



WEST AFRICA PEACE AND SECURITY REPORT

Quarter 2 (April – June 2019)

WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING (WANEP)

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

1.0 Introduction

Within the second quarter of 2019, the security landscape of West Africa witnessed a number of attacks from various violent extremist groups operating in the region. The critical concern in the quarter is the security deterioration in Burkina Faso and the southward spread of attacks with threats to neighbouring Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Additionally, violent extremists in Mali, Niger and Nigeria continue to target security installations, farming communities, schools, religious places, markets and transports. Community and ethnic violence were also prominent in the north of Nigeria, northern Ghana and central Mali. Furthermore, cases of kidnapping, armed robbery, rape and other sexual and gender-based violence were recorded across the region.

In the governance space, protests, labour agitations and political uncertainties continue to feature in Togo, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Nigeria. In Benin, the introduction and implementation of the *certificate of conformity (Certificat de Conformité)* led to significant reduction in citizens participation during the legislative election of April 28, 2019. This has increased political tension and post-election violence in Benin. State-citizens relations also continues to wane as a result of dwindling public trust and confidence in the capacity of institutions of States in the region to respond to the socio-economic and political concerns of the citizens. Furthermore, recurrent public protests and demonstrations expressing discontent over Governments' limited response to basic socio-economic needs were prominent across the social media in the region. This also continues to strain political stability and social cohesion in ECOWAS member States.

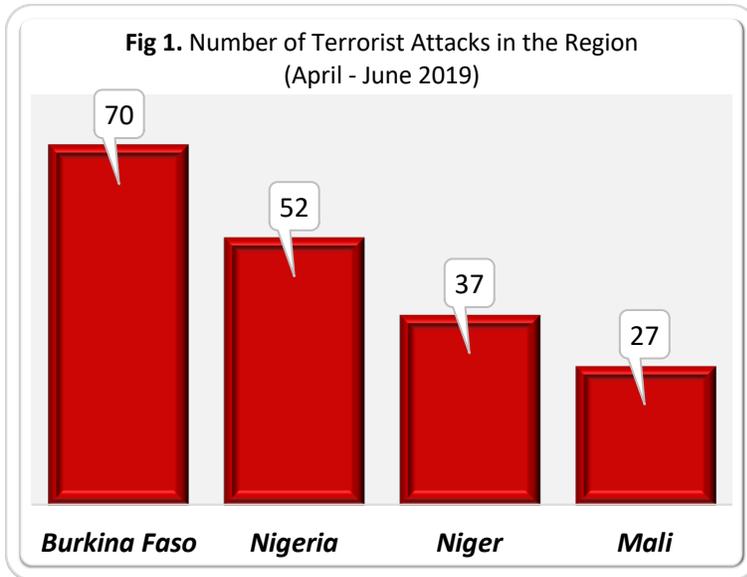
Increased environmental security issues such as improper disposal of plastics, contamination of water bodies, illicit logging of rosewood predominantly in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Senegal and Guinea were also recorded in the quarter. Flooding and windstorm remained an environmental security challenge in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Mali. The omnibus effect of these incidents recorded in the second quarter of the year is reflected in increased fatalities, injuries, destruction of properties, influx of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in communities.

The second quarter 2019 report provides analysis on key human security and governance challenges in the West Africa. It further provides recommendations for response and mitigation.

2.0 Organized Crimes and Violent Extremism

The region continues to witness increased incidents of violent extremism and armed attacks. The cumulative violent extremist attacks recorded in Burkina, Mali, Niger and Nigeria in the second quarter is 186, representing 38 percent increase in the frequency of incidents when compared to the first quarter report of 135 incidents¹.

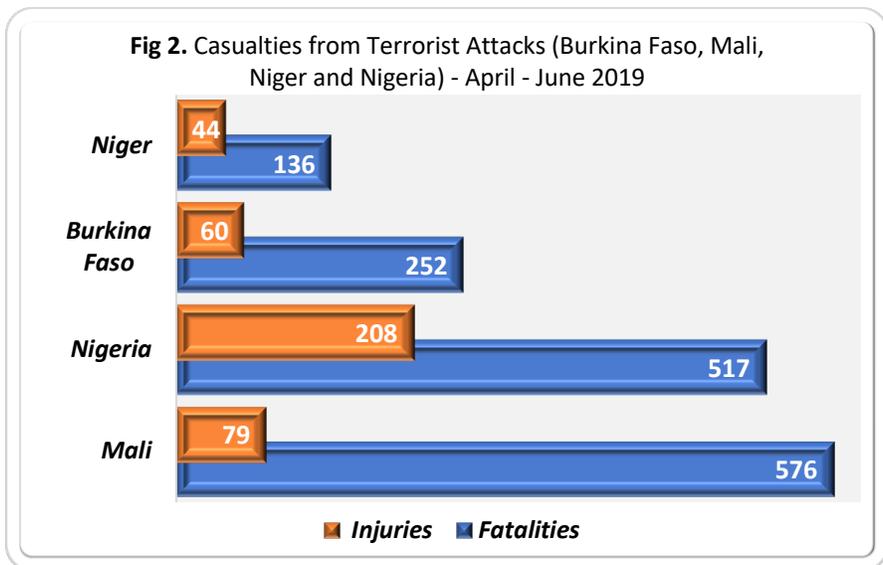
¹ WANEP NEWS (January-June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 29/07/2019).



