

PERSPECTIVES ON WEST AFRICA'S FUTURE

**CONFLICT SECURITY AND
DEVELOPMENT FELLOWS 2007-8**

**HUMANITARIAN FUTURES PROGRAMME
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON**



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Foreword

The challenges associated with access to security and development in West Africa are well known. These range from the abject destruction caused by civil wars that have resulted in collapse of state institutions; acrimonious inter-group relations that have deposited numerous pockets of societies in a state of “neither peace nor war”; economic stalemates with poverty levels and incidences reaching newer heights; the peril of environmental degradation from wide ranging sources; the negative fallout of power plays in the global political economy; youth vulnerability and exclusion; gender relations in a state of quandary; and the dominance of livelihoods that are determined on the basis of elite based systems. These are among many of the characteristics that almost became sub-regional trade-marks during the 1980s and 1990s and that have brought the region to the tribunal of international opinion.

As such, the subsequent experiences of the inhabitants of the West African sub region over the last two decades require the support of the broadest constituency to ensure socio-economic development, security and political stability in this part of the African continent. Two conclusions seem to have emerged from the experiences of the region in the last two decades: first is the need to increase the “predictive capacity” of the region in foreseeing security and development challenges to the extent that is possible; while the other is to have the capacity to meet the identified challenges with effective policy actions.

The most resonant lesson of the post-cold war period is that these challenges cannot be tackled along national borders, particularly in an increasingly globalised world. There must therefore be the resolute commitment to regional solutions to address these challenges and to support the process of creating a secure and stable sub-region in this new century. In this endeavour it is essential that all stakeholders of the West African community are engaged in addressing these challenges in a holistic and consultative manner. For too long, discourse aimed at addressing the security and development challenges of the region has been the preserve of the minority, who often claim superior knowledge and expertise on the anatomy of the region’s problems. There is growing recognition that we must return to the drawing board as this expertise has failed to alter the reality of the vast majority of West African citizens. The exclusion of key constituencies, including West African women and youth, can no longer be acceptable as necessary for moving the sub-region forward. These groups, among others, have experiences of West Africa’s security and development challenges that are no less valid than the renowned expertise of the day.

It is against this background that the new initiative between the Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP), the Conflict Security and Development Group (both at King’s College London) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) can be appreciated. The papers written here are by West African CSDG Fellows on the CSDG/ ECOWAS Peace and Security MA Studentships and Mentoring Programme. The papers identify key issues that take a short look into the long future of West African security and come up with policy prescriptions. Most significant is the reality that this is a collaboration between academia in King’s College London, the voices of West African youth and expertise residing in the CSDG Fellows and West African policy making structures in the sub regional organisation, ECOWAS. This collaboration exemplifies what must be pursued vehemently to ensure that West Africa changes its own course by engaging the wealth of its human resources across a broad constituency of actors in West Africa with rich and full empirical knowledge of their sub-region.

CSDG
June 16 2009

Introduction

The following research papers are authored by five Fellows of the Conflict Security and Development Group (CSDG) / ECOWAS mentoring programme who were tasked to write for a joint publication of the Humanitarian Futures Programme (HFP) and the CSDG at King's College London, on aspects of West African conflict prevention and disaster management from a futures perspective. These papers provide a stimulating and wide-ranging snapshot of how young West African academics think about West Africa's future. They outline the causes and consequences of some of the real challenges facing West Africa and highlight what ECOWAS should be cognisant of in planning 'from the future'. By drawing on the fellows' wider research with CSDG and their experience in work placement with the Commission in Abuja or the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeper Training Centre (KAIPCTC) in Accra, these papers are intended to promote speculation on emerging issues within ECOWAS.

The aim is to commence a dialogue on each of the themes in line with the initial findings of research conducted by the HFP in 2008-09 on the potential drivers of humanitarian crises, including violent conflict, in the ECOWAS sub-region during the 2020s (*Beyond 2020: Crisis Drivers in West Africa's Future* – HFP Publication, May 2009). The focus of this research was to propose ways for ECOWAS to think about crisis drivers in the longer term and speculate systematically about their interrelationship and humanitarian consequences.

