WEST AFRICA
PEACE AND SECURITY
REPORT

Quarter 1 (January – March 2019)

WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING (WANEP)
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE
1.0. Introduction

In the first quarter of 2019, the governance and security landscape of West Africa witnessed the conduct of elections in Nigeria, Senegal and Guinea Bissau, which were critical to the region’s quest to consolidate democratic governance. While the elections in Nigeria and Senegal are consistent with their national Constitutions, Guinea Bissau’s protracted political stalemate within the ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) hindered the conduct of elections scheduled for 2018. After several postponements, legislative election was held across the country on March 10, 2019. Furthermore, within this quarter, the security landscape has witnessed heightened security challenges manifested in organised crimes, extremist attacks, abductions, inter-communal conflicts and farmer-herder conflicts predominantly in Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Niger. The consequences of these violent occurrences are reflected in a cocktail of humanitarian crises including internal displacements, refugee flow, deaths and injuries which have negatively impacted the most vulnerable population, especially women and children. In addition to this, there have been outbreak of epidemics including meningitis and Lassa Fever in countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria. Also, natural disasters orchestrated by human induced activities such as surging destruction of mangroves, disposal of waste into water bodies and illegal mining, devastated lives of plants and animals that support human livelihoods in most countries along the Gulf of Guinea.

This report seeks to provide analysis on key governance and human security progress and challenges in the West African region in the first quarter of 2019. It further provides recommendations for early response and mitigation.

2.0. Democracy and Governance

With regard to governance and democratic space of West Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Guinea Bissau organised relatively peaceful and credible elections. In Nigeria, Presidential, Gubernatorial and Senatorial elections were held between February and March 2019. Despite the successful conduct of the elections, the process was replete with technical challenges arising from logistical preparation by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which led to the postponement of Presidential and National Assembly elections from February 16 to 23, 2019 and Gubernatorial, State House of Assembly and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Area Council elections from March 2 to 9, 2019. Also, inter and intra party disputes, vote buying, burning of sensitive election materials including electronic card readers and ballot papers. Again, hate speeches and
rhetorics as well as armed attacks heightened tension and violence before, during and after the elections.

Data generated from the WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) Election Monitoring System from December 2018 – March 2019 indicated 194 incidents of election related threats within the categories of physical violence, hostile communication, ethics and procedure and rule of law. A significant number of the incidents occurred in Benue, Borno, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Imo, Kaduna, Kogi, Kano, Lagos, Rivers, Zamfara and Yobe States. These States constituted potential hotspots for electoral violence in line with existing trend analysis from December 2018 to March 31, 2019. Physical attacks recorded the highest frequency of 25 percent of the total number of incidents reported. Hostile communication and conformity to the Rule of Law recorded lower percentage margin in terms of frequency of occurrence.

Figure. 1: Graph representing frequency of incidents across the States in Nigeria (December 2018 – March 2019) Credit: WANEP NEWS Data

The graph indicates the predominance of physical violence from all the incident reports submitted across the States. There was a significant increase in fatalities with a total of 161 deaths and 628 injuries recorded.
Similarly, Senegal held its Presidential Election on February 24, 2019 against the backdrop of protests following the disqualification of two key opposition candidates, Karim Wade and Khalifa Sall on grounds of their conviction on corruption charges. Another challenge was the introduction of the Law of Parrainage¹ in 2018. These factors exacerbated tension and violence, leading to the deaths and injuries of people.

¹The Law on Parrainage (2018), enjoins candidates to secure 52,000 endorsements from 7 out of the 14 regions of the country as one of the conditions to contest elections.
out of the 14 regions in Senegal. Dakar region had the highest number of violent incidents with 16, followed by Ziguinchor with eight reported incidents. In addition, there were also six reported incidents in Diourbel and Thies respectively, while Tambacounda recorded four incidents mainly between the supporters of political parties. A total of two deaths were recorded throughout the campaign period.

In the case of Guinea Bissau, legislative elections were held on March 10, 2019, after several postponements in 2018 mainly due to protracted internal political struggle within the ruling PAIGC. There were recorded incidents of inadequate electoral materials, omission of names on the voter register and violent clash in Gabu. However, these were low intensity conflicts which did not affect the peaceful conduct of the elections.

