

ECOWAS 804



*Parliamentary Centre
Le Centre parlementaire*

**CELEBRATING 40 YEARS: ENGAGING PARLIAMENTS,
PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**



Report of the Workshop on the
“Operationalization of the ECOWAS Peace Exchange”
Saly, Senegal March 17-19, 2009

Overview of Program: The ECOWAS Community was created in 1975 with the main objective of improving the standard of living of its member-state citizens through economic integration and social development. These ideals were however challenged due to several destructive conflicts in the West African sub-region within the past two decades. Some of these conflicts manifested as prolonged civil wars in Liberia (1989, 2003), Sierra Leone (1990, 2001), Guinea(1997, 1998), and Cote d'Ivoire (2002,2004).

However in December 1999, encouraged by their resulting unparalleled experience in conflict management, peace keeping and conflict resolution, the Heads of States and Governments unanimously signed the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace keeping and security. This protocol is to address political and structural causes of violent conflicts, elections and accession to power, decentralization of power and participatory democracy, poverty alleviation, human rights etc, the Heads of States and Governments of ECOWAS also adopted a supplementary protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in 2001.

A major and significantly relevant component of the Mechanism is the establishment of a sub-regional peace and security observation system known as the “Early Warning system”. The “Early Warning system” is charged with the responsibility of monitoring and reporting conflicts and early warning signs in all member-states to the Authority of the Heads of States and Governments through the President of the ECOWAS Commission.

The ECOWAS Commission in 2001 therefore set up the Early Warning Department (EWD) which operated the first module, with its zonal bureaus in accordance with the provision of the 1999 Protocol with the following milestones till date.

- The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Civil Society West Africa Network on Peace Building (WANEP) specifying modalities of an implementing partnership.
- Productions of a bulk of 94 specific indicators to be monitored. Done in consultations with various conflict(s) prevention stakeholders.
- Development of the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) reporter and online database

- Development of the ECOWAS Peace Exchange (formerly Exchange Bulletin in partnership with WANEP)
- The enlisting of 30 focal points per country one for civil society
- The production of early warning reports

Training Content: This first module ended in 2008 and in the implementation of its 2009 work plan, the EWD launched the second module of the ECOWARN in Saly, Senegal. The three days meeting comprised of intensive practical sessions to acquaint participants with the operation of the module.

These were practical sessions on a developed online database forum for the exchange of commentaries, narratives and unstructured observations between the field reporters, other identified civil society organizations and expert institutions.

The initial development done in partnership with the first implementing partner WANEP and the Consultant firm Urban Guru Ltd, United Kingdom at the initiation of the Early Warning System along with the ECOWARN has ended and the second module is more geared towards larger civil society participation. The exchange would further complement the ECOWARN qualitatively.

The implementation of the First Peace Exchange was however stalled by the department due to:

1. Prioritization of the ECOWARN Operationalization
2. Stalling of funds from the sponsoring agency USAID to the ECOWAS-WANEP programme
3. Lack of technical support from consultant Urban Guru Ltd.

Objectives

Thus the objective of the training for the second module recognised the challenges from the first and set out to add value to the early Warning department.

The EWD intends to reinforce its capacity in analysis by gathering experts and stakeholders in conflict prevention within the sub-region for this workshop in re-

initiating Operationalization of the Peace Exchange, at a broader and more inclusive level as a point of departure in strategy from the first module.

1. Sensitization of stakeholders at all levels (national, grassroots) on the ECOWAS Peace Exchange
2. Develop a framework of implementation for the Peace Exchange in harmony with the current operational ECOWARN Reporter
3. Review and clear classification of the various themes and components for focus
4. Identify relevant actors, agencies and participants for sourcing of information into the Peace Exchange
5. Agreement on a final format
6. Development of a sound platform to add to the data collection architecture

Participants included representatives from UNOWA, UNHCR, UN Field Missions, Civil Society-WANEP, WACSOF, and local experts who have been contributing to the system.¹

Evaluation of the Program and Learning for ECOWAS Project

The participants spanned a variety of expertise including governance, politics, health, elections, HIV/AIDS, MDGs, capacity building initiatives, conflict resolution, judiciary, and legislature amongst others who were work on early warning with regards to conflicts caused by these issues.

For the first time, the issue of parliaments and their capacity to be proactive in early warning was added to the indicators that will be analysed for the module. As well, it was recognised that, others should always filter in information on how their parliaments are doing into the database to help in monitoring issues in the sub-region.

The discussion and inputs into the module on this level of reporting was facilitated by PC. It was also an outright recognition of the work PC has been doing in the area

¹ **UNOWA**-United Nations Office for West Africa
UNHCR-United Nations High Commission for Refugees
United Nation (UN) Field Missions,
WANEP-West Africa Network for Peace Building, **WACSOF**-West Africa Civil Society Forum

of promoting the role of parliaments in conflict prevention and management with the ECOWAS Parliament and showcasing that parliaments indeed should be given the opportunity to lead on this in the sub-region.

Thus, this also bolsters the contribution that PC is making to the work at the ECOWAS Parliament and helped to establish linkages with the UNOWA Office who are keen on collaborating with PC.

The UNOWA office commends the Centre and looks to collaborating with us in other programs and sharing their experience on working with the ECOWAS Parliament and Commission, specifically, they look to participate in the next training and will help to develop the strategic plan being envisaged for the ECOWAS Parliament in conflict prevention and management.

This training also provide the project with practical tools for analysing events at country levels and sub-regional levels for research; including translation services, country level analyses and current trends on conflicts in the sub-region as they happen.

Appendices

- Copy of Agenda
- Invitation letter