The themes in the research papers range from an examination of emerging trends and consequences on the **Interface between Disaster Risk and Conflict, to Climate Change in West Africa, from a Gender Perspective**, to proposing a more proactive role for the **ECOWAS Council of the Wise in Averting Humanitarian Crises**, the need to pay more attention to the rising phenomenon of **Xenophobia in the ECOWAS sub-region** and crucially a plea for the better **Management of Water Bodies in West Africa** as it impacts upon food security and future inter-state conflicts.

These themes are also central to the mandate of the HFP, which is exploring novel ways for institutions and governments to adapt to fundamental global changes by, inter alia, promoting dialogue between a broad range of scientists and humanitarian policy makers on issues of future vulnerability, as well as evolving scientific learning and innovative technologies that could enhance responses to future crises.

In his paper on **Interface between Disaster Risk and Conflict in West Africa: Emerging Trends, Future Consequences and present threats to sustainable development**, Okey Uzoechina argues that if progress made by ECOWAS in kick-

starting and coordinating development initiatives in Member States is to be sustained, there needs to be a shift from 'compensatory disaster risk management' to 'prospective disaster risk reduction'. His paper examines the progress made so far in articulating an ECOWAS Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction; the adequacy of the implementing structures such as the ECOWAS Emergency Response Team (EERT); the need for and the benefits of developing an interactive Disaster Risk Index (DRI) for geographically-defined hazards in West Africa used to inform policy options, prediction and response to disaster; and how DRR can be mainstreamed into ECOWAS' medium- and long-term development policy. He places this in the context of some of the negative development indicators that are likely to increase vulnerability to hazards and natural disasters, such as:

- Deforestation, which may lead to flooding during increased rainfall, then to soil erosion and possible malaria outbreak. Linked to this, drought may lead to crop failure where there is no irrigation, subsequently to increases in food prices, and potential famine.
- Demographic trends may lead to overcrowding in newly-occupied areas, thereby increasing the risk of epidemics and undermining access for relief efforts during emergencies. This also ties in with a potentially increased imbalance in rural-urban development and proliferation of urban slums/shanty towns with no access to clean water, poor sanitation and ventilation.
- Reduced individual coping capacity due to the devastating effects of armed conflict, high poverty, and increasing unemployment levels (70% of the West African population living on less than US\$2 a day can ill afford first aid, preventive drugs, mosquito nets, clean water or blankets).
- Inadequate public commitment and investment to enhance state resilience to hazards by establishing disaster management structures and improving primary health care delivery.

He proposes four components for early warning systems: (a) hazard detection, observation and forecasting; (b) warning formulation; (c) warning dissemination; and (d) response to warnings. To form a buffer against the trickle-down effect of the global economic recession on vulnerable societies in West Africa and the potential drying-up of emergency relief and humanitarian aid from international agencies and donor countries, ECOWAS's policy and initiatives will have to support and sustain local and national initiatives and coping mechanisms, both at the national and regional levels.

In her paper on **Climate Change in West Africa: the Gender Cultural Perspective of the Threat to Agriculture and Food Security**, Patricia Jallah-Scott explores the gender dimension of the impact and threat of climate change on agriculture and food security in the ECOWAS region. She examines some of the threats posed by climate change for agriculture and food security and on the socio-economic existence of the primarily female rural population.

She argues that most women are heads of household and have maintained their social and economic status in society through their substantive contribution to the agricultural sector. Climate change could pose a major threat to their social, cultural, economic and physical wellbeing. Yet, the management and control of agricultural investments and risk reduction mechanisms seems to exclude women. The apparent disconnect between policy makers and beneficiaries poses a serious threat to achieving policy goals. This is illustrated by the lack of women participating in policy and programme development. This paper concludes that there is a need to develop and implement a gender-cultural risk reduction and adaptation strategy to climate change that addresses the constraints faced by women in the agricultural sector in a pragmatic way. It also emphasises the need for a proactive initiative that targets all stakeholders in the area of policy development in order to generate a more holistic and achievable regional approach to the looming crisis.