In Ghana, the Ayawaso West-Wuogon Constituency Parliamentary bye-election of January 2019 was marred by violence from vigilante groups affiliated to political parties which led to six people injured and boycott by the opposition National Democratic (NDC). This has reinforced the public debate on the increasing political violence linked to vigilante groups associated with the two main political parties – the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in Ghana. This poses existential threat to Ghana’s democratic stability and has adverse implications for peaceful conduct of the 2020 elections.

In the case of Benin, introduction of the mandatory certificate of Conformity² by the Constitutional Court and its subsequent implementation by the Ministry of Interior has shrunk the space for participation of some opposition political parties in the legislative elections slated for April 28, 2019. This continues to heighten tension and foreshadows a potential escalation of protests likely to result in violence and public disorder.

Also, the lingering political crisis in Togo continues to deepen instability in the country. Persistent rejection of the conduct of the legislative election in December 2018 by opposition parties (C14) has intensified the mistrust in the governance system of the country. This is further exacerbated by intra party disputes which has led to the formation of a seven-member breakaway group comprising Parti National Panafricain (PNP) and Comité d’Action pour le Renouveau (CAR) among others. This constitutes a drawback to the mediation efforts being led by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo- Addo of Ghana and the implementation of the proposed ECOWAS’ roadmap for peace and stability in the country. The arrest and sentence of human rights activists including

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²Certificate of conformity: It is the fact of the Decision N ° EL19-001 of the 1st February 2019 of the Constitutional Court of Benin.
Foly Sachivi – an activist and spokesperson of local human rights movement called *En aucun Cas* – to three years imprisonment in January 2019, is a vivid manifestation of state repression of dissenting views in the political space.

Again, political wrangling within the ruling coalition in The Gambia continues to affect its fledgling democracy and state stability. In particular, the removal of the Vice President, Ousainou Darbo and two other ministers by President Adama Barrow is impacting on the political and social cohesion of the country.

Frequent demonstrations by citizens and political parties have also featured prominently within this quarter. In Guinea, an emerging public perception that President Alpha Condé intends to extend his two-term limit has triggered protests. In Benin, opposition parties demonstrated, demanding inclusive legislative elections scheduled for April 28, 2019. According to political parties, the decision of the Constitutional Court on *Certificate of Conformity* limits their participation in the elections. Other countries such as Ghana and Sierra Leone faced incidents related to an emerging trend of strained-citizen relationships across the region. While opposition party organized series of protests against a perceived biased corruption allegation against some political actors in Sierra Leone, protests in Ghana were students-led triggered by their disapproval of decisions of the authorities of the University of Education, Winneba.

### 2.1. Key Resilient Factors

- Despite the slow process and outcome of the dialogue efforts in Togo, the need to intensify dispute resolution effort between the opposition parties and the Government is imperative to end the political crisis. In that regard, the recent meeting between seven parties within the opposition C14 and President Faure Gnassingbé to discuss the future of democracy, stability and institutional reforms in the country is seen as an opportunity for a breakthrough in the political stalemate. This has led to the l’Alliance des Démocrates pour le développement integral (ADDI) to join the Independent National Electoral Commission.

- Sustained condemnation of violent attacks by vigilante groups at the Ayawaso West-Wuogon by-election and the pressure on the NPP and NDC to disband affiliated groups by stakeholders such as the National Peace Council (NPC), civil society, the media and other key stakeholders have led to the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the violent incident and recommend preventive mechanisms against future occurrence. In addition, the NPP and NDC have made formal requests to the National Peace Council
to facilitate mediation sessions between the parties in an effort to resolve the issue of political vigilantism in the country.

- The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2458 extended the mandate of United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea Bissau (UNIOGBIS) from March 1, 2019 to February 28, 2020 and also the presence of ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB) as strategies to mitigate possible threats to the ongoing peace and political stability efforts in the country.

2.2. Recommendations

- The ECOWAS mediation effort in Togo should be resumed and sustained to resolve the current political impasse in the Country.
- Political parties in Guinea Bissau should continue to participate in the dialogue and mediation process initiated by regional and international community. There is also the need for wider consultations and consensus by all stakeholders in the appointment of the Prime Minister to ensure sustained national conversation on peace and social cohesion ahead of the 2020 presidential elections.
- The space for the dialogue between the NPP and NDC being chaired by the NPC should be widened to include other political parties, security agencies, CSOs, youth and women groups to ensure inclusivity and sustained process, leading to lasting solution to party vigilantism in Ghana ahead of the election in 2020.