The emergence of splinter groups and creation of new alliances with redefined Modes of Operation such as ISIS in the Greater Sahel (ISGS), ISIS West African Province (ISWAP) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), has galvanized the potency of attacks and impact on affected countries. Burkina Faso recorded high frequency and spread of attacks by violent extremist and armed groups. Security posts, churches, schools, mining communities and local authority representatives such as chiefs, religious leaders, teachers

and opinion leaders from the North, East and North-Central Regions were the main targets of extremist groups. Second quarter data from WANEP NEWS recorded a total of 70 attacks with 252 fatalities and 60 injuries². Comparing this to the 63 attacks recorded in the previous quarter, it reveals increase in the trend of extremist and terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso.

This has resulted in declaration of state of emergency in 14 out of 45 provinces since the beginning of 2019 by the Burkinabé Government³. Also, frequent attacks in the country has resulted in nearly 220,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugee flow to neighbouring countries⁴. According to the Ministry of Education, as of May 2019, 1933 schools were closed, depriving 326,152 school children access to education and 9042 teachers affected⁵. This



²Ibid

³ See <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/248426/burkina-faso-state-of-emergency-extended-in-14-provinces-july-11-update-4> (Accessed 30/07/2019).

⁴See <https://netafrique.net/burkina-faso-pres-de-220-000-personnes-deplacees-internes-a-la-date-du-10-juillet-2019/> (Accessed on 30/2019).

⁵See <https://netafrique.net/burkina-de-2015-a-2019-283-attaques-terroristes-ont-fait-524-morts-bilan-officiel/> (Accessed on (30/07/2019)).

has heightened vulnerability of children to child labour, especially in illegal mining sites, early marriage, and recruitment by terrorist and violent extremist groups in the country. The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) has revealed that about 700,000 adolescent and young children are involved in illegal small-scale mining in the Sahel Central – North, West, Central and Central Plateau regions⁶. Furthermore, incidents of targeted armed attacks by violent extremist groups in churches located at Soum, Loroum, Sanmatenga and Bam provinces are viewed as a potential catalyst for inter-religious conflict and exploitation for spreading violent extremism in the country.

The southward movements and attacks by terrorist in Burkina Faso have led to growing security concerns of the potential risks of attacks and exploitation of coastal areas of West Africa by extremist groups especially Benin, Ghana and Togo. The concerns are justified by the economic attraction and benefits for organized criminal groups presented by coastal areas of West Africa along the Gulf of Guinea which is



already challenged by insecurity from piracy, illegal oil bunkering, kidnapping, attacks on vessels and smuggling of arms, drugs and contrabands. At the Northern Regions of Ghana, there has been a growing influx of refugees fleeing extremist attacks in Burkina Faso. Between January to June 2019, over 2000 Burkinabé refugees, mostly women and children have been registered and settled in communities including Tumu-Navrongo, Wuru, Kwapun, Banu, Pido, Kunchorkor and Basian in the Upper West Region⁷. The ripple effect of this movement is already manifesting in escalating tensions between host communities and refugees over competition for limited farmlands, water and food⁸. Additional security concerns have been raised by the arrest of an armed Burkinabé in a Roman Catholic Church in Hamile in the Upper West region on June 2, 2019⁹. Another Burkinabe was also arrested at the Ghana-Burkina Faso border with a locally manufactured pistol and several rounds of ammunitions in Hamile when he attempted to illegally

⁶See <http://www.arabnews.com/news/546916> (Accessed on 29/07/2019).

⁷WANEP NEWS (Weekly Highlights from Ghana, 13-19 May 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 30/07/2019).

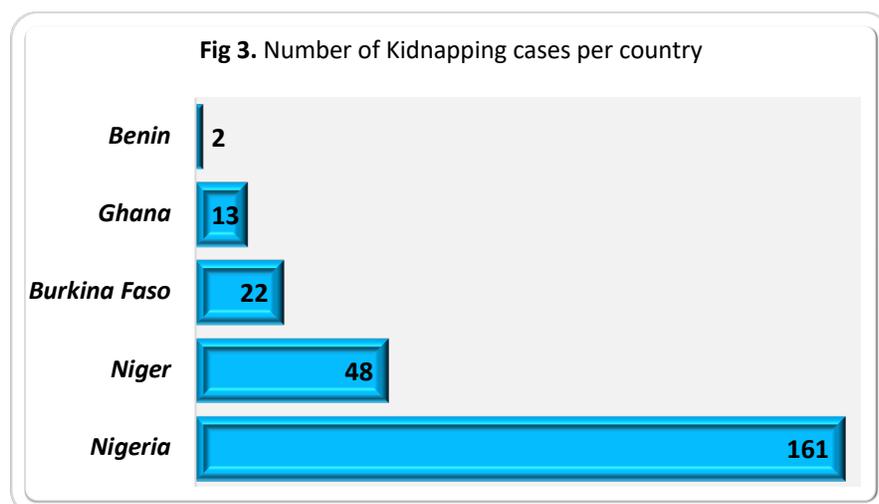
⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

cross into Ghana on June 5, 2019¹⁰. These trends indicate Ghana's potential vulnerability to violent extremism.

