

***“Peace does not come from knowing how you will find the answer, or where to look for it, or when it will come, or what it will be. Peace comes from simply knowing you will find the answer”. Anonymous***

Peacebuilding efforts in West Africa and particularly the contribution of Civil Society Organisations over the past decade are promoting and consolidating peace and political stability in the sub-region. While the level of collaboration between governments and civil society organisations in building peace has increased, there are also visible efforts to institutionalise peacebuilding by creating national structures for peace in various West African Countries. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding [WANEP] during the period under review in 2011 continued through its unique network structure to be at the forefront of mobilising civil society efforts for building peace and promoting human security at national and regional levels in West Africa. This report is a narrative of the salient highlights of our work in the past year, 2011.

WANEP acknowledges the very important recognition of the Alfred Nobel Peace Prize awarding committee in awarding the Nobel Peace Prize of 2011 to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia and Ms Leymaa Gbowee, a former staff member of WANEP. WANEP warmly congratulates the women of Liberia for the achievement of winning the Nobel Peace Prize. WANEP shares with a sense of pride the achievement of Ms Leymaa Gbowee as her recognition is attributed to her role in WANEP – Liberia as the Desk Officer of the Women in Peacebuilding Network [WIPNET] program where she demonstrated courage and conviction in the mass mobilisation of women in Liberia for peace. The women of Liberia are ever more inspired to be at the forefront of bringing justice, healing and peace not only to communities in Liberia devastated by war but also reaching out across the sub-region to be true examples of women efforts and leadership in peacebuilding.

Sustaining WANEP’s institutional efficiency and professionalism received special consideration in 2011 when a system audit was conducted. The outcomes of the audit provide an important benchmark for strengthening the organisation at all the levels and structures of WANEP. The systems audit will also inform the development of WANEP’s Strategic plan from national to regional levels in the coming years. WANEP is now looking for the opportunity to consolidate its operations through a well-structured regional organisation with an efficient regulatory mechanism as well as a rigorous application of its monitoring and evaluation systems from national to regional levels.

The national networks of WANEP continue to grow from strength to strength with more of its

network members active in Peacebuilding practice. At national levels, the improvement in program design and implementation of peacebuilding activities and enhancement of capacities for cross regional learning and exchange of experiences added value to WANEP's work in the sub-region. While a hands-on approach and experience from practice continues to generate knowledge and capacity, new opportunities are emerging for acquiring skills and expertise in academic work and from various training institutions. In 2011 for example, the department of Peace and Conflict Studies at UPPSALA University through a Scholarship from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) provided opportunity for 5 WANEP staff scholarships to attend an International Training Program on Peace and Security in Africa (PASA).

The WIPNET regional conference in November 2011 in Accra provided an opportunity to assess barriers that affect women's participation in post conflict reconstruction and development. It provided a strategic framework with concrete and innovative recommendations to strengthen women's active participation in peace and security initiatives in West Africa in the framework of the UN Security Council 1325

Amongst the major significant highlights in program activities, it is now encouraging to note that the ECOWAS Early Warning Mechanism-ECOWARN is able to provide regularly quality data that informs analysis and decision-making at the level of ECOWAS. In 2011, ECOWAS made specific references to ECOWARN reports as the basis of decisions for interventions in various West African countries. WANEP under its WARN program and through its national networks across the sub-region contribute a significant proportion of the data for the efficient operationalisation of ECOWARN. It is a success story from West Africa of a civil-society-intergovernmental partnership that is creating synergy for the early detection of signs and indicators of conflicts and engaging in the prevention of violence from community to national level. Such efforts have contributed largely towards the non-recurrence of open and violent conflicts in 2011 although new threats emerged during the year particularly in Nigeria with the violent attacks by extremist groups (Boko Haram). During the year under review, WANEP made significant progress in the involvement of communities in early warning through the development of National Early Warning Systems [NEWS]. These national early warning systems have started to generate enthusiasm in communities and bringing out the sense of ownership and local capacity for conflict prevention.

In very challenging ways, the efforts at sustaining dialogue continued albeit with a reversal of progress made on the Jos Plateau of Nigeria. The emerging threat to peace and stability in West Africa around Pastoralist and Farmers conflicts over grazing lands surfaced strongly in a regional roundtable in Ouagadougou. Elsewhere, the support for community dialogue has maintained peace in communities experiencing conflicts in northern Ghana. WANEP contributed through partnerships with ECOWAS and civil society organisations towards peaceful elections in Benin, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Nigeria.

WANEP continued to be active in various partnerships and collaborative efforts in 2011. Noteworthy of these efforts include the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed [GPPAC] which has now grown into a formidable international platform for various levels of collaboration and regional exchange. WANEP was invited to join the International Coalition of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). During the period under review, WANEP continued to participate as member in the work of the Peace and Security Cluster of the AU-ECOSOCC. Also in 2011, within the framework of the AU-EU civil society partnership, WANEP was elected as the chair of the Thematic Cluster on Peace and Security on the Joint AU-EU Strategy (JAES). At the level of the United Nations, there was active interaction and joint activities with UN Agencies and Country Teams in Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Togo and Guinea. At the regional level, WANEP increased collaboration with the UN Office for West Africa [UNOWA] and provided support to the UN Women Office for West Africa in the facilitation of Dialogue and Mediation training for High level West African Women leaders.

In presenting this annual report for 2011, WANEP again acknowledges with profound appreciation, the financial support of its Partners and the opportunities they provided to sustain peacebuilding efforts in West Africa. We particularly highlight the support and partnership from SIDA and the Government of Finland. The support of USAID through the EWARDS project contributed to WANEP's Early Warning program. WANEP equally recognises and acknowledges support from German International Cooperation [GIZ] and IBIS West Africa. There is equal appreciation for the contributions of the Dutch and Norwegian Governments through the GPPAC framework.