice system, the Nigerian government has relied heavily on the use of its military in fighting the group. Human rights groups such as Amnesty International have criticised this approach for its abuse of human rights.[34] How this military response is perceived is important if one is to understand its impact on the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria.

Empirical studies on violent extremism from other regions have found that aggressive militarised responses or security forces' disproportionate or indiscriminate use of force have had far-reaching consequences that, to some extent, have mobilised more people to participate in violent extremism.[35] Threatened by growing Boko Haram attacks, the administration of former president Goodluck Jonathan (2010–15) established the Special Joint Task Force in June 2011, which brought together defence forces, police and intelligence services, and has remained Nigeria's foremost institutional response to Boko Haram.[36]

MILITARISED RESPONSES CAN MOBILISE PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Much has been written about military atrocities and extrajudicial counter-Boko Haram operations. Some analysts have compared their violence to the Islamist group's terror attacks. Comolli, for example, asserts that, 'Nigerian civilians find themselves stuck between two brutal opponents – Boko Haram and the security forces – both of which have been accused of war crimes by human rights organisations and the media.'[37]

Despite recent military successes in reducing Boko Haram's capabilities, which have contributed to a significant decline in attacks, almost to pre-2014 levels, some analysts have observed that military incursions have divided Nigerians 'along two opposing lines: those who support the use of coercion, and those who support conciliation.'[38]

This section therefore seeks to empirically evaluate local perceptions about military responses to Boko Haram as a part of the quest for viable solutions to the insurgency. Peacebuilders were asked to express their views on how military action against Boko Haram has influenced people's decisions to join the group. Figure 5 below summarises the findings of the survey.

In the quantitative survey, as Figure 5 illustrates below, the minority of peacebuilders identified a correlation

Figure 5: Peacebuilder's perceptions on the influence of military action on people's decision to join Boko Haram
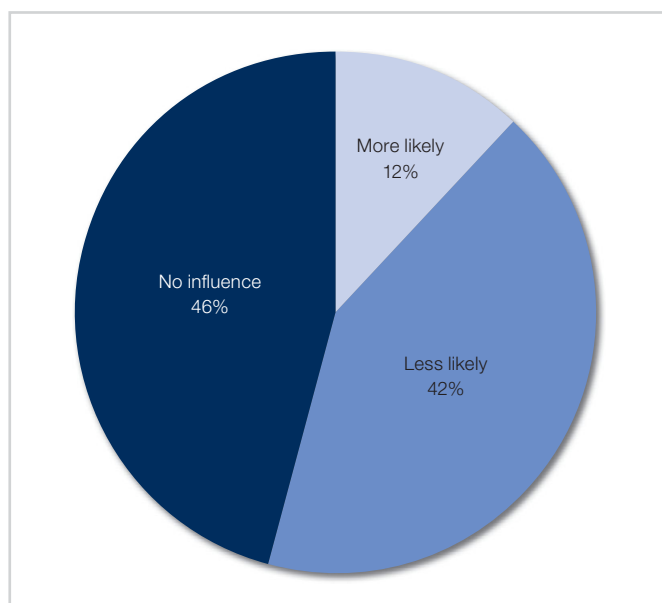

between military action and a person's decision to join Boko Haram (12%); the majority (46%) indicated that it had no influence, and the remainder (42%) that it had little influence. There is a general perception among peacebuilders, therefore, that military action has not deterred people from joining Boko Haram. Instead, during the qualitative interviews, peacebuilders further explained that because Boko Haram is an anonymous and invisible target, and nobody knows who and where they are, the military's actions are not having a positive impact on reducing recruitment. It may also mean that peacebuilders generally have a positive impression of military action against Boko Haram.

The general perception may have been influenced by the reported progress in the fight against Boko Haram. Nigerian Minister of Interior Lt.-Gen. (retd) Abdulrahman Dambazau was reported to have claimed that the military had defeated Boko Haram in the northeast.[39] The popularity of military force, despite damning reports about gross human rights violations seems to reaffirm the uniqueness of the Nigerian context, which is different from other reported cases of violent extremism such as in Kenya against Islamist group al-shabab, where heavy military responses tend to have negative repercussions and are very unpopular. In conclusion, in view of current dynamics, people are more likely to join Boko Haram not because of military action but because of the group's coercive strategies.