Climate change and environmental degradation also have major impact on the ability to access and use water in West Africa. Ebenezer Asiedu's paper **The management of water bodies and its impact on future security in the ECOWAS sub-region** explores how water bodies are managed amongst member states of the West African sub-region and what should be done to address the dissipation of water and accompanying environmental degradation. He argues that inadequate access to water is a potential crisis driver and could give rise to inter-state conflicts.

He surmises that instead of allowing water stress to become a cause of regional and state conflicts, West Africa should adopt the use of water management mechanisms as the driving force for regional cooperation and integration. An interstate agreement on the management of major lakes and rivers within the sub-region could provide long-lasting benefits to all member states, in line with ECOWAS' mission.

With increasing dissipation of major water bodies due to growing demands for both domestic and industrial use, as well as agricultural and energy needs, the present situation poses real threats to security within the region. Most adjoining countries rely on trans-boundary water bodies to meet their water needs. Poor water management represents a risk both for intra-state and inter-state relations. The misuse of water resources within individual countries may compromise water provision to supply food and health needs. Disputes and

subsequent inter-state conflicts over water usage could have debilitating social and political effects within the whole region. Furthermore, the current situation is likely to inflame sentiments over the use of transboundary water resources and could directly impact on the relations between member states and efforts towards regional cooperation and integration.

The paper concludes that these are early warning signals for ECOWAS, which may still appear intangible. The situation can and should be contained before it engulfs the region. Indeed, the energy crisis experienced by some West African countries (Ghana, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Niger, etc.) between late 2006 and most of 2007 presents is a case in point. This crisis came about as a result of poor management of available water resources leading to water scarcity, which then affected not only farming but also the major dams that provide hydro-power.

Salama Njie's paper on **The role of the ECOWAS Council of the Wise in Averting Humanitarian Crises** explores the concept behind establishing the Council of the Wise, and its mandate in mediation, reconciliation and management of conflicts in West Africa. She argues that the Council should adopt a more proactive stance in determining emerging conflicts and engage in preventive diplomacy to anticipate and limit political instability, which for the author has been the main cause of humanitarian crises in West Africa. The Council is an innovative tool and ECOWAS members could use it to champion changes in their respective countries, given that the main remedy to the numerous crises in West Africa is to put in place an appropriate set of political and conciliatory measures.

In regard to humanitarian disasters, the emphasis should be on developing a culture of 'disaster preparedness' in and for high-risk countries, on both the theoretical and practical level. In this regard, the Council of the Wise should collaborate closely with the ECOWAS department of humanitarian affairs to develop effective early-warning systems. Furthermore, it will be vital that the Council of the Wise ensures that the Protocol on Good Governance is implemented as it would alleviate the injustices perpetrated by many West African leaders on their own citizens, especially the poor.

This last point is well illustrated by Jimam Lar's paper **Free Movement, Migration and Xenophobia in ECOWAS: A Case for more attention**, where he highlights the emergence of 'xenophobic' trends in West Africa by identifying and analyzing some of the factors that have contributed to historical and current migration trends across the sub-region. He uses this as a starting point to assess the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. He questions to what extent ECOWAS' futuristic objective of transformation from a 'community of states' to a 'community of people' is actually practiced at the national level. This is important as the success of the Protocol is a pre-condition for achieving sub-regional integration.