3.0. Organised Crimes and Violent Extremism

The West African region continues to witness increasing incidents of organised crimes, violent extremism, terrorism, intercommunal and sectarian violence. The current spate of attacks by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Mourabitoun in Burkina Faso and Mali, Boko Haram and the West African Province of ISIS in Nigeria and across the border with Niger have far reaching consequences on regional security. The mode of operation of these extremist groups in the region ranges from suicide bombing, cross border raids, destruction of security installations and worship places, kidnapping, abduction and banditry. This situation is further compounded by incidents of transnational organised crimes, notably, armed robbery, drug and human trafficking, illegal migration, money laundering and other economic and financial crimes.
Figure 4: Categories of incidents recorded in West Africa (January – March 2019)
Credit: WANEP NEWS Data

The graph indicates that between January and March 2019, armed attack is the highest incidents recorded with 280 cases. This is followed by demonstrations (peaceful/violent) with 173 cases and accident is third with 12 recorded cases. There were also 53 cases of disasters (man-made/natural), 109 fire outbreaks, 104 homicides, 48 gender-based violence and 41 drug cases recorded. The consequences of these on human lives and properties within the region are a cause for concern.

Figure 5: Shows the Number of Deaths and Injuries Recorded in West Africa by WANEP NEWS (January – March 2019)

The graph shows that Burkina Faso has been on the spotlight for persistent terrorist, violent extremism and armed attacks. Between January – March 2019, there have been 63 attacks,
resulting in 159 deaths, 32 injuries and 11 abduction cases\(^3\). In addition, more than 1000 Schools including 500 in the Sahel Province are still closed, affecting a total of nearly 150,000 children\(^4\). This has serious consequences on education and increases the vulnerability of children to early marriage, child labour and terrorist recruitment.

Furthermore, recent incident of unidentified gunmen attack on custom post along the border between Togo and Burkina Faso which led to the killing of four custom officers and a Spanish priest at the eastern province of Koulpelogo in Burkina Faso is an indication of extremist and armed groups attempts to extend their activities to Togo, Ghana and Benin.

In Nigeria, between January and March 2019, 41 incidents of violent extremist attacks were recorded with a total death of 130 and 56 injuries while 161 people were abducted, especially in the North-East and across other geopolitical regions\(^5\). Armed attacks at this period were 128 with 387 deaths and 60 injuries\(^6\).

Continued Boko Haram cross-border attacks in the Diffa region has taken its toll on human lives leading to forced displacements in Niger. Within this quarter, there has been 18 incidents of terrorist attacks, resulting to 93 deaths and 119 injuries. Besides, kidnapping of foreign nationals for ransom, especially in Agadez and along the borders with Mali and Libya remains a major security concern in the area. Between January and March 2019, 25 people were kidnapped, while security installations, mining sites, schools and other properties were destroyed\(^7\). Also, heightened insecurity led to state of emergency declared in Tillabéri and Tahoua regions\(^8\).

Mali is also challenged with increased inter communal violence, terrorist and violent extremist attacks. The heightened ethnic tension between the Dogon and Fulani ethnic groups led to attack on Ogossagou - a Fulani settlement in Mopti region in March 2019 – resulting in the deaths of 160 people\(^9\). A reprisal attack by suspected Fulanis led to the deaths of six people in the Dogon communities – Ouadou and Kerekere – in the Bankass Cercle\(^10\).

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\(^3\) WANEP NEWS (Jan – March 2019).
\(^5\) WANEP NEWS (Jan-Feb 2019)
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) WANEP NEWS (January – March 2019).
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) WANEP NEWS (March 2019).
\(^10\) Ibid.
Rising number of self-defense and community-based armed groups to protect lives and properties in underserved areas is also symptomatic of weak state capacity to provide adequate security for most ungoverned spaces in Mali. The implications of this is shown in the increased cases of human rights violations including arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, assassinations and robberies among others in Mali.

Incidents of farmer-herder conflicts were also recorded in Nigeria and Ghana in this period. In Nigeria, attacks and reprisals by suspected Fulani herders’ and militia in Kajuru and Kachia in Kaduna State resulted in the deaths of 117 people (including 13 women and 22 children) with several houses and livestock destroyed. Again, tension between military personnel and herders reportedly led to the killing of 95 cattle from six ranches at Tubor and Kpokope in the Afram Plains, Eastern Region, Ghana. This indicates continued impact of the phenomenon of farmer-herder conflict on community cohesion and food security.

