

RAISING Change MAKERS

Y-TEaM Newsletter 2023, Volume 1



**YOUTH TRANSFORMATIONAL
EMPOWERMENT AND MENTORSHIP
(Y-TEaM) PROGRAMME 2023**



Sweden
Sverige



AUSTRIAN
DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

About Y-TEaM Programme



The Y-TEaM programme is a youth empowerment programme targeting fresh graduate students between the age range of 18 to 35, with demonstrated commitment to peace, security, development and community engagement. Each year, a cohort of about 30 youth across West Africa are selected to embark on a nine-month long programme. Key components of the programme include, monthly online two-to-three-day training sessions, spotlighting of mentees, six months internship and mentorship programme to support mentees' continuous and lifelong learning process. The programme integrates multiple strategies that are transformational, holistic and experiential.

This maiden newsletter, aptly tagged: **'Raising ChangeMakers!**, chronicles the journey of the 2023 cohort highlighting their skills development, networking, leadership advancement in the course of the programme!



“The skills and knowledge acquired during the Y-TEaM Programme, as well as the mentorship component of the programme contributed to my choice of career in the field of development!”

Rachid Ouattara, Mentee, Burkina Faso

Reflection from WANEP on the 1st year implementation of the Y-TEaM Programme



The Youth Transformational, Empowerment, and Mentoring (Y-TEaM) Programme is a novel initiative of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) as part of its commitment to “Give Back to Society.” The implementation of the programme over the past year has been an incredible journey of self-discovery and growth for the Mentees. One of the most fulfilling aspects of the Y-TEaM programme has been witnessing the development of Mentees who have blossom into confident, empowered individuals who are ready to take on leadership roles in their communities to make a positive impact. The focus on transformation has encouraged Mentees to reflect on their own strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations to develop a growth mindset to embrace new opportunities. The empowerment element through the various trainings workshops has equipped Mentees with valuable tools, skills, and knowledge to become agents of change in their communities. It is heartwarming to also see lasting relationships formed between Mentors and Mentees which is crucial for the professional development of the latter.

However, while the journey has been rewarding, it has not been without challenges. Inadequate financial resources to run the programme smoothly to meet the expectations of our stakeholders was one of the major challenges. Nevertheless, we have diligently worked to overcome the challenges to keep the programme on track. I will therefore take this opportunity to acknowledge the voluntary contributions of WANEP staff who invested their personal resources as well as the unwavering support from our Mentors and Partners who contributed immensely to the successful completion of the 2023 edition. Looking back on the past year, I am proud of the impact that the Y-TEaM programme has had on the lives of the Mentees. I have no doubt that the Y-TEaM programme has created a network of young leaders who will continue to make a positive impact in future.



Dr. Festus Aubyn
Regional Coordinator Research
and Capacity Building

Y-TEaM Mentees' Transforming Lives Across the Region!



A key focus of the Y-TEaM programme is to develop a sense of belonging and community service in mentees, as an act of giving back to their communities, through the skills and knowledge acquired in the course of the programme. Across the region, the mentees demonstrated this level of commitment through hands-on community initiatives thus becoming agents of change in their respective localities. Their amazing journey to transforming lives are vividly captured below;

Mark Adofo and Patience Akofa Agala, as part of their internship programme with WANEP-Ghana, took part in some community activities to put into practice the theoretical knowledge acquired during the training sessions. The two mentees led in community dialogues to help settle a farmer-herder conflict that continues to hamper peace and security in some northern communities of Ghana. Speaking on her experience, Patience said, "It has been an awesome and truly humbling experience". Mark also supported the network on a project focused on building early warning and response network on violent extremism in Ghana-Burkina Faso border communities of Happa, Bangwon, Kokoligu and Hamile.

The project was co-implemented by WANEP-Ghana and the International Republican Institute (IRI). Part of his support involved data collection in the target communities and facilitation of a stakeholders' engagement to inform effective responses to violent extremism in the area. "It was a unique and an amazing experience. One takeaway for me is that community inclusion in any project is key to tackle the real issues and also ensure ownership", he said. On a general note, Patience described the whole exercise as a very fulfilling venture; "as a young person, I believe that through investment in my personal development, I can help change the narrative about youth by educating my peers on non-violence to support ongoing efforts towards regional stability."



In Mali, **Almamy Kamian**, mobilised other youth in his community to repair potholes in some streets in his community to facilitate smooth movement and prevent accidents. According to him, "***the training increased awareness on my responsibility as a citizen in the development of my community. I am ever committed to support where needed.***"



Abdoulaye Cisse, a Y-TEaM mentee from Senegal, voluntarily offered his service to repair a community school water point and toilet to promote sanitation in the school and create a conducive environment for learning. "***It is indeed a great pleasure for me to add value to my community. I encourage my peers to do same,***" he stated.

