

[Extracted from WANEP Annual Report, 2007]

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) continued the pursuance of its mission to promote cooperative responses to violent conflicts in West Africa with motivation and commitment during the year 2007. With its new strategic direction, the National Networks now assume full responsibility for implementing programs at national level while the regional secretariat provided technical support and expertise in coordinating knowledge and facilitating experience sharing amongst the networks. In Mali, Niger and Cape Verde, WANEP now has a focal presence with the resolve to establish functional national networks in the near future.

At the institutional level, WANEP's particular attention to institutional strengthening and organizational development is yielding good results. The National Networks are now vibrant: member organizations rally together on national issues such as elections to coordinate collective actions to prevent violence. There is increasing harmonization of administrative and financial procedures while each national network is supported by the regional secretariat to sustain financial viability and autonomy. These efforts will be deepened in the next few years as WANEP positions itself to be financially viable with national networks being capacitated to fund raise and build strategic partnerships for long term peace building efforts.

During the year under review, WANEP completed the second phase of the Capacity Building Program funded by the USAID: Enhanced Conflict Prevention Framework for ECOWAS and Civil Society Organizations. The successful implementation of the program produced useful lessons on Civil Society Partnerships with Inter-Governmental Organizations. WANEP partnership with ECOWAS increased further while planning for the third phase of enhancing a collective effort to sustain and build on the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention System. In addition to being the regional initiator for West Africa and secretariat for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflicts (GPPAC), WANEP hosts the Africa Desk of the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) in collaboration with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). This partnership reinforced the leadership role of women in peace building through the WPP and the Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET).

The visibility of WANEP in the sub-region made it possible for new partnerships and possibilities. Across the sub-region, WANEP has worked in the past years with an array of international peacebuilding organizations. In 2007, German Development Cooperation- GTZ provided funding support for the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) with the commitment to providing similar support in 2008. Since 2002, WAPI has provided intensive

training courses on various subjects in peace building for up to 213 practitioners. Its scope now extends to the entire African continent. In 2007, WAPI attracted UN staff and practitioners from Australia, Germany and Sweden. Under its Justice Lens program, WANEP joined the Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa in a major research project on Transitional Justice Experiences and the Rise of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Emerging Lessons and Implication for post-conflict societies.

A major highlight in WANEP's partnerships in 2007 was with the Government of Finland in the implementation of the project: Integrated and Collaborative Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management in West Africa, for which WANEP received a grant for institutional support, program development and implementation. In the framework of the implementation of WANEP's strategic plan, the new partnership with the Government of Finland provided a unique alternative to funding and a confidence measure to WANEP's donors of the viability of the organisation and its capacity to attract funding from multiple sources. Through the GPPAC International Secretariat, WANEP established partnerships with the German and Norwegian Governments through their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The willingness of Governments to support civil society peace building efforts is a good indication of the appreciation of the impact of peace building activities at track two level.

The year under review was full of activity and very rewarding. Whereas the challenges to human security, peace and stability persists in West Africa, there is increasing resolve and determination by civil society actors to collaborate, develop joint activities to prevent and transform violent conflicts. This is manifested in the collective actions of members of the WANEP Network. It is therefore with profound gratitude that we celebrate the efforts of all member organizations as WANEP prepares to celebrate 10 years of peace building work in West Africa. We equally recognize and appreciate the work of other civil society networks we have been collaborating with.

We are most grateful to the Government of Finland for their support to WANEP. Through the GPPAC International Secretariat, we thank very much the contributions of the Governments of Norway and Germany for sustaining efforts at peace building in West Africa. We sincerely thank USAID-West Africa Mission for their support and partnership in the implementation of ECOWARN. CORDAID throughout the years stood by WANEP and supported its institutional sustainability and program development. We continue to be very grateful. We are also grateful to the Ghana Research and Advocacy Project for institutional support to the Regional Secretariat. In 2007, WANEP worked with several partners who provided funding for various peace building activities. While we appreciate the support of all these partners, special mention goes to Oxfam Great Britain for the WIPNET program in the Mano River Union (MRU) countries, Oxfam Novib for WANEP-Nigeria's WIPNET programs, IBIS West Africa for the Justice Lens program and the West Africa Human Rights and Democracy Project. The others

are Catholic Relief Services for the USAID Capacity Building Program and GTZ for the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute. From the national to regional levels, WANEP collaborated and worked with UN agencies including UNDP-Ghana, UNDP-The Gambia, United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSL), UNIFEM, UNICEF and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

With deep sense of gratitude, WANEP continues to appreciate its partnership and the work with the ECOWAS Commission and directly with the Observation and Monitoring Center (OMC) of the Department of Political Affairs, as well as Peace and Security. The opportunity for CSO-ECOWAS collaboration at several levels and with various CSOs in West Africa has proven invaluable in lessons learnt and accomplishments made. Through the toil and commitment to promote peace, may the people of West Africa experience peace and prosperity in all aspects of human development.

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