Again, Nigeria recorded 52 terrorist attacks which led to 517 deaths and 208 injuries in Yobe, Borno, Benue and Adamawa States of the North Eastern zone of the Country¹¹. In Niger, 37 incidents of cross-border attacks by Boko Haram resulted in 136 fatalities and 44 injuries¹². Niger also hosts 166,000 Nigerian refugees and 121,000 Nigerien IDPs¹³. Mali recorded 27 terrorist attacks in the quarter with a death toll of 567 and 79 injuries¹⁴. The fatalities recorded are mainly due to reprisal ethnic attacks between the Fulani and Dogon ethnic groups in Central Mali in March and June 2019 respectively. Emerging trends from attacks in Mali suggest exploitation of ethnic divisions and tensions by extremist groups to perpetuate violence in local communities. Over 800 schools in Mali have been closed down since January 2019, affecting over 250,000 school children¹⁵.

Incidents of kidnapping is another critical security challenge in the quarter. Nigeria recorded 161 kidnapping cases mainly in Adamawa, Borno, Yobe and Zamfara of the North-Eastern Region¹⁶.



In Niger, 48 cases of kidnapping of women and children were recorded in Diffa and Tillabéri regions¹⁷ while in Burkina Faso a total of 22 cases of kidnapping were reported in the East, Sahel, North the Central-North and Boucle du Mouhoun Regions¹⁸. The emerging trend of kidnapping and organized crime in the

region is gradually affecting countries less prone to these crimes such as Ghana and Benin. Between April and June 2019, Ghana has recorded 13 cases including two Canadians in the Ashanti, Greater Accra, Northern, Easter, Upper East and Central Regions¹⁹. The trend emerging in crimes, particularly kidnapping, suggests alliances and collaboration between internal and external organized crime networks in carrying out their operations. The same was noted in Benin

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹WANEP NEWS Nigeria (January – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 30/07/2019).

¹²WANEP NEWS Niger (January – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 30/07/2019).

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴WANEP NEWS Mali (January – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 30/07/2019).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶Op. cit. WANEP NEWS Nigeria.

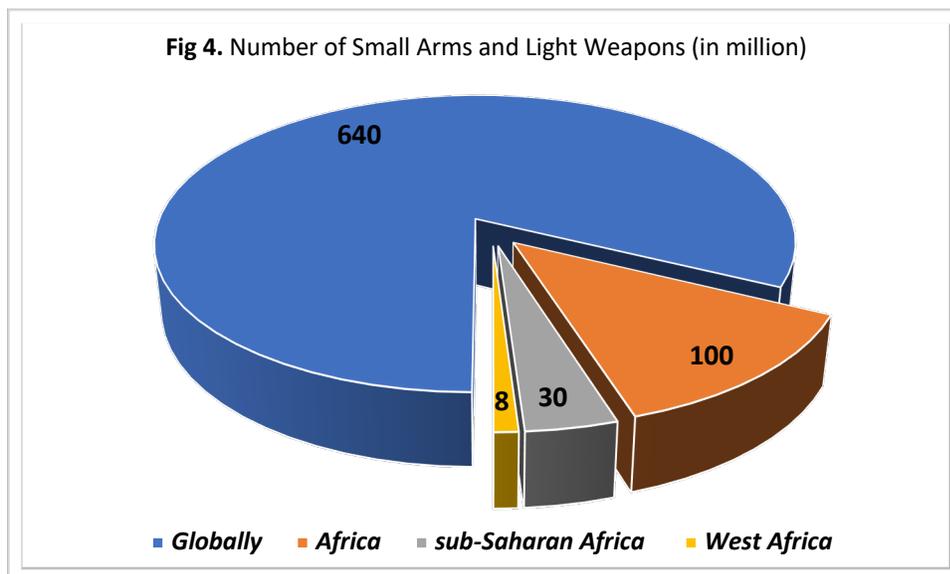
¹⁷Op. cit. WANEP NEWS Niger.

¹⁸WANEP NEWS Burkina Faso (January – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 30/07/2019).

¹⁹WANEP NEWS Ghana (January – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 30/07/2019).

in the kidnapping of two French tourists and a tour guide in Pendjari Forest²⁰. Analysis suggests that kidnapping is increasingly becoming lucrative for organized crime networks operating in the region.

In addition to this, proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa is another contributing factor to the growing security threats in the region.



Available data on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) reveals that out of the 640 million SALW circulating globally, an estimated 100 million are found in Africa, and about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and eight million in West Africa, alone²¹. This has implications on the

stability of the region, as extremist and armed groups continue to have access to weapons for their operations. A complex mix of organized crime and violent extremism exposes the region as a veritable ground for insecurity, instability and the spread of violent extremism in Central Africa.