Peacebuilders' views on solutions to Boko Haram

Peacebuilders, particularly those from the same communities as members of Boko Haram can bring insightful perspectives to efforts aimed at finding a solution to deep-rooted issues that drive violent extremism. They can contribute to ending violence either as partners with community and government actors, or by providing their expertise and services directly to those in need. In the quantitative survey, peacebuilders were requested to indicate what in their view could be a solution to the Boko Haram quagmire in the country. The survey revealed that, despite their overwhelming belief that military force was making an impact on Boko Haram, the peacebuilders were generally of the view that a sustainable and long-lasting solution to the current

Figure 6: Peacebuilders' proposed solutions
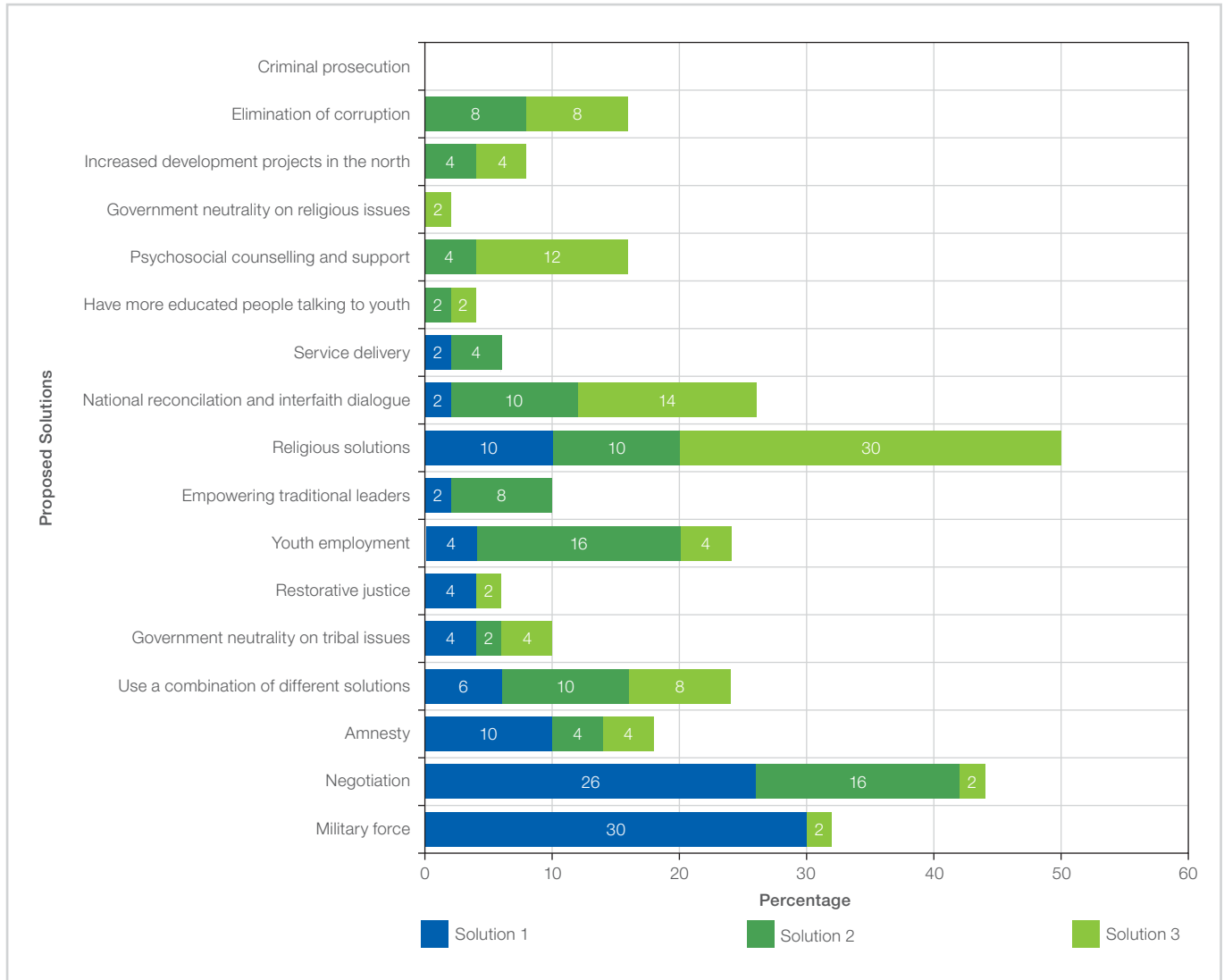
crisis could only be achieved through broad-ranging non-military measures. To fully assess their views, respondents were specifically asked, 'What would you suggest as a solution to deal with Boko Haram (ranking a maximum of three multiple answers)?'. The findings of the survey are shown in Figure 6

