

[Extracted from WANEP Annual Report, 2009]

2009 was a significant milestone for the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). At the regional level, WANEP concluded the celebrations of its 10th anniversary with a special General Assembly. The opportunity to celebrate also provided space for institutional introspection. At the time of its founding, West African civil society peacebuilding practitioners engaged in working with conflict were very few. While a few international organisations mainly operating from Europe worked on West African conflicts, the programs designed were unsustainable as there was little local ownership, expertise and institutional capacity of West Africans to sustain peacebuilding efforts. The story today is different. Peacebuilding in West Africa is largely locally driven. West African Governments have now integrated peacebuilding in some of their departments and ministries. From both the national to regional levels, responding to conflicts has been significantly transformed with more emphasis on prevention.

More men and women have acquired professional training and expertise from the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) of WANEP and are active practitioners in various organisations. New peacebuilding organisations have emerged including exclusively women peace organisations founded out of WANEP's experiences, programs and activities. In very humble ways, WANEP is gratified to be associated with these positive developments, while increasing its resolve and commitment to enhance local West African indigenous capacities for conflict prevention.

During its 10th anniversary general meeting in January 2009, WANEP constituted a professional board moving away from a board structure that was founded mainly on the basis of representation of the national networks. At national level, the networks will follow suit to complete a restructuring process that began in 2007. While annual general meetings are maintained at national level, the WANEP General Assembly at regional level will be henceforth convened bi-annually. The WANEP constitution was reviewed and adopted with key amendments. At the institutional level, WANEP is now a professional peacebuilding organisation with high institutional capacity to engage in Partnerships with Governments. Out of such institutional development, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with WANEP for another five years 2009-2014, a testimony to ECOWAS' trust in WANEP's leadership to be the civil society lead agent in the operationalization of ECOWARN; the ECOWAS early warning system. At national levels, WANEP has developed rapidly and continues to consolidate itself in response to numerous challenges around conflict prevention in communities. The program Early Warning and Response Design Support (EWARD) started during the year under review with funding support from USAID. The program is increasing the capacity of WANEP member organisations

to respond to violent inter and intra-communal conflicts. It is also sustaining the institutional capacity of WANEP to ensure the smooth operationalisation of ECOWARN.

The success of WANEP program designs and implementation over programs and the organisation. In this effort, WANEP is being considered for the Africa Program of the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA) to strengthen civil society collaborative efforts with the African Union and ECOWAS. Similar exploratory talks were held with the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA). WANEP during the period under review undertook important activities at the invitation of some key partners. We highlight some of such activities in this report. Under the framework of the Africa Alliance for Peacebuilding which brings WANEP, the Africa Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and the Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa in active Africa peacebuilding collaboration, WANEP participated in the observation of the South African general elections in April 2009. The observation mission coordinated by ACCORD at the invitation of the State Legislature of Kwa Zulu Natal monitored political intimidation and intolerance as part of the elections in the Kwa Zulu Natal Province. In partnership with InWent, a German training organisation, WANEP organised and co-facilitated a specialised training for ECOWARN Focal Point Persons as part of the implementation of the ECOWAS early warning system - ECOWARN. WANEP was invited by the Catholic Relief Services to provide expertise in the setting up of a viable early warning system for the Peace Commission of the Government of Southern Sudan. During the last quarter of 2009, WANEP Executive Director was invited as a Papal delegate in the capacity of auditem (expert) to the Second Special Assembly of African Bishops at the Vatican in Rome. The special synod was convened by the Holy Father under the theme "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace". While the experience with the Bishops and their deep level of commitment and engagement was unique, an invitation to such a special gathering demonstrates that WANEP's work in the peacebuilding field continues to be appreciated outside the borders of West Africa. From its experiences of a regional network organisation, WANEP is sought to share experiences in the establishment of similar peacebuilding networks in Africa particularly, in helping to establish and enhance the Regional Network for Resource Based Conflict Prevention in Eastern Africa (RBC-Network); through cross expert training, knowledge exchange and Joint program implementation. WANEP also continues to play a leading role in the efforts of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflicts (GPPAC) of which the Executive Director of WANEP is the current Chair.

WANEP seizes the opportunity in presenting its 2009 annual report to underscore again our profound gratitude and thanks to all our funding partners for their generosity, support and encouragement. We acknowledge and appreciate the support of our funding partners at the national level in each West African country. While we cannot list all their names, we note particularly the Government of Finland through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ECOWAS, USAID, IBIS-West Africa and the Government of Denmark as well as CORDAID, German Technical Cooperation-GTZ and the Ghana Research and Advocacy Project (G-RAP). Thanks to all the good will and generous support to WANEP, civil society is contributing significantly to the positive developments of conflict prevention in West Africa. There is nothing more dignifying

than being able to resolve one's own problems. We thank our partners for their support in this effort.

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For the Management Team