Communal violence, human trafficking, sale of human organs, armed robberies, chieftaincy, ethnic and land disputes were also recorded in the quarter. In particular, intra and inter-community ethnic violence were preponderant mainly in Nigeria, Mali and Ghana. Between April and June 2019, 142 deaths were recorded in communal and ethnic violence in Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi, Cross River, Taraba, Benue, Bauchi and Anambra States of Nigeria²². In Mali, the Dogon and the Fulani ethnic group land dispute of March 2019, resulted in the death of 160 people, mostly women and children²³. A reprisal attack in June 2019 led to the death of 141 people in three Dogon communities of Sobane-Kou, Ouadou and Kerekere²⁴. Recurrent ethnic clashes between the Chokosi and Konkomba ethnic groups in Chereponi, Saboba District, North East region of Ghana from March to May 2019 also resulted in three deaths and over 2,600 people displaced²⁵. In June 2019, three people also sustained injuries from gunshot wounds triggered by a protracted chieftaincy dispute in Bole Bamboi of the Savannah region²⁶. The trend emerging

²⁰WANEP NEWS Benin (January – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 30/07/2019)

²¹ See <https://allafrica.com/stories/201802220192.html> (Accessed on 2/08/2019).

²²Op. cit. WANEP NEWS Nigeria.

²³Op. cit. WANEP NEWS Mali.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Op.cit. WANEP NEWS Ghana.

²⁶Ibid.

from ethnic and inter-communal violence recorded in the quarter indicates issues of chieftaincy conflict and competition for natural resources such as land, are the key causative factors.

Furthermore, drug trafficking and piracy continue to feature in the security landscape of the region. Drug trafficking – tramadol, opioid, codeine, amphetamines and cocaine - among others through the Gulf of Guinea is linked with armed groups and terrorism in the West African-Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria)²⁷. Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde continue to serve as the transit points for drug trafficking mainly from Latin America to Europe²⁸. For instance, in the first half of the year 2019, Cape Verde Police seized 9.5 tons of cocaine bound for Tangiers and Morocco on a Panama flagged vessel²⁹. There are also cases of marijuana cultivation and use predominantly by youth population mostly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea³⁰. With regards to piracy, there have been 22 cases of attacks in the Gulf of Guinea³¹. Additionally, 21 crew members of various vessels were kidnapped across five separate incidents in Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo³². The activities of pirates and drug traffickers on land and territorial waters of countries in the Gulf of Guinea are not only potential sources of increased violence and conflicts, but also safe corridor for terrorist attacks on economic activities in the region.

2.1 Key Resilient Factors

- Multi-lateral cooperation and partnership meeting was organized by the United Nations Office for Drug and Crime (UNODC) Sahel Programme in Dakar, Senegal between 24 and 26 April 2019. Participants from Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Chad, Senegal, Libya Morocco, Mauritania, UNODC and G5 Sahel defence and security experts discussed strategies to enhance partnership in curbing increased crimes and violent extremism in the Sahel. The meeting resulted in establishment of Security Cooperation Platform to collect security information at the national level and exchange at the regional level for early response and mitigation of threats;
- The Governments of Ghana, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger are making efforts to counter the spread of violent extremist attacks. This is evident in regular security discussions in the first half of the year 2019, including a meeting called by President Akuffo Addo of Ghana with his counterparts from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, to enhance prevention and mitigation of terrorist and extremist threats, particularly in the coastal areas of West Africa. This has led to deployment of security personnel in border communities and other strategic points in the countries;
- There has been continued public education in the mainstream media and other social media platforms on terrorist and violent extremist threats in the region. The Media and Civil Society have been engaging the citizenry on terrorism awareness and preparedness,

²⁷See United Nations Office for Drug and Crimes (UNODC) West and Central Africa, <https://www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/index.html> (Accessed on 6/8/2019).

²⁸Institute of Security Studies (ISS), 'Can Cape Verde Keep Drug Traffickers Out?'. June 2019. Available at: www.issafrica.org (Accessed 6/8/2019)

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰WANEP NEWS (April – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 6/8/2019).

³¹WANEP, 'Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Is the Coastal Territory of West Africa the New Weak Link?' Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 6/8/2019).

³²Ibid

especially in Ghana. One such example is a recent two-day training (held from July 24 to 25, 2019) organized by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) for Government officials, religious leaders, media, private sector, women and youth groups to enhance resilience against extremist threats in the region;

- In Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari has ordered the Police Service to adopt community policing as key component of strategies to curb rising insecurity in the country. This will help strengthen civil-police relations and human security in communities in Nigeria.

2.2 Recommendations

- The Intelligence Units of National Security Agencies of States in West Africa should sustain and intensify intelligence cooperation and intelligence sharing to address the surging threats of terrorism and transnational organized crimes in the sub-region;
- The national peace infrastructure and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should strengthen partnership and collaboration to enhance community resilience to mitigate the threats to human security.

3.0 Governance and Democracy

The governance and political landscape of the region is faced with electoral reforms dogged by controversies, disputed legislative elections, protests, demonstrations, tensions and political uncertainties. In Benin, the introduction of the mandatory *certificate of conformity*³³ by the Constitutional Court in February 2019 as a requirement for political parties to contest in the April 28, 2019 legislative election led to political demonstrations and violence. While Benin has made tremendous progress in multi-party democratic governance since the early 1990s, the implementation of the *certificate of conformity* and changes to the electoral code obliging political parties to pay CFA 250 million (USD \$450,000) to file candidates limited the space for political participation. This resulted in the low turnout of 27.12 percent of voters in the 2019 legislative election compared to 65.88 percent in the 2015 legislative elections³⁴. The sharp decrease in voter turnout with a difference of 38.76 percent indicates broader rejection and dwindled interest in the electoral process. It also reveals mistrust on the part of voters and opposition parties in the electoral system. The omnibus effect was the 38 demonstrations recorded across the country in the quarter³⁵. This has contributed to strained state-citizens

³³The *Certificate of conformity*: It is the fact of the Decision N ° EL19-001 of the 1st February 2019 of the Constitutional Court of Benin.

