

INTERFAITH MEDIATION CENTER



Location: Kaduna, Nigeria

Partner: Ashoka

Issue Areas: Armed Conflict

Points of Interest: Peace and Conflict Transformation

The Organization

Imam Mohammed Ashafa, a Muslim cleric and Pastor James Wuye, a Christian minister, founded Interfaith Mediation Center together. The Center is the first interfaith initiative in Nigeria for resolving the frequent and violent clashes between Muslims and Christians. Today, Imam Ashafa and Pastor James work together to teach warring, religious, youth militias to resolve their conflicts peacefully. But they did not start out as peacemakers. Ten years ago, Imam Ashafa and Pastor James were enemies, intent on killing one another in the name of religion.

In 1992, violent interreligious conflict between Muslims and Christians broke out in Kaduna State, a northern region in Nigeria. Christians and Muslims fought each other in the marketplace, destroying each others' crops and attacking each others' families. Both the Imam and the Pastor participated in the fighting and both paid a heavy price for their involvement. Imam Ashafa lost two brothers and his spiritual leader. Pastor James lost his hand.

After this event, they each dreamed of revenge against the other. A mutual friend asked them to meet as community leaders and they reluctantly agreed. Imam Ashafa recalls what happened: "A mutual friend...took both of us by the hand and said: 'The two of you can pull this nation together, or you can destroy it. Do something.'" Over the next few years, through meetings and separate religious enlightenments, the two men slowly built mutual respect for each other and decided to work together to bridge the divide between their communities.

In 1995, Imam Ashafa and Pastor James formed the Interfaith Mediation Center, a religious grassroots organization that successfully mediates between Christians and Muslims across Nigeria. The Interfaith Mediation Center promote awareness of the psychology behind religious violence and address its root causes. They draw on the power of spirituality and the peaceful interpretation and application of religious texts. Imam Ashafa and Pastor James focus both on preventative outreach and conflict resolution throughout Nigeria to promote their message of peaceful co-existence.

Their organization, now with over 10,000 members, reaches into the militias and trains the country's youth, women, religious figures, and tribal leaders to become civic peace activists. Under their leadership, Muslim and Christian youth join together to rebuild the mosques and churches they once destroyed through war and violence.

Why the Need?

Kaduna State is in northern Nigeria and home to many of the northern political and economic elite. Its population of approximately 6.1 million is divided almost equally between Muslims and Christians. With its mix of ethnic and religious groups, Kaduna continues to be a hot spot for conflict points in Nigeria. The different communities compete for a greater share of the limited resources and for political power. Each community feels it is politically and economically left out. In this environment religion can be used to gain political power and youth are many times exploited by leaders who seek to gain personally from the conflict.

How Team Efforts Translate to Impact

Funds teams raise will go to support the daily operating costs of the center.

The Partner

Ashoka's vision is that of a global society that is able to respond quickly and effectively to social challenges everywhere. Ashoka's mission is to shape a citizen sector that is entrepreneurial, productive and globally integrated, and to develop the profession of social entrepreneurship around the world. Ashoka identifies and invests in leading social entrepreneurs- extraordinary individuals with unprecedented ideas for change in their communities - supporting them, their ideas and institutions through all phases of their careers. Rather than leaving societal needs for the government or business sectors to address, social entrepreneurs are creating innovative solutions, delivering extraordinary results, and improving the lives of millions of people. Ashoka has invested in more than 1,700 Ashoka Fellows in 60 countries. Those Fellows have transformed the lives of millions of people in thousands of communities worldwide.

NGC's Approach to Sustainable Global Change

NGC and our Global Partners believe that people in communities all over the world are the real experts and know their community and the solutions to their problems. We want to advocate to and educate others on behalf of this model of sustainable global change. Additionally, we seek to empower our Global Projects with the financial resources to create change at the grassroots level. 100% of funds your team raises are sent to Interfaith Mediation Center.

By sending your team's funds directly, your project organization has the power to decide the best way to use the money. Since money will be spent in the community, your funds will also support the local economy.

The Interfaith Mediation Center creates a sense of credibility in the community since both the Imam and Pastor have been involved in the conflict/resolution process since the programs beginning and both have suffered personal tragedies because of the conflict. Their efforts will create a community where acceptance and compassion set the precedence.

Additional Resources

Partner Website: <http://www.ashoka.org/>

Ashoka Fellows: Pastor James Wuye <http://www.ashoka.org/fellow/3875>

Imam Mohammed Ashafa <http://www.ashoka.org/fellow/3874>

CIA World Factbook (Nigeria): <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>

Embassy of Nigeria: http://www.nigeriaembassyusa.org/f_index.html

Related News: <http://www.peoplebuildingpeace.org/thestories/print.php?id=93&typ=theme>

New York Times collection on Nigeria: <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/nigeria/index.html>

See your team binder for more ways to educate your team about your project.