WANEP Celebrates ECOWAS AT 40

On June 25, 2015, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, WANEP rolled out the drums to celebrate the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS 40th anniversary in an interactive Forum held in Dakar, Senegal. The Minister of African Integration, NEPAD and Good Governance represented by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Monsieur Massamba SENE gave the keynote address aptly titled: “Sustaining Peace and Security in West Africa – 40 Years of Challenges and Opportunities for CSOs Engagement.”

This follows on the Media Roundtable earlier organized by WANEP on May 18, 2015 as a platform for robust reflections with the media and CSOs on the accomplishments of ECOWAS and challenges in the last four decades.

Speaking at the Interactive Forum, Her Excellency Mrs. Salamatu Sulieman, ECOWAS Commissioner of Political Affairs, described the high powered event as “an excellent opportunity to share experiences and explore collaborative strategies for entrenched sustainable peace in our region.”

The Executive Director of WANEP, Mr. Chukwuemeka Eze, in his welcome address reiterated the cordial relationship of ECOWAS with CSOs as stipulated in the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). A relationship, he said, has resulted to the emergence of a broader civil society platform such as the West Africa Civil Society Forum, WACSOF.

Board chair of WANEP Regional, Professor Isaac Olawale Albert, identified the competent human resources in ECOWAS, the partnership with CSOs and with centers of excellence as contributing significantly to making “ECOWAS a pride to the global community and a model Regional Economic Community on the continent.”

NEW APPOINTMENTS IN WANEP

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, WANEP has recently appointed Mr. Alimou Diallo as the new WANEP/ECOWAS Liaison Officer at the ECOWAS Commission, Abuja-Nigeria. Mr. Diallo was the former Regional Coordinator Network Development (RCND) at the WANEP Regional Office, he takes over from Mr. Constant Gnacanja who has recently moved on. Prior to his appointment as the RCND, Mr. Diallo served as the National Network Coordinator, NNC, Guinea. In the same vein, Mr. Francis Acquah-Aikins, erstwhile Communications and External Relations Officer, (CERO) WANEP replaces Alimou Diallo as the new RCND.

In other developments, Mr. Ifeanyi Okechukwu, former National Network Coordinator, NNC, WANEP-Nigeria is now the Regional Coordinator Early Warning heading the five-year WANEP/USAID Project on Mitigating Electoral Violence through National Early Warning Systems. Mr. Okechukwu is assisted by Ms Edwige Mensah formerly Program Officer at the PMC while Ms Mfreke Ukpanah replaces Ms Mensah as PO-PMC. The $2.5 million project is focused on identifying potential triggers of violence in upcoming elections in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Niger and Sierra Leone.

In line with its repositioning process, Ms. Queeneth Tawo, former Regional Coordinator Programs is now the Regional Coordinator Corporate Communications.
“Electoral violence can be averted by developing local capacities”

Levinia Addae-Mensah, WANEP Programs Director

Within the last two decades, West Africa has witnessed a wave of democratization with multi-party democracy and a culture of elections taking root in a number of countries across the region. However this transition to democratic governance has been riddled with challenges in the form of election disputes and electoral violence, which continue to threaten peace and security in the already volatile region. The fiercely competitive nature of party politics in West Africa has been a factor challenging stability in the region largely because there is a widespread perception of elections as a “winner takes all” event and on the other hand because party formation tilts along ethnic, religious and parochial lines rather than along ideological lines. This is further complicated, against a backdrop of palpable inter-ethnic tensions, violent extremism and religious intolerance and raises the stakes and risks for all those involved.

In a number of countries across the West Africa region, presidential elections have led to the outbreak of violence along political party and sadly, ethnic lines that have threatened to engulf the countries concerned in civil war, with security risks for neighboring countries and the region as a whole. Election processes have been marred with allegations of misconduct or other forms of manipulation of the electioneering process. The narrative of elections in West Africa has therefore become filled with political tensions and high incidences of electoral violence. The region is thus considered one of the most politically challenged regions of the world with socio-economic consequences increasing poverty levels and slowing down development.

WANEP is convinced that this narrative can change if local capacity is developed and harnessed for timely election violence monitoring, analyzing and reporting. This will lead to a proactive and timely response to the indicators and will avert electoral violence and ensure stability of the region.

In the past 12 years WANEP has been monitoring and analyzing electoral processes in West Africa under its mandate as the official partner of ECOWAS in the operationalization of the ECOWAS Early Warning Mechanism. WANEP has come to realize that electoral dispute mechanisms are a sine qua non in the overall maintenance and sustenance of peace and security in the region. In the light of this, WANEP through the project entitled “Mitigating Election Violence in West Africa through National Early Warning Systems (NEWS)” funded by USAID, seeks to fulfill one of its key strategic objectives of enhancing the capacity of civil society and relevant state institutions for the promotion of human security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding in West Africa. This is also to support the various provisions and protocols of ECOWAS relating to Democracy, Good Governance and Conflict Prevention, which lay emphasis on the early detection and mitigation of violent conflicts.