TAKING ACTION FOR PEACE



Y-TEaM Mentees Generate Awareness on Youth Peace and Security Concerns



Online hate speech is a form of posting, sharing of hateful and prejudiced content against an individual, group or a community. It can take the form of derogatory, demonizing, and dehumanizing statements, threats, identity-based insults, pejorative terms, and slurs. In November 2020, Facebook reported for the first time that the percentage of content exposure for hate speech was 0.11%. This means that for every 1,000 times a piece of content is viewed on the platform, one of them consisted of hateful content. In West Africa, hate speech on social media to some extent, has contributed to tensions among communities.

Worried by this revelation, a Y-TEaM mentee from Togo, [Cecile Papoutere](#), joined other youths from the Youth4Peace network, Togo to launch a 15-day of activism against hate speech on June 20, 2023 on social media platforms. The campaign was very educative, as it created avenue to share aspects of the Togolese law that address and provide sanctions against hate speech.

Combating Drug Abuse in Sierra Leone

[Alhaji Mamadu Bah](#), a mentee from Sierra Leone (first right), took part in a radio discussion on the role of young people in combating drug abuse in Sierra Leone with other staff of WANEP Sierra Leone. Drug abuse is a major concern in the country. In recent years, there has been an increased number of drug addiction, especially among the youth population contributing to heightened risk to violence. The radio programme helped raised awareness on the dangers of drug consumption and the mechanisms available to support the victims.



Interactive Session with Students



As a 'way of giving back to community,' three mentees namely; [Taïba OUEDRAOGO](#), [Rachid OUATTARA](#) and [Monique SAWADOGO](#), all from Burkina Faso held awareness session on Citizenship for Peace, at the Peniel High School, Ouagadougou, on 17 May 2023. The sensitization was in two-fold; an interactive dialogue session with the students and a sport activity for peace through which, they raised awareness on values of peace, tolerance and the role of the youth in promoting peace. About 60 students were in attendance.

Y-TEaM Mentees 'Go Green' for Peace

To mark the 2023 International Youth Day, [Abdoulaye Cisse](#), a Y-TEaM mentee, joined WANEP Senegal and the Youth4Peace Senegal for a reforestation/tree planting activity at the Wakhinane GUEDEAWAYE water and forestry center on 12 August. 307 seedlings were planted to promote a green environment and combat climate change.



Mentees Horn their Skills in Public Speaking



Two mentees, **Patience Akofa** and **Mark Adofo** moderated a webinar organised by WANEP Regional on 'Leveraging Technology to advance the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in West Africa. This dialogue session offered opportunity to assess the communication and public speaking skills of the mentees having gone through the course on effective communication and intensive coaching by communication experts.

Also in Niger, **Mahamadou Chitou**, during her internship with WANEP Niger participated in a panel discussion at a symposium organised by UN Women from 3-5 May 2023 in Niamey, Niger.



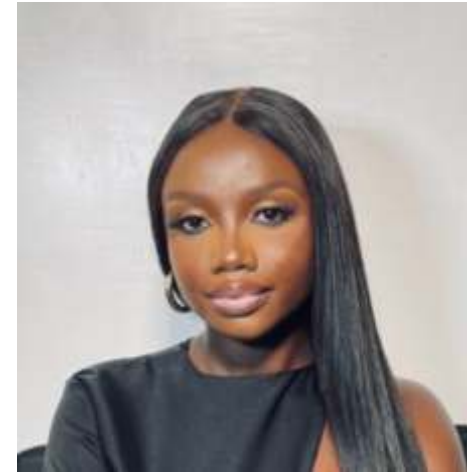
The theme of the symposium was 'Reflection on the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the changing context of the Sahel: Rethinking and readjusting approaches.' Mahamatou, specifically shared her perspective on the sub-topic: Young Women and Girls' Leadership for Peace. *"It was a great experience and opportunity for exposure to me. I learnt a lot from some experienced women, and this helped me build my confidence and public speaking skills",* she stated.

TESTIMONIES: Reflections from Mentees!



