

GENDER connect

GENDERConnect is a monthly publication of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) desk of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). It chronicles WANEP's interventions and initiatives in its efforts towards actualizing the WPS commitments across the region.

This edition is dedicated to interventions undertaken across the WANEP Networks to tackle Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

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SENSITIZATION ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE BY WOMEN ACTIVISTS IN COTE D'IVOIRE

Let's Talk: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence!

In 2015, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 19 June of each year as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. This was a significant milestone in the continuous efforts to tackle SGBV, raise awareness on the need to end conflict-related and other forms of sexual violence, to honour the victims and survivors around the world and to pay tribute to the heroines and heroes who devoted their lives to speak up against SGBV.

The date was also selected to commemorate the adoption of UNSCR 1820 on 19 June 2008. The Resolution condemns sexual violence as a tactic of war, an impediment to peacebuilding and a threat to international peace and security. Concerned with the devastating impact of Sexual Violence on the lives and livelihoods of victims and their families, the United Nations Security Council further adopted Resolution 2467 on 23 April 2019 which articulates a survivor-centered approach to the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres on the occasion of the 2020 International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence commemorated on June 19 called for support for SGBV survivors.

"On the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, we must hear the survivors, and recognize their needs and demands. They are mostly women and girls, but also men and boys, calling for our support to access life-saving health services, justice and reparation."

It has become imperative to shed more light on the scourge of sexual violence more so with the rise in domestic violence and other forms of sexual violence against women in this COVID 19 era. In this wise, this edition of **GENDERConnect** is dedicated to the best practices and lessons learnt by WANEP in its implementation of SGBV initiatives.

Town Hall meeting: WANEP-Nigeria in collaboration with other CSOs have been raising awareness on Gender-Based Violence in communities in Lagos State, Nigeria



TACKLING THE SCOURGE OF SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, WANEP is utilizing various platforms such as the Peace Huts in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire to address issues of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) across the region. The Hut provides a safe space for women and serves as psychotherapy and healing centre for victims and survivors of SGBV. It is also a platform for skills acquisition where grassroots women acquire skills in bead making, sewing and other handicrafts to get them economically empowered in order to mitigate against the risk of sexual violence.

WANEP-Liberia through the Peace Huts has been monitoring SGBV cases to ensure that victims get speedy justice. In 2019, out of the 163 rape cases recorded, 75 were effectively prosecuted. In 2017, a total of 105 women were trained on psycho-social support and are currently providing trauma counselling and psycho-social support to survivors and victims of SGBV in their respective counties.

WANEP-CI has put in place focal points in



Focus Group Discussion on strategies for tackling SGBV in Cote d'Ivoire

the communities to support SGBV victims to report promptly and is also using young 'gender-champions' to conduct awareness on the issue.

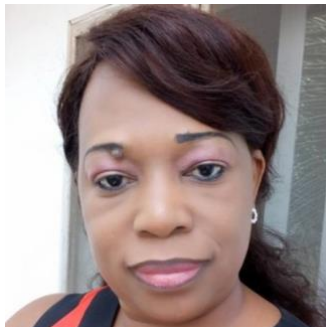
WANEP-Guinea is utilizing a Mentorship strategy to empower young women and equip them with skills to understand and contribute to the fight against SGBV. A database of young women and women professionals has been created to provide a space for experience sharing and mentoring.

WANEP-Sierra Leone has built capacities of community women leaders to

advocate and raise awareness on SGBV across the country. Despite the enactment of the Three Gender Acts of 2007 and the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 to prevent sexual and domestic abuse, Sierra Leone continues to experience a disturbing rise in SGBV. President Julius Maada Bio recently declared rape and sexual violence a "National Emergency" and imposed life imprisonment for perpetrators.

WOMEN MAKING CHANGE: VOICES AGAINST SGBV

SENEGAL: Ms. Cécile Senghor, a founding member of the WIPNET programme of WANEP-Senegal is a women's rights advocate.



The English teacher

turned activist is no stranger to gender issues.

As a schoolteacher, she used her platform to advocate for increased enrolment of young girls and keeping them in school. In 2010, she served as the electoral adviser and gender focal point at the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI), during the presidential elections of Côte d'Ivoire. Ms. Senghor is currently engaged in sensitizing communities in her country on the impact of COVID 19 from a gender perspective.

SIERRA LEONE: Madam Rosseta Sovula, fondly called "Mama Gender" is a



passionate campaigner for the prevention of SGBV and protection of victims and survivors. As a key

beneficiary of the WANEP Women Peace and Security trainings, she used the knowledge gained to train women and men on SGBV issues across the country.

An ardent gender activist, Madam Rosseta took part in the development of the landmark 'Three Gender Act' of Sierra Leone. Madam Rosseta devotes her time to counselling women on SGBV issues and supporting women with Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF). As the Vice President of Women's Forum, she has been championing collaboration with men as allies in pushing for women and girls' rights.

NIGERIA: Ms. Priscilla Usiobaifo is the Executive Director of The BraveHeart Initiative for Youth and Women (BHI), a member organization of WANEP Nigeria. She has been championing



the fight against SGBV in Nigeria over the years with a string of successes. Efforts of her organization led to the successful conviction of a 75-year-old man for the rape of a 10-year-old girl without option of fine and the 14 years imprisonment of a 40-year old man who defiled a 14-year old epileptic girl living with disability. Her interventions also led to the conviction and 14 years imprisonment of a 27-year-old man for the defilement of a five-year-old girl.

COTE D'IVOIRE: Mrs. Djamala Akissi Jacqueline aged 50, housewife with 5 children is a beneficiary of the Peace Hut facilitated by WANEP-Cote d'Ivoire. As a victim of domestic violence in the hands of her husband, she was so traumatized to the extent of wanting to commit suicide. 'My husband beats me for no reason,' she says. According to her, 'since my arrival at the hut and with the help of the counsellors, many things have changed in my life!' She is encouraging other victims to go to the Peace Huts where they can acquire skills to know their rights and how to protect themselves from abusive men!