Specifically, this five year project will enable WANEP, through its National Early Warning Systems to monitor, analyze and report electoral violence indicators in Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Niger and Sierra Leone within the broader framework of the ECOWAS Early Warning Mechanism (ECOWARN) and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, (ECPF). NEWS strives to respond to critical demands for pertinent information relating to human security and violent conflict especially at the local community level. WANEP upholds that vital information at community level that is uncollected and unreported is highly needed for the purposes of conflict prevention especially in electoral processes. NEWS will therefore provide qualitative and quantitative data for analysis and production of various early warning reports to various levels of local and international stakeholders for response.

WANEP is grateful to the U.S Government for its financial support for this project. WANEP also wishes to express sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Burkina Faso for their willingness to support the implementation of this project and more importantly, for their commitment to a free, fair and credible electoral process culminating in the institutionalization of credible democracy in Burkina Faso and in West Africa. We believe that this project will contribute to a successful transitional process and consolidation of democratic governance in Burkina Faso.

Long live Burkina Faso!
MILESTONES

ISN ETH Zurich

PARTNER OF THE WEEK

ISN Names WANEP “Partner of the Week”

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding was named Partner of the Week by the International Relations and Security Network (ISN) in June. This is in recognition of WANEP’s work and the impact it is making in the region and its collaboration with ECOWAS in achieving peace and security in the region. ISN is one of the world’s leading open access information services for both professionals and students who focus on international relations (IR) and security studies. It was established in 1994 to facilitate security-related dialogue and cooperation within a trusted network of international relations organizations, professionals and experts, and to provide open-source international relations and security-related tools and materials in accessible ways. ISN works with the world’s leading think tanks, universities, research institutes, NGOs and international organizations.

WANEP in the News

WANEP’s leading position in peace and security in the region was further affirmed by the numerous appearances and consultations by the media. In the reporting quarter, WANEP staff both at the regional and national levels were constantly sought after by the media to comment and discuss on topical issues. The Executive Director, Mr. Eze, Regional Coordinator Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr. Vincent Azumah and Mr. Francis Acquah-Aikins, Communication and External Relations Officer were all guests of the media in the reporting period.

Mr. Eze spoke on religious intolerance in schools while Mr. Azumah was in a panel discussion on issues of security in Ghana. It was aired in the local Akan language on TV Africa in Ghana.

WANEP ED Gets Society for Peace Fellowship

The Executive Director, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, WANEP, Mr. Chukwuemeka Eze, has been awarded the 2015 fellowship of the prestigious Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP). A statement released by the Society dated June 14, 2015, says, “Fellowship of the SPSP is the highest grade of membership that is conferred on deserving persons who have exemplified themselves in peace practice and scholarship in line with international practices.”

Mr. Eze was considered worthy of this honor in recognition of his contributions to building peace across West Africa and beyond. The statement further added “it is indeed apposite that you join the prestigious rank of the Body of Fellows of SPSP comprising eminent personalities at this point in time, as an insignia of your unflinching commitment to the promotion of a culture of peace across the world.”

Mr. Chukwuemeka Eze who became WANEP Executive Director early this year has over 15 years’ experience in peacebuilding practice. He has garnered numerous awards and laurels in his line of practice. With this latest achievement, Mr. Eze joins other distinguished Fellows of the SPSP in providing leadership for the Society including prompt response whenever a Fellow is requested to intervene in the interest of the Society, projecting and defending the interest of the Society at every opportunity, serving as Peace Ambassador and committing totally to peaceful co-existence between persons and between groups among other obligations.

Mr. Eze will be officially conferred with this fellowship at the investiture ceremony on August 10, 2015 at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), in Port Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria.
Countering violent extremism in West Africa

The Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the ECOWAS Commission through Ms. Onyinye Onwuka, of the Early Warning Directorate (EWD) has commended WANEP for the sustained cooperation and promotion of peace and security in the region. Ms. Onwuka was speaking at a three-day regional training workshop on “Countering Violent Extremism in West Africa: Strengthening Regional Prevention Capacities” organized by WANEP in collaboration with the Global Centre on Cooperative Security.

She lauded the WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) especially for the support to the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) and appreciated WANEP and the Global Centre for the initiative in holding the workshop in view of the threats from violent extremism to the ECOWAS Peace, Security and Development Agenda.

Ms. Naureen Chowdury Fink, Head of Research and Analysis at the Global Centre on Cooperative Security (GCCS), Washington in her address reiterated the Centre’s resolve and ambition to Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) globally and more importantly in Africa. She appreciated WANEP for the collaboration, which she hoped would be the beginning of a formidable partnership in the promotion of regional security.

The workshop held from May 20 to 21, 2015 in Accra, Ghana and had 37 participants comprising 15 females and 22 males including WANEP NEWS Managers, Zonal Coordinators, WANEP regional staff and 4 representatives of the ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate in attendance.

As ECOWAS and WANEP partner to counter the threats posed by violent extremism in the region, Ms. Onwuka said the linkage between the early warning and early response would be integral to the operationalization of the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan.