An inspiring moment with my Mentor by Ewaoluwa Oyewo, from Nigeria

My introductory session with my mentor, Dr. Emmanuel Bombande, was an introspective one that gave a lot of clarity, as we first explored questions on why I joined the programme, my unique traits, values, purpose, career aspirations in Global Security Peace and Development, current and next steps. This was significant because my mentor also shared his experiences with me, which served as some form of validation and example for me. At the end of meeting, he assigned some readings to me in preparation for our next meeting. I was able to set up subsequent meetings following his advice so I could take ownership and responsibility. In our meetings, we discussed the global peace, security and development landscape, the African perspective, West Africa current issues, Women Peace and Security, and many other issues that has helped to shape my research interests for further studies. Ultimately, I like that he demystified expertise in my chosen profession and provided guidance beyond the immediate Y-TEaM programme. His continued mentorship is priceless, and I am grateful to him and WANEP for this".



"The Y-TEaM programme contributed to my readiness and recruitment as the programme assistant in an international peacebuilding organisation". - Abdoul Rachid OUATTARA, Burkina Faso

"I am Abdoul Rachid OUATTARA, a beneficiary of WANEP inaugural Y-TEaM Programme for the 2023 cohort. Participating in this programme, my goal was to build my capacity, increase my employability and navigate the peacebuilding environment to support peace efforts in my country. In addition to the capacity building component, I completed a six-month internship at the WANEP-Burkina Faso office, which allowed me to gain practical experiences on some aspects of peacebuilding programming.

Also, as part of the programme, I was mentored by Mr. Jean Yves Bonzi, Coordination Officer at the United Nations Office in Somalia. During our mentoring sessions, Mr. Bonzi provided me some guidance on job search techniques in international organisations, including on the INSPIRA, the UN talent management and job application platform. By applying the techniques my mentor took me through, I applied and successfully secured a job with Mercy Corps International in September 2023 as a programme assistant in Burkina Faso. I wish to express my gratitude to WANEP Burkina Faso and my mentor Mr. Bonzi for their remarkable support to my personal and career development. A special thanks goes to WANEP Regional for initiating this unique programme for youth empowerment in West Africa. This needs to be sustained to support capacity building among young people, to ease their involvement in peacebuilding for effective implementation of the regional, continental, and international frameworks on Youth, Peace and Security".



Reflections from Mentees!



⇒ "The online courses were quite informative, though extensive. My takeaway is from the topic on Understanding the context of peace and security in West Africa. This topic broadened my horizon on some of the peace and security dynamics in the region such as electoral violence, violent extremism, drug trafficking and kidnapping. We also discussed some of the political and governance challenges including unconstitutional changes of power, which is currently a major threat to peace and security in the region. One important thing I have learnt is that all these dynamics present some vulnerability factors for youth violence, and this has contributed to fuel the negative narrative about the youth in the region. As a young person, I believe that through investment in my personal development, I can help change the narrative about youth by educating my peers on non-violence to support ongoing efforts towards regional stability.", **Akofa, Ghana.**

⇒ "I learnt a lot from the topic on Peacebuilding programme design. In fact, the entire project cycle was a new knowledge for me. I learnt about the power analysis tool, key players to consider in solving the identified problems among others. I also enjoyed the interactive approach used by the facilitator, which allowed us to demystify the whole concept of programme design. I thank WANEP and its partners for this extraordinary experience with the Y-TEaM programme" **Sarah, Nigeria**

⇒ "I have had the opportunity to speak in public in the past, but I often feel very nervous, but with this training I have learnt how to improve my self-confidence. Through my direct involvement in numerous public speaking activities during my internship with WANEP Niger, I have been able to improve on my public speaking skills. The training really had an impact on me. Thanks to WANEP". **Mariama, Niger**

⇒ "These training sessions were undoubtedly very enriching, particularly topic about Leading change within the context of conflict transformation. I learnt that leadership skills can be developed and sustained over time. Leadership is also self-confidence and trust in other people to be able to get them to buy into your vision. It was a wonderful experience because it helped discover the leader within me. Overall, I enjoyed the combination of theory and practical sessions the programme provided, as well as the experience sharing with some stakeholders and youth leaders. For me, it was significantly good, learning from their challenges and successes. It is a motivation for us, as young peacebuilders. **Almamy, Mali**

A MENTORSHIP JOURNEY: Reflections from a Mentor!



I am thrilled to share the success story of a mentorship journey that unfolded over the past six months. As a mentor, I had the privilege of coaching two remarkable young peacebuilders, who not only excelled in their endeavors but also taught me valuable lessons along the way.

Throughout the mentorship, it became evident that both mentees were not just participants; they were determined individuals with a sincere willingness to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Their enthusiasm was contagious, and their curiosity about my experiences from various peacekeeping missions around the world created a dynamic learning environment.