3.1. Key Resilient Factors

- Multi-lateral cooperation between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger is aiding identification and arrest of suspected collaborators, terrorist, violent extremist and armed groups.
- Ghana is also taking steps towards enhancing prevention and mitigation of terrorist and extremist threats through a multi-lateral stakeholders’ security discussion organised by the Government in February 2019 with neighbouring coastal states – Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo and Cote d’Ivoire.

3.2. Recommendations

- The Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), AU, ECOWAS and international community should increase support to enhance the capacity of the Malian Government to own the peace and security process of the country.
- ECOWAS member states should review their national counterterrorism strategies to align with the regional strategy in order to ensure synergy and harmonisation. This should also include community mechanisms such as infrastructure for peace.
- ECOWAS member states should ensure a robust regional intelligence cooperation beyond the Sahel countries to address rising threats of transnational organised crimes including terrorism, violent extremism, drug and human trafficking, piracy and proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the region.
- The Governments, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), traditional and religious leaders, youth and women groups should partner with High Council for Reconciliation and

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11WANEP NEWS (February 2019).
National Unity in Burkina Faso, High Islamic Council of Mali and High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace in Niger to play a key role in promoting community dialogue as well as reduce tension and violence among communities to enhance resilience against increased spate of terrorism and violent extremism.

4.0. Women, Peace and Security

The quarter recorded a number of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, especially rape in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Ghana. In the cases of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, the victims are within the age brackets of three months and above and the perpetrators are mostly members of the same family and other men in the community within the ages of 35 and above. Since the beginning of 2019, Sierra Leone recorded more than 350 cases of gender-based violence and rape in Freetown alone with the victims mainly minors including a 14-month old child. While Liberia also recorded a total of 26 rape cases and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Guinea recorded 7 cases of rape with the victims ranging from three months and above. Ghana recorded 6 suspected cases of rape and ritual murder involving women and girls in the Volta, Ashanti, Central and Greater Accra Regions. Notably, victims were mostly teenagers who were abused by their fathers and neighbours. The trends emerging in rape cases suggest an increasing vulnerability of the girl child to SGBV. Communities in Northern Burkina Faso, North and Central Mali have also reported cases of gender-based violence committed by armed groups. For example, there were reports of women being dispossessed of their property by the Group for the Support for Islam and Muslims (GSIM), a radical group that terrorised local population.

12Source: Umaru Fofana, Reporter BBC and Reuters. Available at The Rainbow Initiative, hashtagSierraLeone’s only referral centre for rape and other sexual offenses (Linkedln post in February 2019. (Accessed March 5, 2019).

13WANEP NEWS (January – March 2019).
Furthermore, the insecurity caused by Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria and Niger have impacted disproportionately on women and girls. The disruption of farming activities and livelihood has heightened the prices of basic food items, increased the level of poverty and unemployment, particularly for women and girls. Between January and March 2019, about Seven female suicide bombings occurred in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States in Nigeria. Two female suicide bombings also happened in Diffa in Niger. A report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs indicates that one in five suicide bombers is a child and 75% of them are girls. There are worries that this trend may grow because of violence in the Northeastern region of Nigeria which has led to the displacement of more than 1.2m children in the zone as of March 2019. The impact of this includes the difficult and unsanitary conditions affecting women, girls and children living in Internal Displace Persons (IDPs) and refugee camps. Such conditions in IDP and refugee camps make women prone to outbreak and spread of diseases such as Lassa Fever, meningitis, malaria and cholera.

Additionally, women participation in politics and governance in this quarter remains a challenge. In Senegal, the Law on Parrainage hindered the only female aspiring to contest the presidential election who could not satisfy the requirement as stipulated by the aforementioned law. In the case of Nigeria, the six women out of 73 presidential contestants all withdrew their candidacy prior to the polls. In the March 2019 legislative elections in Guinea Bissau, 14 out of 102 legislative seats were won by women, representing 14 percent as against 86 percent of men. This could be attributed to many structural challenges such as male dominance, economic indifferences and other socio-cultural norms of the society. Most importantly, election which is the medium to political participation is often characterised by violence and as such women shy away from the process.

