

Pat Williams, Working Group on Nigeria, raised the point that for most Nigerians, preoccupations with day-to-day survival often prevent them from addressing larger questions necessary for informed and active grass-roots involvement in state-building, including the contents of the Constitution. People simply do not have the time and capacity to ponder the nature of an ascending political system or the meaning of a democratic culture. Key issues for many Nigerians are: jobs, health and basic subsistence. If the Nigerian state is to be lent legitimacy through grass-roots endorsement, work has to be done to educate and engage people on the community level. Annie Brisibe, Niger Delta Women for Justice, pointed out that today people on the ground are mostly cut out of the constitutional debates and used for political purposes. The ascending democracy in Nigeria is not participatory since no efforts have been made to involve women and youth.

Alison van Rooy, North South Institute, identified other factors that need to be addressed for democracy to flourish in Nigeria. She outlined the results of a three weeks project undertaken by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Stockholm), assessing the progress of democracy in several developing countries, including Nigeria.¹ The democratic assessment of Nigeria identified five main constraints to reconciliation:

1. *Missing democratic dividend*: it is difficult for Nigerians to rally for democracy indefinitely if few see real positive change such as more jobs or improvement of the standard of living, including better health and educational systems.
2. *Wide-spread corruption and inefficiency*: the entrenched bureaucracy is susceptible to bribes, many see the public service as an avenue for personal gain. This situation leads to a lack of faith in elected officials, who are unable (or unwilling) to tackle the issue. Furthermore, it poses challenges for international donors (it is estimated that around 130 international loan agreements have been "misplaced"). Nigeria's debt arrears are more a question of fiscal ineffectiveness (and embezzlement of funds) rather than incapacity to repay, since oil revenues should be more than sufficient to cover interest and debt payments.
3. *Constitutional Reform*: as stated before, it is necessary that the new Constitution is based on consensus and that constitutional preparations include extensive, inclusive discussion of core issues, including the division of power and resource allocation.
4. *Military Reform*: the military should be professionalised and sent back to the barracks. Efforts should be made to demilitarise the national culture. Attempts should be made to replace the culture of violence (i.e., aggressiveness, vengeance, personal "rule of law," authoritarian tendencies) with a democratic culture (i.e., pluralism, tolerance, civilian

¹A study will be published by the end of June.