As a mentor, I happily shared my insights, challenges, and triumphs, fostering an exchange of knowledge that transcended generational and experiential boundaries. It was heartening to witness their eagerness to absorb the wisdom gained from years of service in conflict zones.

One notable aspect of our mentorship was the mentees' focus on preparing for the employment market. Recognizing their ambition, I provided practical tips drawn from my own experiences and guided them through the intricacies of the UN career portal. Their commitment to readiness was commendable, reflecting a deep understanding of the competitive nature of the field they were about to enter.

I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to WANEP for initiating and supporting this invaluable mentorship program. The impact it has had on these young peacebuilders is evident in their growth, knowledge acquisition, and enhanced preparedness for their professional journeys. Such initiatives play a crucial role in shaping the future of peacebuilding by nurturing the potential of emerging leaders.

In conclusion, I urge the continuation of this initiative, as it not only serves as a platform for mentorship but also contributes to the larger goal of creating a cadre of capable and passionate individuals dedicated to promoting peace and harmony in our communities and beyond.



Mr. Jean Yves Bonzi

Coordination Officer,
Integrated Office of the DSRSG RC HC,
Somalia

A Celebration of Excellence!



“Remarkable growth and transformation,” was how Dr. Chukwuemeka B. Eze, WANEP Executive Director, described the Y-TEaM mentees of 2023 cohort. He said this in an inspirational opening address during the official closing ceremony held virtually on 27 September 2023. He expressed his gratification at witnessing the tremendous progress made by the mentees from across the region. Dr. Eze challenged them to innovate and make meaningful impact in their localities emphasizing that even small efforts can create significant change.

In a welcome speech, Ms. Josiane Sombo, WANEP Program Officer, Youth, Peace and Security, who coordinated the programme, said the ceremony was an opportunity to 'celebrate the remarkable achievement of the 2023 cohort of the Y-TEaM Programme.' A programme that has left an indelible mark on 27 young people from diverse backgrounds who embarked on a transformative journey from January to August 2023. Comprising 17 females and 10 males, these mentees engaged in a comprehensive curriculum that spanned six months of training, six months of internship, and six months of mentorship. This holistic approach significantly enriched their knowledge and skills across a wide spectrum of subjects related to peace, security, governance, and development. During the ceremony, the mentees were awarded certificates, marking the successful culmination of their mentoring journey.



Dr. Onyinye ONWUKA, Head of Mediation and Coordination of Regional Political Affairs, Directorate of Political Affairs, Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, ECOWAS Commission, who was also one of the mentors, conveyed her elation at being part of the mentoring process and commended WANEP for empowering young people with essential soft skills. She underscored the importance of intergenerational dialogue and knowledge transfer in achieving sustainable development in West Africa. Mr. Romaric Houdou Samson, Programme Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation at WANEP, highlighted key achievements and challenges recorded. These achievements included an increased knowledge, skills and commitment to peace, security, governance, and development among mentees. Some challenges raised included: funding constraints, internet service quality in mentees' countries, and measuring the long-term impact of the 2023 cohort.

In his speech, H.E Emmanuel Bombande, UN Senior Mediation Adviser, Co-founder and former Executive Director of WANEP, commended WANEP for its unique initiative and emphasized the programme's high number of female participants, reflecting WANEP's commitment to inclusivity in peacebuilding. He encouraged the mentees to remain curious, continue learning, and make the world a better place through their actions. Highlights of the ceremony was the inauguration of the 2023 cohort's executive members comprising a President, Vice-President, and Communication and Public Relations Focal Person.

As a way forward, mechanisms have been put in place to support mentees' life-long developmental process, which goes beyond the lifespan of the programme. These include formation of a Y-TEaM alumni, which is a platform for peer-to peer learning and experience sharing that are essential in the personal and career development of the mentees while the Y-TEaM Coordination team will continue to document the immediate, medium and long-term impact of the programme on the mentees. Additionally, mentees will be featured in WANEP's social media platforms to share their experiences, achievements, and the positive impacts they are making in their communities, to inspire and motivate other youth. Also, some mentees may be recommended by WANEP either as workshop participants or resource persons across the region while others may be recommended for a scholarship or a job opportunity.