WANEP Commiserates with Ghana Government over June 3rd Disaster

The Board, Management and staff of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) sent a condolence message to the people and government of the Republic of Ghana over the fire and flood incident of June 3, 2015 which claimed over a 100 lives. The solidarity message was contained in a press release by the organization and was widely circulated. Excerpts of the message stated; “WANEP stands in solidarity with the Government and people of Ghana in these trying times of extensive loss of lives and properties and with all those who are mobilizing efforts and in some instances, even risking their lives to respond to this large scale tragedy and disaster. WANEP commends these efforts that have come from various quarters across the socio-economic and political spheres of Ghana.”

It further added “the Board, Management and Staff of WANEP across the West Africa region wish to add their voice to the numerous appeals to the authorities to find more sustainable measures to prevent such perennial fatalities. WANEP further urges all to desist from the politicization of this tragedy and the blame gaming and rather rally all and sundry to engage in a dispassionate assessment of the issues at hand as we explore more integrated and coordinated approaches to mitigate the impact of such natural disasters. WANEP finally wishes to appeal to all to observe the precautionary measures put across by the authorities to minimize the effect of the rains as we go through the rainy season.”
WANEP Reviews National Early Warning Systems (NEWS)

As part of efforts to strengthen the National Early Warning Systems (NEWS) to enhance the support to the ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, WANEP holds regular refresher trainings for its NEWS Managers from the 15 national networks across West Africa. This quarter’s workshop took place on May 18 to 19 and was themed “Peer Review of WANEP NEWS and Appraisal of Contribution to ECOWARN” with 37 participants in attendance. The workshop is an annual training organised for the NEWS Managers for the purpose of experience sharing, identification of core challenges and collaborative approaches to ensure effective operationalization of the NEWS Portal.

The primary goal of the retraining workshop was to strengthen the structure and operations of NEWS at the national level and improve reporting into the ECOWARN system at the regional level. It provided a platform for the clarification of roles and expectations of WANEP and its NEWS Managers in the ongoing decentralization of ECOWARN. The training provided a platform to test-run the NEWS mobile application developed to facilitate offline early warning reports as well as to appraise the performance of the NEWS Managers and Zonal Coordinators. The training helped to deepen their commitment to the continued success of the system and to identify areas of needed support.

PASA 2015 SESSION

Two WANEP staff; Ms. Queeneth Tawo, Regional Coordinator Programs and Mr. Boris Some, the National Network Coordinator of WANEP Burkina Faso participated in the Peace and Security in Africa, PASA 2015 session.

The 13 month PASA programme consists of five phases beginning on 15 March 2015. The first two phases takes place in Uppsala, Sweden from May 18 to June 6, 2015 and in Cape Town and Durban, South Africa, from November 2 to 13, 2015. Phases I, III and V are introductory, interim and concluding phases and are carried out in participants home organization. The programme is sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).
As part of his familiarization tour of WANEP’s National Networks since assuming the leadership of the leading peace-building organisation in West Africa in January 2015, Mr. Chukwuemeka Eze visited WANEP Liberia from 26th to 29th May 2015. At a function held in his honour during the visit, Mr. Eze expressed appreciation to Liberians especially the women for their resilience and unity of purpose in tackling the deadly Ebola pandemic which almost crippled the country. He commended the enthusiasm and commitment to work and the great impact achieved by the network and reiterated the regional secretariat’s continuous support to the cause of WANEP Liberia and its WIPNET programme.

During the visit, Mr. Eze also paid a courtesy call on the Special Representative of the President of ECOWAS Commission to Liberia, His Excellency Ambassador Tunde Ajisomo where they discussed issues on peace and security in the region especially WANEP’s continuous support to ECOWAS as the leading civil society organisation partner in the operationalisation of the ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN). Pictures from that memorable visit are captured here.
It was a joyous occasion as WANEP Accounts Officer, Gideon Abotsikpui walked down the aisle with his heartthrob Gifty on July 4th in Ohohoe, Ghana. The WANEP family were on hand to make the day a memorable one. Congrats to the latest couple in the house!

WHOA ARE

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) was conceived in 1996 but formally launched in 1998. Unlike other activist organisations, WANEP strategically chose to engage major actors, particularly government actors in a bid to establish a platform for dialogue, experience sharing and learning, thereby, complementing efforts at ensuring sustainable peace and development. WANEP is a member of the Peace and Security cluster of the African Union’s (AU) Economic and Social Council –ECOSOCC representing West Africa and also has a Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). WANEP is the Regional Initiator and the current Chair of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflicts (GPPAC).

OUR GOAL

WANEP’s cardinal goal is to build sustainable peace, thereby creating an enabling environment for development in West Africa.

WHAT WE DO

WANEP work covers eight critical areas of intervention including;

- The West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI)
- West Africa Early Warning and Response Network, (WARN)
- Women in Peacebuilding (WIPNET)
- Non-violence and Peace Education, (NAPE)
- Civil Society Coordination and Democratic Governance Program, (CSDG)
- Responding to Conflicts through Dialogue

WHERE WE WORK

WANEP’s growth and influence has been phenomenal. After 15 years of peacebuilding practice, WANEP has grown to become a household name in West Africa with national offices in all the ECOWAS Member countries, and over 500 member organisations spread all over WA.