Figure 6 above shows that a significant number of the peacebuilders ranked military force as their first choice (30%) – in addition, one peacebuilder (2%) ranked it as a third choice – thus demonstrating some faith in the military as a part of the solution. This is consistent with their earlier view that heavy use of force had little or no impact on people's decision to join Boko Haram. When placed with non-military options, Figure 6 reveals that the peacebuilders were divided, but the majority ranked such measures as their first choice (70%). Negotiation, however, was the most acceptable non-military solution (26% ranked it as their first choice, 16% second and 2% third). This was complemented by those who chose dialogue and national reconciliation (32%) and amnesty (28%).

The marginal interest shown in youth employment, ending corruption, and socio-economic development, seems to contradict some of the peacebuilders' perceptions. For example, as seen earlier in this policy brief, the majority of peacebuilders (82%) believed that religious reasons were responsible for people's decision to join Boko Haram. One would have expected religious solutions to be high on the list, but none of the peacebuilders suggested the application of sharia as a solution; and only a small number recommended educating young people about religious teachings, or empowering religious leaders to play a more instrumental role in dissuading young people and countering Boko Haram narrative either through positive sermons or proselytism.

> An effective and successful response would require hard security strategies and soft measures that address the underlying causes and drivers of violent extremism

How peacebuilders view their role in addressing the Boko Haram crisis

From the qualitative interviews, it became apparent that peacebuilders viewed themselves as actors driven by the overall aim of establishing peace and unity in the country. For the majority of them, no single approach can effectively respond to the Boko Haram crisis. An effective and successful response would require hard security strategies and soft measures that address the underlying causes and drivers of violent extremism. With their diverse backgrounds and expertise across a broad spectrum of social, political, economic and developmental fields, peacebuilders, believe they could provide the missing link in the government's responses to Boko Haram. Their proximity to Boko Haram members and mastery of cultural and social dynamics give them a comparative advantage. According to the peacebuilders, their unique contribution includes the following:

• **Education and training:** teaching tolerance and acceptance of others, through learning to see the world from the perspective of 'others'; among other things, by educating individuals about the 'true' meaning and intent of religion, through preaching 'the word' and correcting misguided religious beliefs. According to peacebuilders, the onus is on them to convince Boko Haram members of the true and peaceful meaning of Islam. Some Christian peacebuilders explained that Muslim peacebuilders need to drive this process, as they have a better knowledge of the Quran and are regarded as more credible among fellow Muslims. Despite this very specific role, everyone should preach a message of peace, and be vigilant for religious leaders who promote extremist ideologies. For example, as one peacebuilder explained, 'No religion encourages disruption and conflict, so peacebuilders are more likely to be religious, as all religions

82%

THE PERCENTAGE OF PEACEBUILDERS WHO BELIEVE THAT RELIGIOUS REASONS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PEOPLE'S DECISION TO JOIN BOKO HARAM

preach peace. People who join Boko Haram have a wrong understanding of religion.' [40]

- **Research:** including, identifying key members and stakeholders within communities and the government who can assist in mediation and conflict resolution; and determining the root causes of conflict within communities, with the aim of informing peacebuilding policies and identifying solutions to conflict.

- **Support:** helping vulnerable individuals by creating social forums that encourage youth participation and integration, as well as offering mentorship to address individual cases and enforce community values.