Whilst national borders exist, evidence clearly shows that the 'invisible boundaries' of linguistic and ethno cultural identity' are extremely powerful and can undermine national identity. The cross border movements of communities living on borders of neighbouring countries is a product of historical cultural affinities, such as with the Ewe, Yoruba, and the Hausa on the Ghana/Togo, Nigeria/Benin and Nigeria/Niger borders respectively. A prominent recent example of xenophobia within the sub-region is the much reported 'ivoirité' policy (Ivoirians first), which advocated for a realignment of the rights of those considered as immigrants in theory and policy in Côte d'Ivoire. This has been broadly viewed as one of the causes for the country's civil war.

He concludes that when a situation deteriorates, due to, for example, political uncertainty, social disintegration, economic down turn, employment crises, etc, immigrants become easy targets of attack. International migration and xenophobic tendencies are not new phenomena in West Africa, but there are strong indications that these tendencies are indeed on the rise. Political choices need to be made and carefully crafted and coordinated policies can assist in bringing ECOWAS citizens on board to drive and support the

implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement and the Rights of Residence. This is crucial at a time when West Africa like other regions in the South is beginning to feel the effects of recent economic downturns. Co-operation among Community Member States and their citizens could make the difference between the last time major West African economies relapsed and now.

Humanitarian Futures Programme
Kings College London
June 2009

INTERFACE BETWEEN DISASTER RISK AND ARMED CONFLICT IN WEST AFRICA: EMERGING TRENDS, FUTURE CONSEQUENCES, AND PRESENT THREATS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Okey Uzoechina

Introduction

In the quest for sustainable development within the ECOWAS region, policy attention as well as funding allocation and operational support has focused overwhelmingly on peace and security, thereby inadvertently confining other equally important but less demonstrably relevant concerns such as disaster risk reduction (DRR) to a blind spot. Disaster risk is measured by the extent to which people and infrastructure are vulnerable to hazards. A hazard is a potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon or human activity which may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption and environmental degradation. Ironically, the increase in natural disasters, hazards, human vulnerability, and the humanitarian consequences of conflict in the region in the last three decades have served to slowly but surely place human security and human development on the front burner, highlighting an indisputable link between conflict, disaster and underdevelopment.

Conflict increases exposure to environmental hazard, human vulnerability, epidemic diseases, crop failure and loss of livelihood. It may also lead to adverse demographic reconfiguration with unregulated flows of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In turn, disasters occurring in the aftermath of conflict lead to particularly acute humanitarian crisis, especially with the weakening of the governance structures and the state's capacity to provide public goods (for instance, quality health care) to its citizens. This precarious state of affairs poses a clear and present danger, and necessitates exceptional measures that enhance not only coping capacity in the aftermath of disaster, but that also establish multi-tiered and cross-cutting institutional adaptive capacity, both at the national and regional levels.

Whereas conflict prevention and conflict resolution are now the buzzwords in ECOWAS peace and security policy, the risk of disaster—which poses an equally important challenge to development—is yet to be mainstreamed into ECOWAS development policy. Scarce attention has been paid to the potential of DRR as a tool for structural (long term) conflict prevention. Against this backdrop, this paper advocates a paradigm shift from compensatory disaster risk management to prospective disaster risk reduction if the progress made by ECOWAS in kick-

starting and complementing development initiatives in Member States is to be sustained. The paper examines: the progress made so far in articulating an ECOWAS Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction; the adequacy of the implementing structures such as the ECOWAS Emergency Response Team (EERT); the need for and the benefits of developing an interactive Disaster Risk Index (DRI) for geographically-defined hazards in West Africa used to inform policy options, prediction and response to disaster. Finally the paper will look at the next steps in mainstreaming DRR into ECOWAS' medium- and long-term development policy.

The Disaster Crisis: Development at Risk

Anecdotal evidence suggests that disasters triggered by natural hazard events have increased in occurrence and severity in the West African region, particularly in the Sahel zone, over the last three decades. The Sahel humanitarian crisis, arising from climate change, desertification, food insecurity, malaria, meningitis and measles, now severely affects parts of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Although 154 disasters were recorded in the first five years of this decade compared to 136 during the past two decades, this increase may be attributed to three contributory factors, namely:

The negative trend of climate change leading to increase in incidents, severity and/or duration of droughts, floods, famine, locusts invasion, crop failure, tropical cyclones, and the overflow of river banks and beaches in coastal areas due to rise in sea level.