³⁴Inter-Parliamentary Union. Benin national Assembly. Historical Archives of Past Elections. Available at: www.archive.ipu.org/parlile-e/reports/2033_E.htm (8/8/2019).

³⁵WANEP NEWS (Monthly Bulletin, April – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 8/8/2019).

relations which has the potential to trigger further demonstrations, strikes and boycotts that would heighten tensions and violence that could affect the political stability of the country.

Additionally, the reported period recorded cases of demonstrations and protests. Between April and June 2019, a total of 267 incidents of demonstrations were recorded in the region³⁶. The demonstrations recorded in the period were mainly opposition parties, labour unions, religious, students and community protests against political exclusion, manipulation of



*Benin: Public protest following disputed Legislative Election
Credit: www.tellerreport.com
(June 22, 2019)*

constitutions, poor working conditions and inadequate social services in rural and urban centres. The trends in demonstrations and protests reveal the use of social media to rally support for civil agitations and demand for political reforms and improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the people. Furthermore, a new form of peaceful demonstration emerging in Burkina Faso is the *mood movement* – where public workers resort to down tools as a way to register their discontent with poor conditions of service and draw the attention of State authorities for reforms. While recurrent demonstrations in the region show increase public awareness on issues of governance and increased space for political participation, it also reveals continued mistrust and waning of State-citizens relations. Given the current surge in the activities of armed and violent extremist groups, as well as criminal networks in the region, dwindling confidence and mistrust among the population are exploitable fault lines that could aggravate States fragility.

There are also preparations towards a cycle of high-stake presidential, legislative and local elections in 2019 and 2020 in the region. While Burkina Faso and Ghana will hold both presidential and legislative elections, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Togo will organize only presidential elections in 2020. Similarly, Guinea Bissau is scheduled for presidential elections in November 2019. In addition to this, Senegal will hold legislative elections while Ghana will also organize local elections in 2019. Undoubtedly, these elections have the potential to enhance democratic governance and stability in the region. However, there are concerns regarding the electoral processes among the stakeholders. In Burkina Faso, for instance, the introduction of the 2015 electoral code excludes people perceived to be supporters of the attempts by Blaise Compaoré to amend the Constitution in 2014. This continues to be a source of simmering tension between opposition parties and the ruling Government ahead of the 2020 elections. Given the

³⁶WANEP NEWS (April-June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 8/8/2019).

current security deterioration in the country and rising political tension between the Government and opposition parties, there are concerns about the ability of the State to effectively organize the 2020 elections.

In Ghana, the Electoral Commission (EC) is preparing towards the District Assembly elections in 2019 and Presidential as well as Legislative elections in December 2020. In preparation for the 2020 elections, political parties have commenced primaries for parliamentary candidates. Unlike legislative elections which is conducted on party lines, District Assembly elections are non-political as established by the National Constitution and preparations are underway to conduct the election in December 2019. In addition, while the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) are political appointees, the Government has activated a process to amend clauses in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana to pave the way for the election into these positions. The EC has set December 17, 2019, for a national referendum as part of the process leading to the amendment. In as much as this has the potential to enhance local and inclusive governance, it could also heighten political tension and violence in the conduct and management of local elections in Ghana.

Continued disagreement and political stalemate between the Government and opposition parties over constitutional and electoral reforms in Togo are also a worrying concern in the body-politic of the country. Despite the concerns raised by the opposition, the Independent National Electoral Commission conducted the local elections on June 30, 2019. Unlike the legislative elections in December 2018, the opposition participated in the local elections and won 595 seats against 895 by the ruling Government³⁷. Although there has been recent amendment in some Articles of the 1992 Constitution, especially Article 59³⁸, which restores the presidential term limit to five years renewable once, a sticking point remains between the Government and the opposition over the non-retrospective nature of the law. This means that the incumbent president, Faure Gnassingbé, is legally permitted to run for another two terms till 2030. The opposition disagreement with this provision foreshadows heighten tensions and violence in the country in the lead up to the 2020 elections and beyond.

The lingering political imbroglio in Guinea Bissau also continues to exacerbate tension in the country. The National Assembly adopted a resolution on June 27, 2019, authorizing its president, Cipriano Cassama as interim Head of State on grounds that the mandate of President José Mario Vaz expired on June 23, 2019³⁹. Meanwhile, President Vaz continues to hold office as the incumbent. The constitutional crisis, coupled with lack of breakthrough in mediation efforts continue to affect governance effectiveness and stability in the country. The seeming attempts by President Alpha Condé of Guinea to amend the presidential term limit enshrined in the National Constitution is leading to political uncertainties in the country. Similar to this, the current political development in Cote d'Ivoire is also a cause for concern in the quarter. Internal political wrangling in the ruling political party, the Rally of the Republicans (RDR) and concerns about the possibility of President Alassane Ouattara to amend the Constitution in order to extend

³⁷See <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-48895390> (Accessed on 21/08/2019).

³⁸Article 59 of the 1992 Constitution of Togo stipulates that "the President of the Republic shall be elected by a Universal Suffrage in two rounds for a term of five years renewable once. An amendment of this provision may only be made by a referendum".

