

[Extracted from WANEP Annual Report, 2008]

In September 2008, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) accomplished 10 years of collaborative peacebuilding in West Africa. This is remarkable. Sustaining institutional capacity as a regional network organisation though challenging has been rewarding and appreciated not only in West Africa but on the African continent and globally. Following its establishment in September 1998, WANEP sustained the efforts of Civil Society collaborative efforts in building peace.

At the time WANEP was founded, the West Africa landscape was blighted with unprecedented levels of violence and destruction particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Internal upheavals spread to other countries including Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, and Guinea. The violent militant insurgency in the Niger Delta and sporadic communal violence in Nigeria has continued and remained a daunting challenge to peace and stability in the sub-region. In many other West African countries where relative peace has prevailed, the challenge of good governance, organising free, fair and peaceful elections continue to threaten peace and the enshrinement of a culture of democracy. Inter-ethnic strife, religious instigated violence, land, chieftaincy disputes and conflicts over resources continue to be prevalent in almost all West African countries. New threats have re-emerged in the Sahel belt with the upsurge of violence in northern Niger and Mali.

All these sources of violent conflicts notwithstanding, the resolve of West African States to engage comprehensively on conflict prevention is extraordinary. West Africa's internal capacity to resolve and prevent conflicts is now a reference globally. Specifically, the Early Warning Mechanism, ECOWARN is an example that many other sub-regions are now replicating. WANEP is proud to associate itself with the West African resolve to prevent violent conflicts. WANEP's contribution as a regional civil society organisation has popularised and made peacebuilding a house hold expression in all West African countries. WANEP's partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in particular is also a reference that has tremendously redefined inter-governmental and civil society collaboration.

A WANEP institutional appraisal was conducted in 2008 as part of the process of implementing the strategic plan (2006-2009). Consistent with the restructuring of WANEP within the framework of the strategic plan, most national networks are now self-sufficient in national capacities for fund-raising and implementation of national peacebuilding programs. The harmonisation of institutional structures now reflects the uniqueness of WANEP as a regional

civil society organisation with the same norms, principles, core values and objectives of collaborative peacebuilding from national to regional level. The regional secretariat is now focused on fund-raising and coordinating regional based peacebuilding programs as well as providing technical back-up support to the national networks. Mali and Niger continue to receive special attention as organisations in these countries strive to develop into fully functioning national networks.

WANEP partnership with ECOWAS was enhanced during the year under review. The ECOWARN system; the mechanism for early warning and conflict prevention of which WANEP is the strategic civil society implementing partner is now fully functional and operational. WANEP also contributed to the development of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Strategy Framework and participated in key meetings of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) of the ECOWAS Commission. WANEP is currently discussing with the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Department of ECOWAS to broaden its partnership base. Across the sub-region, WANEP is now active in responding to various levels of conflicts and engaging with Governments as well as the inter-governmental body, ECOWAS. The experiences that have accumulated over the past decade are now important resources attracting solicitation of WANEP's expertise in other African inter-governmental organisations including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in the Horn of Africa (IGAD), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the African Union (AU).

In 2008, WANEP attended important meetings of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the AU, the pre-AU summit Civil Society Conference in Alexandria, Egypt and the United Nations Conference on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence both at the Africa and International levels in Nairobi and Geneva respectively. WANEP also participated in the Global Article 9 conference to abolish war in Tokyo, Japan.

Consistent with its strategic plan, WANEP continues to facilitate international partnerships for collaboration with WANEP national networks as well as in various regional activities. In the past year, such partnerships included collaborative efforts with Brandeis University in Transitional Justice in West Africa, InWent, a capacity building institution in Germany and the Woodrow Wilson Centre for International Scholars of the United States. Under the Africa Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfAB), WANEP continues to work closely with the Africa Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), and the Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI). WANEP now works closely with the Kofi Anan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in many areas but particularly in the organisation of the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI).

WANEP coordinates a platform for regional activities in West Africa within the framework of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflicts (GPPAC). WANEP is host of the Africa Desk of the Women Peacemakers Program and is building synergy between this initiative and the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) a key program at WANEP that continues to mobilise and capacitate women in building peace.

WANEP is most grateful to its partners for funding support particularly the Government of Finland, ECOWAS, German Technical Cooperation-GTZ, CORDAID, IBIS-West Africa, Oxfam-West Africa and the Ghana Research and Advocacy Project (G-RAP). As we leap forward into another decade of peacebuilding, we are humbled by our achievements, motivated by commitment, privilege and resolve to remain advocates of peace in 2009.

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For the Management Team