The demands of population growth and rapid urbanisation leading to depletion of natural resources and degradation of the environment (deforestation, overgrazing, and pollution) thereby creating a leeway for soil erosion, desertification and epidemic diseases.

Increased disaster risk awareness and improved monitoring, data collection and information-sharing capacity, thereby leading to better records of disaster events (although, this still falls short of systematic disaster risk indexing and mapping).

However, what is beyond doubt is that the human,

environmental and material consequences of these disasters have increased exponentially, pointing to a corresponding increase in human vulnerability in the region. Lagos, host to 60% of the industries in Nigeria, is rated one of the 20 most vulnerable cities in the world. Sadly, vulnerability to hazards and natural disasters in the region will only worsen given negative development indices, such as:

- The degenerative quality of some disasters: deforestation may lead to flooding during increased rainfall, then to soil erosion and then malaria outbreak; drought may lead to crop failure where there is no irrigation, then to increases in food prices, and over time famine.
- Negative demographic trends which, on the one hand, may constitute distancing from disaster prone areas but, on the other hand, may lead to congestion in newly-occupied areas, thereby increasing the risk of outbreak of epidemics and undermining access to relief efforts during emergencies.
- Heavy imbalance in rural-urban development (e.g. access to amenities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, schools and industries) resulting in rural-urban drift and proliferation of urban slums/shanty towns with no access to clean water, poor sanitation and ventilation.
- Reduced individual coping capacity due to the devastating effects of armed conflict, high poverty, and increasing unemployment levels (70% of the West African population living on less than US\$2 a day can ill afford first aid, preventive drugs, mosquito nets, clean water or blankets).
- Inadequate public commitment and investment to enhance state resilience to hazards by establishing disaster management structures and improving primary health care delivery.

Haunting imagery from Richard D. Kaplan's incisive article, *The Coming Anarchy* written over a decade ago easily comes to mind. The interplay of disaster, conflict and development in parts of sub-Saharan Africa leads to what is now called "complex emergencies", a phenomenon that continues to daunt humanitarian and developmental efforts. For instance, systemic exclusion of young people and other social groups in Nigeria drives people to resort to high-risk, high-profitability informal and criminal activities such as illegal mining and sabotage of oil pipelines, often causing pollution of water bodies, infernos and untimely death. If this trend remains unchecked, the next two decades may well turn out to be lost to hazards despite stand-alone efforts to address the problem of peace and security in the region. This informs the need to integrate DRR as a priority concern into the security and development agenda of the ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS member states. For instance, the lack of an integrated approach is

demonstrated by the fact that the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) was originally conceived as an exclusively military force. The civilian component of the ESF, of which the ECOWAS Emergency Response Team (EERT) is a part, was only conceived as an add-on to the force in 2006.

The Conflict Dimension: Double Jeopardy

While constituting a credible analytic technique, disaggregating the negative development indices (as done above) somewhat warps the picture: the common thread is that climate change, population growth, rapid urbanisation, and shrinking state capacity altogether create social stress, and increase vulnerability, thereby constituting remote drivers of conflict. The interplay of disaster, conflict and underdevelopment leads to what is now called "complex emergencies", a phenomenon that continues to daunt humanitarian and developmental efforts. The link between disaster risk and conflict is mutually reinforcing. First there is (armed) conflict-induced disaster; then there is disaster-induced conflict, which may further increase vulnerability to disaster and hazard. Let us explore this connexion on several fronts.

Disasters occurring in the immediate aftermath of armed conflict exacerbate the humanitarian consequences of conflict, for which West Africa is now the poster child. Such disasters are engendered by the disruption of livelihoods and social support networks, vulnerability of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the diversion of developmental resources to fund conflict.