³⁹See <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-48795775> (Accessed on 9/8/2019).

his term in office is leading to rising political tensions in the country. The emerging trend observed in the governance landscape across the region of constitutional, amendments extending presidential term limits and introduction of electoral codes that limit political participation indicate potential retrogression of gains made in multi-party democracy and governance in line with the ECOWAS supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of 2001⁴⁰.

Rising political tension in The Gambia and Sierra Leone is another pertinent issue in the period of reporting. In The Gambia, the disagreement among the members of the ruling coalition, headed by President Adama Barrow is having an impact on the political and social cohesion of the country. The Coalition arrangement in December 2016 stipulated a three-year transitional government and allows fresh elections in 2019. However, this arrangement contravenes section 63 (1) of the 1997 Constitution which stipulates a five-year tenure. While the President has declared his intension to abide by the mandate of the Constitution, some members of the Coalition are disgruntled. This has led to series of protests mainly within the President's United Democratic Party (UDP) strongholds that has resulted in violence. In the case of Sierra Leone, disagreements between the ruling Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP) and the main opposition All Peoples' Congress (APC) over the Commission of Inquiry probing the former administration on corruption allegations is exacerbating political crisis which manifested in inter party violence in a recent bye-elections in the country. The APC accuses the Government of constitutional violations and intimidation of opposition supporters.

3.1 Key Resilient Factors

- The Truth, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission (TRRC) and the National Human Rights Commission are key institutions contributing to transitional justice and social cohesion in the Gambia;
- Even though there is a stalemate in the dialogue and mediation process in Togo, the coalition of civil society groups, G7 continues to monitor the political situation, release statements to condemn acts of violence and regularly share its perspective on the situation with stakeholders and international partners. This space for civil society is utilized to highlight issues and concerns of citizens to actors within and outside the country for response;
- The increased demand by citizens across the ECOWAS Member States for inclusive governance, improvement in social services, economic conditions, respect and protection of human rights through mainstream and social media platforms is opening up the political space for civic articipation and awareness on national issues;
- The ECOWAS, AU and UN are concerned about the need for Governments to create space for inclusive participation in governance, respect for national laws, regional and international conventions and protocols that promote good governance, human rights

⁴⁰ The ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was adopted in December 2001 by the Heads of State and Government as supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999).

and sustainable development. The ECOWAS and AU Protocol on Democracy and Governance and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are actions that indicate the commitment of intergovernmental organizations in promoting inclusivity and participation in governance.

3.2 Recommendations

- The Governments should strengthen and sustain dialogue with labour unions and other social interest groups to address issues related to conditions of service of public servants or employees, especially in Burkina Faso, Guinea, The Gambia and Liberia;
- The Governments of Benin, Burkina Faso and Guinea should increase space for inclusive engagement and dialogue with political parties and other relevant stakeholders on constitutional and electoral reform processes;
- ECOWAS and UNOWAS should continue to engage political stakeholders in Guinea on the impeding constitutional review in order to address the disagreements surrounding the process.

4.0 Gender, Peace and Security

The growing insecurity in the region in the quarter continues to have impact on women and girls. The attacks by violent extremist and armed groups have contributed to the flow of refugees as well as internal displacement of people, mainly women, girls and children in Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Niger. Since the beginning of 2019, approximately 50 percent of the 236,000 people internally displaced in Burkina are located in the Sahel region, of whom 85 percent are women and children⁴¹. Furthermore, 18 health facilities and nearly 250,000 people, mainly women and children had no or limited access to health services⁴². Transfer of patients has also become difficult due to unavailability of ambulances as well as limitations caused by the State of Emergency, particularly in the 14 provinces and other administrative divisions in the Sahel and the East regions⁴³. This has implication on the health security of pregnant women, nursing mothers as well as children who require access to healthcare in the affected areas of the country.



*Women and Children displaced from Burkina Faso seek asylum in the Bawku West District in Ghana
Credit: www.ghanaweb.com*

⁴¹See <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-growing-insecurity-dg-echo-un-echo-daily-flash-21-august-2019> (Accessed on 04/09/2019).

⁴²The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), *Mixed Movements in West Africa*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/69961.pdf> (Accessed on 13/08/2019).

⁴³Ibid.

Similar effect was recorded in Nigeria where armed attacks have driven more than 80,000 civilians to seek refuge in camps at Borno State, Nigeria. Already, 250,000 people have been displaced from northeastern Nigeria since the beginning of the year 2019⁴⁴. Moreover, according to UNICEF report, in May 2019, for instance, almost 900 children including 106 girls recruited into the ranks of an anti-Boko Haram militia, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Maiduguri in the northeast of Nigeria were released by the local militia⁴⁵. Insecurity in the



Displaced women and children received relief materials in Yola, Nigeria

Credit: www.peaceinsight.org

North and Central Mali has also led to the shutdown of 800 schools, affecting almost 250,000 children many of whom are girls⁴⁶. The increased cases of displacement and refugee flow in the affected countries have led to loss of economic livelihoods of women and predisposition to health hazards as well as violence from extremist and various armed groups. Such conditions also continue to deny children access to education, entrenched child labour as well as recruitments into extremist and armed groups.

