



UNDP, WANEP and ECOWAS launch a gender-sensitive project for inclusive governance and peaceful transitions

The three partners are joining efforts to accelerate the women, peace and security agenda in the Sahel

Bamako, 28 October 2020 -- About 50 participants from across the ECOWAS region gathered together today at the Sheraton Hotel in Bamako, Mali, for the high-level launch of the UNDP-funded project *"Building an Inclusive Approach to Post-Covid-19 Recovery, Crisis Recovery and Governance Reforms in the Sahel"*.

The event was chaired by Honorable Iva Denoo, Charge d'Affaires of the Ghana Embassy in Mali and attended by dignitaries such as His Excellency Moctar Ouane, Prime Minister of the Government of Mali; Her Excellency Finda Koroma, Vice-President of ECOWAS; Her Excellency Giovanie Biha, Deputy Special Representative, UNOWAS; Her Excellency Bineta Diop, the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security; and Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, the UNDP Regional Director for Africa, participated in the event virtually.

Also in attendance were Ambassadors to ECOWAS from Mali, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Niger; distinguished partners from SIDA, ADA, DANIDA, EU, and USAID; members of the diplomatic corps; and representatives from MINUSMA, G5-Sahel, UN WOMEN, WANEP, the African Women Leaders Network, and members of the CSO community among other dignitaries.

With \$1.5 million provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Programme for Africa, this project is a joint initiative of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UNDP. It aims to strengthen systems and structures that empower women, at local and national levels, as essential actors in governance, peace, security and development in Mali, as well as inclusive and peaceful political transitions in Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Prior to the launching ceremony, the Regional Working Committee, chaired by the ECOWAS Vice President Her Excellency Madam Finda Koroma, held its first meeting on Tuesday, 27 October 2020. In attendance were WANEP's Regional Project Team and National Secretariats, and ECOWAS and UNDP representatives involved in the project implementation. This working session aimed to define the modalities for the implementation as well as the monitoring and evaluation benchmarks of the project in order to guarantee its success.

The project is premised on the fact that if inclusive governance is enhanced and socio-economic considerations are prioritized for vulnerable groups at the national level, then community resilience will be sustainable, peace and development consolidated, and social cohesion maintained in the Sahel and by extension, in the entire ECOWAS region.

The project also builds on the growing global movement that women should be actively engaged in decision making processes, participate in political transitions, and actively involved in national reconciliation processes.

The project is further informed by the prevailing insecurity, socio-economic and humanitarian crises in the Sahel countries, reinforced by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and takes into cognizance the consequences of the recent Malian crisis, which constitutes additional threats to the fragile political systems and security of bordering countries such as Niger, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.

The intertwined issues of security and political crises reveal the complex and multilayered challenges that threaten peace, stability and development across the region with implications for

societal well-being at all levels, especially for women who suffer inter-sectional social inequalities.

The *Building an Inclusive Approach to Post-Covid-19 Recovery, Crisis Recovery and Governance Reforms in the Sahel* project seeks to:

- Mobilize and create platforms for women's collective actions and contribution to governance and political transitions;
- Increase women's participation in electoral processes and contribution to the reduction of electoral violence;
- Facilitate women's engagement in policy dialogues and influencing;
- Support women's strategic responses for positive impacts;
- Promote an evidence-based advocacy through researching.

Bamako, 28 October 2020.