Meet the 2023 Y-TEaM Mentees



Laleye Carolina
Master in Project Management,
Ecole Nationale d'Administration,
Benin



Sanoussi Missiratou
Master's in Law,
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Chaire UNESCO Benin



Sawadogo Monique
Level 3 Degree in Economic Sciences,
option Environmental Economy
and Sustainability,
Université T. Sankara,
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Ouattara Rachid
Level 3 Degree in sociology,
Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo,
Burkina Faso



Ouedraogo Taibata
Master in Mediation,
Conflict Management and
Culture of Peace,
Swiss UmeF University, Burkina Faso;
Level 3 Degree in Marketing Communication,
Institut Africain de Management,
Burkina Faso



Carole Djoman
Master in Project Management,
Chaire UNESCO pour la Culture
de la Paix,
Université de Abidjan,
Côte d'Ivoire



Kassi Manuella
Master in Political Sciences,
Option, International Affairs
and Diplomacy,
Institut Universitaire d'Abidjan,
Côte d'Ivoire



Santos Kebbeh
Post Graduate Diploma in
Peace and security,
Gambia



Abdoulaye Cissé
Level 3 Degree in Law, option,
Business Law,
Faculté des Sciences Juridiques
et Politiques,
Université Cheikh Anta
Diop de Dakar, Senegal



Mark Adofu
Degree in Language and
Communication,
Linguistics at Kwame Nkrumah
University of Science and Technology,
Kumasi, Ghana



Patience Agala
Master of Arts,
Gender, Peace and Security at KAIPCT,
Accra, Ghana



Ama Poma Akyeampong
Master of Arts, Conflict,
Peace and Security,
KAIPCT, Accra, Ghana



Bah Kadiatou
Level 3 Degree in
Economic Sciences,
Université Koffi Annan de Guinée



Barbosa Sanca Emmanuel
Degree in Diplomacy,
Casablanca, Morocco



Kamian Almany
Master in Sociology,
Ecole Normale Supérieure
de Bamako
Mali



Konaté Brahima
Master in Public Finances and
Administration,
Faculté des Sciences Economiques
et de Gestion de Bamako (FSEG),
Mali



Maimouna Sidibé
Degree in Corporates communication,
Institut Universitaire de Technologie,
Bamako, Mali



Pakoupetere Mana Cécile
Master in Planning and
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Togo



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Level 3 Degree in Human Rights
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Niger



Laila Tall
Level 3 Degree in
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Niger



Mahamadou Chitou
Degree in Corporates Communication
and Level 3 Degree in Law,
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Richard Dambo
Bachelor of Education in Social Studies,
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Sarah Yanayork
LLB Hons in Civil Law,
Ahmadu Bello University,
Zaria, Nigeria



Ewaolowa Jadesola
B.Sc. International Relations,
Covenant University,
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Binta Mabintyah
B.S.C Degree in Peace and
Development Studies,
Njala University, Torwama-Ba,
Sierra Leone



Alhaji Mamadu
BSC - Bachelor of Social Sciences,
University of Sierra Leone

Meet the 2023 Y-TEaM Mentors



Chukwuemeka B. EZE, PhD
Executive Director, WANEP



Mrs. Levinia Addae-Mensah
Programme Director & Deputy
Executive Director, WANEP



Onyinye Onwuka, PhD
Head of Mediation and Coordination of
Regional Political Affairs
Directorate of Political Affairs
Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security



H.E. Emmanuel Bombade
UN Senior Mediation Adviser,
United Nations Department of
Political and Peacebuilding Affairs,
Former Executive Director of WANEP



Mr. Constant Gnacadja
Programme Officer
Conflict Prevention
Directorate of Political Affairs
ECOWAS Commission



Mrs. Carla Maria Borges Bettencourt
Board Member,
WANEP Regional



Mrs. Queeneth Tawo
Regional Coordinator, Women,
Peace and Security, WANEP



Mr. Francis Acquah
Executive Assistant to Commissioner,
Department of Political Affairs,
Peace and Security, ECOWAS Commission



Festus Aubyn, PhD
Regional Coordinator
Research and Capacity Building,
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Mrs. Nora Da-do Amedzenu-Noviekou
National Network Coordinator,
WANEP Togo



Mrs. Bjoue Kesia-Onam Birch
Peacebuilding Advisor
UN Women DRC



Mr. Jean Yves Bonzi
Coordination Officer,
Integrated Office of
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Mr. Julien Oussou
Regional Coordinator,
Network Development,
WANEP



Mrs. Prisca Kouakou
Coach, CEO, Priscanad Group



Margaret Ellis, PhD
Founder & Programme Facilitator,
Coaches of Influence Foundation (COIF)



Mr. Moctar Kane
Former AU Youth Envoy WA,
Country Manager at
Global Community Engagement
and Resilience Fund



Ms. Mfrekeobong Upkanah
Conflict Prevention Specialist



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