Again, between April and June, 2019, nine recorded cases of female suicide bombers were used by Boko Haram and Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States of North Eastern region of Nigeria⁴⁷. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), one in every five suicide bombers is a child and 75 percent of them are girls⁴⁸.

There were also recorded cases of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone recorded over 1966 cases of sexual assaults against women and girls in the first half of the year 2019⁴⁹, resulting in varied physical injuries, unwanted pregnancies, Sexually Transmitted Diseases and stigmatization which affects the education and health of women and girls in communities⁵⁰. The trend emerging in sexual violence cases, particularly rape against children is that a number of the victims end up in prostitution. Also, perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone are mainly members of

⁴⁴See <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/05/10/africa/boko-haram-children-freed-intl/index.html> (Accessed on 13/08/2019).

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Op. cit. UNHCR, 2019.

⁴⁷WANEP NEWS. April – June, 2019.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Rainbow Initiative, www.facebook.com/rainbowinitiative (Accessed on 10/08/2019).

⁵⁰*The Calabash*, '21% of Prostitutes in Freetown are Children'. Available at: <https://thecalabashnewspaper.com/sierra-leone-news-21-of-prostitutes-in-freetown-are-children-news-report-says/> (Accessed on 15/2019).

the families, teachers and elderly men in the communities of the victims⁵¹. In Liberia, 33 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were recorded within the last six months⁵². While most of the victims of such violence are girls, the perpetrators are family members and other men in communities mostly within the ages of 35 and above⁵³. Guinea also recorded 10 cases of rape against girls in the quarter⁵⁴. The involvement of family and community members in SGBV reveals a decline in social protection values and increases risk of women and girls to violence in communities.

4.1 Key Resilient Factors

- The Government of Sierra Leone has revoked the state of emergency on rape and other sexual violence declared in February 2019. However, there has been a review of the Sexual Offences Act 2012 by the Parliament to include among others life sentence for sexual penetration of minors and 15 years of imprisonment sentence for sexual assault against women and girls;
- The Legislature of Liberia has also passed the Domestic Violence Law to address the issue of rape and other forms of violence against women. In addition, the Government, United Nations and other development partners continue to invest in sexual and gender-based violence units located in the Police Service and Government ministries to investigate sexual abuses and violence as well as established specialized courts to deal with such crimes in Montserrado County in the North-West⁵⁵. Medical and support services to victims of sexual violence have also been established in seven counties in the country⁵⁶.
- The Government of Burkina Faso, since the commemoration of the 2019 International Women Day, has commenced engagements with women groups to enhance their capacity through training in an effort to curb SGBV in the country;
- The advocacy work of *Club des Jeunes filles Leaders de Guinée* has been important in raising awareness on issues affecting young women in communities of Guinea. The group has been involved in engaging the Government, women and girls' networks, media and internal partners in creating voices for females in the country.

4.2 Recommendations

- The Governments and humanitarian organizations in Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Niger should improve gender sensitive facilities including healthcare, food and non-food items supplies for IDPs and refugees in camps. This should also include building trust between host communities and refugees as well as improving security, education and skills enhancement facilities, especially for women and children in the camps;
- West African Governments, through the ministries and agencies responsible for women and children affairs should support and work with women groups and networks to

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²WANEP NEWS (Liberia Monthly Census). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed 15/08/2019).

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴WANEP NEWS (Guinea Monthly Census). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed 15/08/2019).

⁵⁵Amnesty International, *Liberia 2018/2019*. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/liberia/report-liberia/> (Accessed on 15/08/2019).

⁵⁶Ibid.

develop or review National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 to integrate strategies on women’s role in preventing violent extremism as well as gender and sexual-based violence;

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should intensify advocacy and engagement with Women and youth leaders as well as social networks at the community levels to enhance awareness and understanding of issues affecting women and girls and the appropriate channels for reporting of abuses.

5.0 Environmental Security

Despite efforts made in the area of environmental protection and sustainability in countries across the region, the reporting period recorded cases of flooding, wind and thunder storms, plastic waste pollution and illicit logging, especially mangroves and rosewoods. Incidents of torrential rainfall resulting in flooding were recorded in Nigeria and Ghana. Nigeria recorded 26 cases of rainstorm and flooding with 24 fatalities and 34 injuries in Abuja, Borno, Edo, Bauchi, Delta, Kwara, Lagos Oyo, Sokoto Taraba and Zamfara States⁵⁷. In Ghana the impact of rainstorms and flood led to 23 fatalities predominantly in the Ashanti, Greater Accra, Bono East, Western and Upper East regions⁵⁸. Recurrent flood in countries of the region is attributable to weaknesses in enforcement of environmental regulations, city/town planning, poor drainage systems and waste management.

Plastic waste also continues to threaten the environment and human security within the region. Despite growing concerns about the phenomenon of plastic waste, it is increasingly degrading biodiversity particularly in coastal communities that depend on marine resources for livelihood. Indiscriminate disposal of plastic waste clogs drainages and water ways and increases the risk of flooding and outbreak of waterborne diseases such as malaria, cholera and diarrhea.