Disruption of livelihoods and social support networks

With the displacement of populations and disruption of economic activities and entitlements, individual coping capacity in the face of disaster is diminished. Closely-knit social support networks (such as the ubiquitous African extended family system, thrift and micro-credit clubs of market women, community development and the dependency structure of age grades in Liberia) usually form the first line of warning and emergency response to disaster at the community level. The effectiveness of these networks lies in the fact that societies are complex adaptive systems emerging through sundry locally interconnected and interacting relationships of trust. However, these networks are dislocated with prolonged armed conflict. In 2007, the Deputy Minister for Sport, Youth and Child Development in Sierra Leone, Angela Cifre, lamented the collapse of the extended family system which provides a web of support and provisioning. She attributed the inability to cope with the increasing number of orphans and vulnerable children in the country to this development. Family dislocation has also affected rights to land, agriculture, and economic activities. It has also forced women to assume new cultural roles as heads of some households with the demise or displacement of the male heads. Often, the

result of conflict is increased vulnerability and reduced coping capacity in the face of disasters like famine and drought.

Vulnerability of refugees and IDPs

Cross-border spill-over of refugees and resettlement of IDPs form on their own a belligerent strain of viruses that may infect host communities. Guinea, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire are yet to fully reverse the flow of refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone. In the early years of the Liberian conflict, 400,000 Liberians fled to Sierra Leone, 600,000 to Guinea and over 250,000 to Cote d'Ivoire. Refugee camps are often overcrowded, poorly equipped and often unsanitary, thereby forming sites for the transmission of epidemic diseases and HIV/AIDS. In June 2003, the United Nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) reported that IDPs in Liberia, particularly children and women, were especially vulnerable to malnutrition, deteriorating health, trauma and socio-economic dislocation. The humanitarian situation continued to degenerate with armed activity being directly targeted at settlements hosting IDPs. Moreover, relief agencies could not reach about 10,000 people residing in camps as well as thousands of other people who were caught up in conflict areas inaccessible to humanitarian assistance. In the long period of the Liberian war, deaths attributed to direct conflict was far less than death attributed to indirect causes like diseases and starvation, which decimated civilian populations.

Diversion of developmental funds/resources

Armed conflict engenders the risk of disaster by diverting developmental funds to the prosecution of warfare; thereby indirectly diminishing the capacity of states to effectively respond to disaster. In 2000, the government of Chad admitted diverting US\$4 million of oil investment to boost its arsenal against the northern rebels. Proceeds from hardwood in Liberia and gemstones in Sierra Leone were also the primary sources of funding for the war efforts. The buffer of primary health care delivery is an instance. Where health infrastructure is destroyed in conflict and cannot be immediately replaced, the danger posed to the local population is enormous. National platforms and initiatives for DRR should complement regional and continental structures. Where such national platforms are weak or non-existent, regional resources may become significantly over-stretched.

On the other hand, poorly managed disaster and hazard events may induce fresh conflict or exacerbate ongoing conflict. Disaster-induced conflict may arise from increased competition for scarce resources, and distortion of rights to land and other cultural practices.

Increased competition for scarce resources

In the near future in West Africa, desertification, floods and soil erosion are likely to increase competition for scarce arable land and grazing fields, which may in

turn lead to aggravated conflict, as is the case in present day southern Sudan. In Nigeria, Fulani herdsmen now migrate southwards in the dry season due to drought and desertification in the north, often leading to destruction of food crops and farmlands. Low-level conflict between the herdsmen and southern farm owners has become a recurring phenomenon. Since the two occupational groups are also divided along ethnic and religious lines, such friction could trigger pervasive ethnic conflicts by opening bottled-up grievances. In the 1970s and 1980s, negative demographic trends also led to the phenomenon of "environmental refugees" in the Sahel region, bringing about unchecked influx of human populations offering cheap labour from Mauritania to Senegal. This caused friction with host communities and the government.