- **Mediation and negotiation:** peacebuilders can play an important role in conducting and managing grassroot diplomacy, which could offer an opportunity for community leaders to address sources of radicalisation through a range of social and economic tools. They could also assist the government in planning peaceful interactions between (religious and ethnic) communities in conflict through mediation and solution-oriented negotiation (e.g. signing peace affirmations and agreements, hosting peace festivals to commemorate harmonious co-existence, etc.).

> Peacebuilders can play an important role in grassroots diplomacy, which could help community leaders to address sources of radicalisation

Challenges facing peacebuilders in responding to Boko Haram

Despite the possible roles peacebuilders note they could play in resolving the Boko Haram crisis, a number of severe challenges confront them. These include:

- Governance challenges that plague efforts to resolve the crisis. Politicians often deepen ethnic and religious divisions by creating negative impressions about opposing groups. This is done for political gain; for example, to win votes during elections. Also, the overall impression is that government funds are not used as intended but instead for personal gain.

- A history of misguided or incorrect religious preaching that further contributes to a disconnect among differing religious groups, due to incorrect interpretations of scripture.

- If peacebuilders are not appropriately educated or trained, instead of being part of the solution they may make the situation worse if they take the wrong approach.

- Many peacebuilders lack support from the government and donors, leading to low success rates and impact, which contribute to feelings of

POLITICIANS OFTEN CREATE NEGATIVE IMPRESSIONS ABOUT OPPOSING GROUPS FOR POLITICAL GAIN

discouragement and frustration. A possible solution might be to find another platform to share ideas with the stakeholders.

- Limited funding is available to enable peacebuilding and conflict resolution, especially compared with the budget available to purchase military hardware.

- Lack of facilities; for example, community centres, trauma counselling centres, and personal protection to enable peacebuilders achieve their ultimate objectives.

Conclusion

The main findings of this study have brought to the fore some of the underlying factors that account for the escalation of violent extremism in northeast Nigeria, that has manifested itself in the form of Boko Haram. The key finding of the study was that the majority of the peacebuilders interviewed (82%) perceived religious values as the main driver of violent extremism. This may be the result of politicisation of religion, which has become a major factor that has moulded the identity of Nigerians, created divisions in the country, as well as the influenced the posturing and rhetoric of Boko Haram.

The study also found that other perceived major drivers included, social pressure (56%), consisting of peer pressure (22%), desire to belong to a group (26%), family and ethnic pressure (4%), marriage (2%), and seeking a purpose in life (2%). Our observations suggest that issues of identity and social exclusion – some of

which were psychological in nature – have fuelled social pressure. Political reasons also featured prominently (44%), largely a result of perceived government corruption, and disaffection or lack of affiliation with the political system.

The findings also revealed that peacebuilders saw poverty and economic reasons as being among the prominent drivers of Boko Haram's violent extremism (44%). Economically related factors consisted of poverty (26%), unemployment (16%) and loss of property (2%).

In determining where radicalisation takes place or who is likely to introduce people to Boko Haram and where, the peacebuilders said that online social media and friends were prominent sources of Boko Haram's propaganda, and that neighbours also played a significant role. The study was conclusive in its finding that peacebuilders believed that military force has contributed very little to radicalising people to join Boko Haram. However, the peacebuilders did not think the that the military could provide a long-lasting answer to Boko Haram; hence, they recommended a set of solutions that included military and non-military measures.

The findings also suggest that peacebuilders can and should be part of the solution to violent extremism. They can provide various services and expertise, ranging from education, research, negotiation and mentorship, support, mediation and humanitarian intervention, to building community cohesion.

Notes

1   See for example, H Matfess, Here's why so many people join Boko Haram, despite its notorious violence, *Washington Post*, 26 April 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/04/26/heres-why-so-many-people-join-boko-haram-despite-its-notorious-violence/.

2   See for example, Jeroen de Zeeuw, Building Peace in War-Torn Societies: From Concept to Strategy, The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations – Clingendael, August 2001, 8.

3   United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, Peacebuilding FAQ, www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/faq.shtml.

4   United Nations 2016, Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2282 (2016) on Review of United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12340.doc.htm

5   See United Nations, UN Peacebuilding: an Orientation, New York: United Nations, September 2010, 1.

6   United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, 'Peacebuilding FAQ', www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/faq.shtml.