The challenges of waste management are further aggravated by lack of capacity of West African



Plastic waste: A major environmental Challenge in West Africa
Credit: www.ipsnews.net

States to properly regulate or recycle plastics. It is estimated that more than 8 million tonnes of plastic waste end up in the ocean every year, destroying marine wildlife, fisheries and revenue from tourism. Plastic pollution has been estimated to cost at least US\$ 13 billion in damage to marine ecosystems in the

⁵⁷ WANEP NEWS (Nigeria Monthly Bulletins April – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 19/08/2019).

⁵⁸ WANEP NEWS (Ghana Monthly Bulletins April – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 19/08/2019).

region⁵⁹. In Ghana, for example, 5,700 tonnes of polyethylene (about 70,000 plastic bottles) are produced every month with only 2 percent recycled while 98 percent finds its way to dump sites, drainage pipes and water bodies⁶⁰. Also, 2.58 million metric tonnes of raw plastics are imported into Ghana annually, of which 73 percent end up as waste, while 19 percent is reused⁶¹.

The phenomenon has contributed to the depletion of fisheries which has led to a recent imposition of ban on fishing activities in coastal communities from May and July 2019. While this is not an institutionalized mechanism, it is an option often used when there is realization of low fish harvesting in coastal communities. Data available indicates that fishermen in Ghana harvest less than 20,000 tonnes of fish a year while the historical maximum has been between 120,000 – 130,000 tonnes per a year⁶². In a situation where the decline of yield over a particular period is less than 10 percent of the historical maximum, it suggests depletion of resources and its associated consequences, especially on the value chain of fish trading in the country⁶³. The Gambia also generates 2500 tonnes of waste every year, of which 70 percent are organics and plastics⁶⁴. Inadequacies in the capacity of the country to recycle most of its plastic waste has led to pollution of its water bodies and coast lines. Given that tourism contributes 20 percent to The Gambia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), poor waste management has the potential to strain the dividends from the tourism and hospitality industry. Already, fishing communities are affected by the increased depletion of water and sea resources, especially lobsters which is becoming extinct partly due to poor waste management.

Illegal logging and smuggling of rosewood also featured prominently in Ghana. Despite the ban imposed on logging of rosewood by the Ghana Forestry Commission, between 2018 and 2019, about 200 containers of rosewood mainly from the Kalakpa Resource Reserve in Abutia in the Volta Region were illegally smuggled out of the country to the international market⁶⁵. According the Forestry Commission's report, between 2012 and May 2019, a total of 300,368.94m³ rosewood products have been exported outside the country, with a round wood



Rosewood logs: Among the threatened plan species in Ghana
Credit: www.image.shutterstock.com

⁵⁹See <https://thebftonline.com/2018/top-headlines/only-2-of-plastic-waste-generated-is-recycled/> (Accessed on 20/08/2019).

⁶⁰WANEP. *Ghana: Current Peace and Security Dynamics in Perspective*. June 2019. Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 20/08/2019).

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴See <http://www.recyclingwasteworld.co.uk/in-depth-article/big-waste-issues-in-little-gambia/86487/> (Accessed on 20/08/2019).

⁶⁵*The Ghanaian Times* 'Illegal Felling, smuggling of rosewood: 200 Containers Shipped Out'. Thursday, June 20, 2019. No. 18,639. Available at: www.ghanaiantimes.gh (Accessed on 20/08/2019).

equivalent of 385,845.50m³, which translate into 257,230 trees⁶⁶. Rosewood is known to be a hard timber species which takes more than 100 years to mature and also not cultivated but grow by themselves. With this, the increasing depletion of the timber suggests deforestation and depletion of biodiversity which increases the vulnerability of Ghana to environmental insecurity. One of the negative impacts of illegal felling of rosewood is the inability of local communities to use the leaves and the stem cover for their traditional medicinal purposes. As a result, protests have been organized by local community against the authorities of the Kalakpa Reserves in Abutia which has caused uneasy tension.

5.1 Key Resilient Factors

- The increased global conversation on plastic waste and its impact on environment and human security has generated awareness, especially in West Africa where most countries are vulnerable to the risk of climate change. This has led to the development of a regional framework, *The Abidjan Convention*⁶⁷ and national policies aimed at addressing the varied threats to biodiversity in the region;
- The plastic waste pollution in the region has also triggered national discourse on banning or taxing the use of non-degradable plastics in West Africa. For instance, some countries such as Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria have enacted laws restricting the use of plastics. There is also an ongoing national conversation on banning or introducing a levy on plastics in Ghana and other countries of the region;
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations and the media in the region have built coalitions to influence policy and raise public awareness on environmental and human security.

5.2 Recommendations

- ECOWAS, should adopt and harmonize the *Abidjan Convention* with other regional frameworks and national laws on the environment in order to enhance synergy and coherence in the implementation and mitigation of existing and emerging threats to the environment;
- West African States should review and strengthen existing environmental laws, policies and institutions and enhance enforcement of regulations;
- West African Governments should explore innovations and new technologies that encourage multiple use of plastics to reduce plastic waste;
- The Governments, CSOs, NGOs and the Media should intensify engagement with communities to ensure awareness and local participation in the designing, implementation and monitoring of environmental policies including afforestation, reforestation and strengthening local structures for environmental protection.

⁶⁶See <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2019/August-7th/forestry-commission-disputes-bbc-report-on-rosewood-trade.php> (Accessed on 20/08/2019).

⁶⁷*The Abidjan Convention* – is designed to ensure protection, management and development of the marine and coastal environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region.