Distortion of rights to land and other cultural practices

Disaster-induced conflict may also arise from distortion of rights to land and land use due to resettlement of IDPs (the abandoned property phenomenon at the end of the Nigerian civil war is a case in point), or because of culture and/or gender-insensitive distribution of emergency relief (food aid and medic-aid). With respect to the latter, the International Committee of the Red Cross' universal principles of humanity and humanitarian imperative may face challenges on the ground as socially constructed roles and customs grant primacy to men folk (who are customarily the breadwinners) or according to family and social status, rather than women and children. The allocation of communal land, property and entitlements (including food and money) in some communities in southern Nigeria is per stipes, not per head. This means that allocation is done not according to individual needs, but according to (often polygamous) family sub-groupings represented by a male child. Hypothetically, departure from this customary mode of entitlement may constitute a source of conflict or domestic violence.

Disaster Risk Reduction as Conflict Prevention

The multifaceted and reinforcing linkage between disaster, conflict and development—forming sub-national and transnational pockets of disaster risk, insecurity and fragility—imply a logical conclusion: DRR can be positioned and integrated to promote development-sensitive conflict prevention. The recently adopted ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) 2008 laments the "weak internal coordination, underutilisation and misdirection of existing human capacities as well as the deployment of limited instruments" in implementing the preventive aspects of the pivotal Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security 1999 (§ 2, ECPF). A significant coherence in policy is revealed by the fact that

Chapter VIII of the 1999 Mechanism and one of the 14 components of the ECPF is humanitarian assistance. By targeting the link between disaster and conflict, one of the objectives of the humanitarian assistance component of the ECPF (§ 93 ff.) is to “mitigate the impact of humanitarian disasters and emergencies that could result in social and political upheaval”.

However, ECOWAS’ posture to disasters is overwhelmingly reactive rather than preventive. There is therefore the need for policy repositioning to make the institution more attuned to the human security and development challenges of the 21st century. Primary consideration should be given to the legal and moral responsibilities to prevent and mitigate disasters and hazard events, over the responsibility to react and rebuild. Pursuant to § 94 (c) of the ECPF, mainstreaming DRR into ECOWAS and member states’ security and development policy will contribute in no small measure to reducing disaster-induced conflict, and will cushion the debilitating impact of natural disasters and hazard events in the face of armed conflict.

Planning From the Future

Planning from the future requires institutionalising a systematic way of identifying, monitoring, forecasting, and mitigating (long-term) threats that would have a negative impact on security and development. Mechanisms for early warning of disaster within the ECOWAS system are still essentially *ad hoc*, informal or haphazard. In terms of cost-benefit analysis, the cost of institutionalising and boosting of early warning and capacity for early response greatly outweighs the high risk, high probability, and damaging consequences of disaster risk in West Africa. Early warning systems should comprise four components, viz: (a) hazard detection, observation and forecasting; (b) warning formulation; (c) warning dissemination; and (d) response to warnings.

However, the potential of the ECOWAS early warning system is yet to be fully maximised. Fortunately, early warning systems have crosscutting, multi-functional capacities, and are therefore applicable to the many areas of conflict prevention, disaster risk reduction, agricultural and human development. At the level of the ECOWAS Commission, this would entail greater internal coordination and sharing of information among the departments dealing with Political Affairs, Peace and Security; Humanitarian Affairs, Human Development and Gender; and Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources. In fact, there can be no compartmentalisation of development and security concerns or issues of environmental and humanitarian disasters, drought and famine, as all of these factors impinge on state resilience.

Acknowledging disaster risks as drivers of conflict, the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) uses a pool of indicators that comprises disaster events

(accident or other hazard resulting in an emergency situation, acute pollution or environmental damage, flood or wildfire, severe climatic condition such as drought, and invasion of locusts or other pest) in order to improve prompt response to disaster. It also includes other heads having a bearing on disaster risk such as women, children, refugees and IDPs; health and social services; agriculture, farming, fishing, livestock and mining. However, despite such comprehensive coverage, systematic data is usually not readily available and the capacity for disaster monitoring, reporting, and analysis is still at its embryonic stage.