7   F Kazingufu and B Moix, Putting Local Peacebuilders First, *Conflicts of the Future: Trends and Responses*, Alliance for Peacebuilding, September 2014 Issue, 8–9, http://buildingpeaceforum.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/afp_forum_issue4_rd5-FINAL-PDF.pdf.

8   See, for example, M Oche, Nigeria: War Against Insurgency – Over 5,000 CSOs Hold Rally in Support of PMB, *AllAfrica.com News*, 31 August 2016, http://allafrica.com/stories/201609010889.html.

9   Interviews with peacebuilders in February 2016.

10 See for example, Ronald Hatto, From peacekeeping to peacebuilding: the evolution of the role of the United Nations in peace operations, *International Review of the Red Cross*, 2013, 495–515.

11 See for example, MK Rossier, A Review of Practices and Expert Opinions: Linking Humanitarian Action and Peacebuilding, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) Working Paper 7, Centre on Conflict, June 2011, http://graduateinstitute.ch/fr/home/research/centresandprogrammes/ccdp/publications/publications-workingpapers.html.

12 Interviews with peacebuilders in February 2016.

13 Ibid.

14 See for example, A Okeowo, Terror and Amnesty in Nigeria, *The New Yorker*, 3 May 2013, www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/terror-and-amnesty-in-nigeria.

15 G Holmer, 'Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective', Special Report 336, 2013, www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR336-Countering%20Violent%20Extremism-A%20Peacebuilding%20Perspective.pdf.

16 F C Onuoha, Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?, Special Report, 348, United States Institute of Peace, 2014, www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR348-Why_do_Youth_Join_Boko_Haram.pdf.

17 See for example, M Fick, Boko Haram dispute with ISIS bursts into the open, *Financial Times*, 5 August 2016, www.ft.com/content/bed19ac2-5a61-11e6-8d05-4eaa66292c32.

18 See A Brigaglia, Ja'far Mahmoud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust: Reflections on the Genesis of the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria, *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, Issue No. 11, 2012, 37.

19 Ibid.

20 Interview with peacebuilder in February 2016.

21 Ibid.

22 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Key Challenges of Youth in OIC Countries May 2015, www.sesric.org/files/article/507.pdf.

23 A Botha and M Abdile, Getting behind the profiles of Boko Haram members and factors contributing to radicalisation versus working towards peace, The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, October 2016, https://frantic.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/kua-peacemakers/2016/10/Boko_Haram_Study_Botha_Abdile_SUMMARY_disclaimer_included_2016.pdf

24 I Abrak, Boko Haram Using Loans to Recruit Members in Face of Crackdown, *The Guardian*, 9 May 2016, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/may/09/boko-haram-loans-recruit-members-crackdown-nigeria-traders-spy.

25 Interview with peacebuilder in February 2016.

26 G Holmer, Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective, Special Report 336, United States Institute of Peace, 2013, www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR336-Countering%20Violent%20Extremism-A%20Peacebuilding%20Perspective.pdf.

27 J Zenn, Boko Haram: Recruitment, Financing and Arms Trafficking in the Lake Chad Region, Combating Terrorism Center, 31 October 2014, www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/boko-haram-recruitment-financing-and-arms-trafficking-in-the-lake-chad-region.

28 S Gates and S Podder, Social Media, Recruitment, Allegiance and the Islamic State, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 9:4 2015

29 Ibid.

30 A Madugba, Kano Emir Links Boko Haram to Social Media, Internet, *Vanguard*, 5 July 2015, www.vanguardngr.com/2015/07/kano-emir-links-boko-haram-to-social-media-internet/.

31 Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS in March 2015. For more information on the pledge, see S Almukhtar, How Boko Haram Courted and Joined the Islamic State, *The New York Times*, 10 June 2015, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/11/world/africa/boko-haram-isis-propaganda-video-nigeria.html?_r=0.

32 S Ugwuanyi, Boko Haram Ideologies: Shettima appoints Preaching Regulators, Orders Spy on Suspicious Sermons', *Daily Post*, 12 August 2016, http://dailypost.ng/2016/08/12/boko-haram-ideologies-shettima-appoints-preaching-regulators-orders-spy-suspicious-sermons/.

