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American University of Nigeria (AUN), Yola, is to participate in a Canada – Funded Research on Boko Haram and insurrection in the northern parts of Nigeria.

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A statement from the varsity said a consortium of nine universities in Canada and the Lake Chad basin countries of Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon have secured a preliminary grant of C\$198,000 to build a massive database on the Boko Haram insurrection in the Lake Chad basin.

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According to the statement, the grant is to fund an international scholars' partnership that can design a significant research initiative and gain the approval of the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) that is providing the preliminary grant.

"If satisfied with the design architecture, SSHRC, a federal research-funding agency that 'promotes and supports post-secondary research and training,' will provide an additional endowment to carry out the actual research," the statement said.

Primarily, the grant will fund logistic support for a series of planned meetings in Yola, elsewhere in the Lake Chad basin countries, and in Canada. These meetings will eventually produce a comprehensive proposal for the actual research that may require more funds.

To this end, the consortium led by York University, Toronto, Canada, is assembling more than 20 scholars on Africa from places like York, McGill, University of Ottawa, and those in Nigeria, Chad, far north Cameroon, and Niger.

One of the five-member steering committee of the project, from the Department of Politics & International Studies at the AUN, Prof Bill Hansen said the spadework is intended to produce data on all aspects of the Chad basin region, including education, health, environment, agriculture, politics, economics, religion, and multiple other topics and sub-topics.

"The intent is that it will create the most complete and comprehensive collection on Boko Haram and the entire Lake Chad basin."

Professor Hansen says the path-breaking joint project will ultimately be a significant step forward for AUN and research on Boko Haram and insurrection in Nigeria.

On the benefits of the Canadian-funded research project, he said: "Knowledge of the causes and trajectory of the insurrection will allow for civil society and governments to make policy decisions that might avert another similar episode."

Prof Hansen has researched extensively and published critically-acclaimed studies on Boko Haram and Muslim-Christian relations in Northern Nigeria. His strong argument is that the insurgency is directly fueled by social inequalities and mismanagement of the sociopolitical space by successive governments.

He has published many research work on northern Nigeria with the most recent on Poverty and 'Economic Deprivation Theory': Street Children, Qur'anic Schools/Almajirai and the Disposed as a Source of Recruits for Boko Haram and other Religious, Political and Criminal Groups in Northern Nigeria published in Perspectives on Terrorism, 10 (5).

Included on the Canadian side of the research team are Prof Paul E. Lovejoy, one of the few global authorities on slavery in West Africa and the Atlantic slave trade. Lovejoy, who heads the steering committee, is the lead applicant for the grant.

Speaking, the President of AUN, Dr. Dawn Dekle, who congratulated Prof Hansen and his fellow international scholars, said the choice of AUN was as much a statement of endorsement of the university's leadership in research scholarship and humanitarian intervention as it was a recognition of Professor Bill Hansen's essential contributions to global understanding of the origins of the insurgency.

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