4.1. Key Resilient Factors

- Advocacy campaigns, especially led by women’s groups, faith-based organisations and social networks to condemn and raise awareness on increasing cases of rape in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea and call on authorities and other stakeholders for prompt action to address the problem.
- There is also the political will on the part of Governments of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea expressed through public condemnation and proclamation against gender-based violence, especially rape and the pledge to strengthen state institutions including the

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15 Ibid
police and the judiciary to investigate and prosecute perpetrators as well as protection of victims.

4.2 Recommendations

- The Governments of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea should go beyond proclamations and create a space for multi-level stakeholders’ engagement, leading to research into the phenomenon of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), strengthen institutions including the police, judiciary, CSOs, the media and local community structures, and provision of necessary support to victims and survivors.

5.0. Environmental Security

The environment of West Africa within this reported period has witnessed outbreak of epidemics including meningitis (Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Togo and Ghana), Lassa Fever (Benin, Togo and Nigeria) and Yellow Fever (Nigeria). For instance, the Burkinabe health authorities have reported 933 cases of meningitis with 55 deaths, representing 5.5 percent fatality increase between January 1 and March 14, 2019\textsuperscript{16}. Meningitis C outbreak was mostly recorded in Diapaga, Eastern Region of Burkina Faso. There have also been reports of 381 confirmed cases of meningitis and 83 deaths in 32 states including Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria\textsuperscript{17}. Similarly, health officials in Togo have confirmed 244 meningitis cases and eight deaths in Kpendjal Prefecture as of mid-March 2019\textsuperscript{18}. In January 2019, 16 cases and three deaths from meningitis were reported in the Zabzugu District in the Northern Region of Ghana\textsuperscript{19}. The recurrent outbreak of preventable diseases and level of fatalities in the West Africa-Sahel Belt suggests pervasive weaknesses in the healthcare systems and service delivery in the region. It further indicates the region’s vulnerability to other diseases that threaten human lives, livelihoods and development, especially within local communities.

\textsuperscript{16}WANEP NEWS (January – March 2019).
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid. (March 2019).
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid
Another environmental security threat observed in the quarter is the destruction of mangroves and pollution of water bodies with plastic and other waste disposal in Senegal, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria. Across these countries, mangroves continue to be harvested for livelihood supports, construction of houses and industries. In addition to this, disposal of waste in water bodies also continues to threaten ecosystem sustainability. This has adverse impact on biodiversity, especially fisheries and income of fishing communities and households’ consumption of fish in West Africa.

Despite the efforts to address the problem of illegal mining and its consequences on lives and the environment through policy interventions, it is prevalent in communities in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire. Notably, in Burkina Faso, extremist and armed groups captured and occupied some gold mining sites in the Eastern Region but were repelled by security forces. This shows the interest of armed groups in utilising mining proceeds to finance and sustain their operations. In Guinea, between January and February, 20 people were killed as a result of collapsed mining pits in Kotounindony and Fradjani of the Haute Guinée Region. Additionally, in January 2019, 16 miners were killed and several injured in an explosion in mining pit in Talensi, Upper East region of Ghana. Apart from the environmental threats such as pollutions, degradation of farmlands and other health related hazards, illegal mining also continues to fuel criminal activities in communities within the countries concerned.

5.1. Key Resilient Factors

- Concerted and sustained public campaigns against environmental threats such as illegal mining, waste disposal and destruction of mangroves among others at the local and national levels by Government institutions, traditional authorities, CSOs, NGOs and the media and other relevant advocacy groups.

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20WANEP NEWS (January – February 2019).
• There are existing national and community-based environmental and basic healthcare such as community-based environmental advocacy groups, customs and traditional norms, health centres, hospitals and public health awareness services which support resilience of affected communities.

• Increased national and international awareness campaigns have embolden women and girls victims and families to report cases of SGBV to the appropriate.

5.2. Recommendations

• WANEP, ECOWAS and AU Early Warning System indicators should be reviewed to include the depletion of mangroves, coastal erosions and waste disposal as a mechanism to inform policy direction at the national, regional and international levels.

• ECOWAS, in collaboration with development partners, should conduct in-depth environmental vulnerability assessment across West Africa to inform policies on environment protection and preservation.

• The Governments of Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, The Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leon and Senegal, through relevant agencies, should strengthen community environmental and healthcare delivery structures to adequately respond to environmental and health threats such as mangroves destruction, waste management, illegal mining, outbreak of diseases to mitigate their impact on communities.