33 MM Hafez, The Ties that Bind: How Terrorists Exploit Family Bonds, Combating Terrorism Center, 19 February 2016, www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-ties-that-bind-how-terrorists-exploit-family-bonds.

34 N Belay, Boko Haram Summit: Human Rights Must Be Foundation of Regional Response, Amnesty International, 14 May 2016, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/boko-haram-summit-human-rights-must-be-foundation-of-regional-response/.

35 See, for example, A Botha, Radicalisation in Kenya: Recruitment to al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council, ISS Paper 265, September 2014.

36 The Special Joint Task Force was subsequently replaced by the Army Command Seventh Division in 2013. See Wale Odunsi, Military dissolves North-East JTF as Army creates new Division to crush Boko Haram, *Daily Post*, 19 August 2013, http://dailypost.ng/2013/08/19/military-dissolves-north-east-jtf-as-army-creates-new-division-to-crush-boko-haram/.

37 V Comolli, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*, London: Hurst and Company, 2015, 3.

38 D Agbiboa, Resistance to Boko Haram: Civilian Joint Task Forces in North-Eastern Nigeria, *Conflict Studies Quarterly (Special Issue)*, 2015, 13.

39 See, *Vanguard News*, Military has defeated Boko Haram insurgents – Dambazau, 20 July 2016, www.vanguardngr.com/2016/07/military-defeated-boko-haram-insurgents-dambazau/ (22 July 2016).

40 Interview with peacebuilder in February 2016.

INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

Subscribe to the ISS for the latest analysis, insight and news

We're improving human security in Africa with authoritative research, training and expert policy analysis

Step 1: **Go to www.issafrica.org**
Step 2: **Under 'Subscribe to the ISS,' click on 'Email subscriptions'**
Step 3: **Select the type of notices you would like to receive:**

Latest from the ISS

- ISS press releases
- ISS Weekly newsletter
- ISS Today
- ISS Spotlight

ISS event invitations

- Seminars, ISS Addis Ababa
- Seminars, ISS Dakar
- Seminars, ISS Nairobi
- Seminars, ISS Pretoria
- Training courses

ISS thematic reports

- Peace and Security Council Report
- Regional Report: Central Africa
- Regional Report: East Africa
- Regional Report: West Africa
- Regional Report: Southern Africa

Or, subscribe by topic of interest (to receive press releases, spotlights, event invitations, and reports that deal with your chosen topic):

- African Futures
- Arms control and disarmament
- Conflict prevention and analysis
- Corruption and governance
- Counter-terrorism
- Crime and criminal justice
- International criminal justice
- Organised crime
- Peacekeeping and conflict management

ISS POLICY BRIEF

About the authors

Martin Ewi joined the ISS in July 2010 as a senior researcher. He served as a political affairs officer at Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) from 2005 to 2010. Before joining the OPCW, he was in charge of the African Union Commission's counter-terrorism programme in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He holds a master's degree in international peace studies from the University of Notre Dame, Southbend, Indiana, USA.

Uyo Salifu is a researcher in the Transnational Threats and International Crime Division of the ISS. Her focus areas are counterterrorism and countering violent extremism in West Africa, witness protection, and children and gender in terrorism.

About the ISS

The Institute for Security Studies partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. It provides policy advice, practical training, technical assistance and independent research.

Acknowledgements

© 2017, Institute for Security Studies

ISS Pretoria
Block C, Brooklyn Court,
361 Veale Street
New Muckleneuk,
Pretoria, South Africa
Tel: +27 12 346 9500
Fax: +27 12 460 0998

ISS Addis Ababa
5th Floor, Get House
Building, Africa Avenue,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: +251 11 515 6320
Fax: +251 11 515 6449

ISS Dakar
4ème étage,
Immeuble Atryum
Route de Ouakam,
Dakar, Senegal
Tel: +221 33 860 3304/42
Fax: +221 33 860 3343

ISS Nairobi
Braeside Gardens,
off Muthangari Road
Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 72 860 7642
Fax: +254 73 565 0300

www.issafrica.org