UN OCHA monitors and publishes information on hazards and countries at risk in West Africa and other regions in its quarterly *Disaster Risk Trends*. The monitoring is done by the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre, which is similar to what the Observation and Monitoring Centre (OMC) of the ECOWAS system intends to achieve. Nigeria’s geo-stationary Communication Satellite (NigComSat-1) that was launched into orbit in May 2007 is a multi-functional facility. It was (before its untimely malfunctioning) reputed to have the capacity for real-time disaster monitoring services and it is supposed to enable access to even the remotest rural villages through the Internet. NigComSat-1 is a public-private-partnership venture under the Nigeria’s Ministry of Science and Technology. Such existing local capacity should be tapped into and improved upon in order to develop rapid deployment of humanitarian relief, which would in turn cushion the harsh effects of disasters on populations and boost resilience in affected states. The draft ECOWAS Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction—one of whose focus areas is improving identification, assessment, monitoring and early warning of disaster risks—already provides an entry point for cooperation.

Next Steps for the ECOWAS Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction

The ECOWAS Policy for DRR is not a panacea for disaster risk but only a first step. It contains an expression of agreed principles, objectives, priorities and institutional aspects to develop effective disaster risk management capacity in the sub-region. While the Policy gives structure to the process, a blueprint can be developed for context-specific aspects of disaster beyond merely addressing generic manifestations and humanitarian consequences of disasters. Nonetheless, there is a need for coordination of activities in ways that address the logistical differences between types and intensity of disaster: the manner of addressing disaster caused by flooding is quite different from the manner of addressing disaster caused by drought. Also, measures need to be in place that can help decipher the less visible dynamics and matrix of interactions that underline vulnerability to disaster risk in each case.

It is, therefore, necessary to develop a Programme of Action for implementation of the Policy, which would detail components of priority actions in member states in operational language. However, the Policy remains mute on the empirical bases for the Programme of Action, and on the procedure for identifying the priorities. A condition for achieving this aim is the setting up of an easily updatable, bottom-up and interactive electronic database, a Disaster Risk Index (DRI).

If ECOWAS is to decrease the negative trend of disaster risk, reduce the threats to sustainable development, and mitigate future consequences in the next 20 years, then it needs to be more anticipatory, adaptive and agile. Reducing disaster risk requires venturing beyond reacting to imminent or subsisting threats on the early warning radar. Notably, the “shiny tools” wielded by the OMC are periodic assessment reports—Daily Highlights, Incident Report, Situation Report, and Strategic Assessment—based on data gathered from the field on a daily basis. These tools are ill-adapted to deal with the complex social, political and developmental factors that underline disaster risk in West Africa. Rather than seeing every disaster or hazard that arises as a one-off event, DRR should adopt a more futuristic and integrated way of reducing vulnerabilities and risks. Technological expertise already exists to develop a Geographical Information System for disaster mapping and indexing for the region, which would inform long-term policy formulation in an increasingly complex and uncertain era. A DRI will, among other things:

Complement bottom-up early warning signals by recording, tracking, and mapping disaster events, thereby developing long-term predictive capacity for emerging trends of disaster risk, such as the effects of climate change on ecosystems and human populations.

Improve crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery by enabling the empirical analysis of risk and probability indices of geographically-defined disasters and hazard events.

Increase awareness, sequence initiatives and target action to boost resilience in areas of high-vulnerability, especially where disasters are recurrent (this method has worked in the management of tropical cyclones in Bangladesh).

Inform policy and action to control and/or reverse slow-onset natural disasters such as desertification and soil erosion, and to manage and prevent sudden-onset disasters and hazard events such as floods and epidemic diseases.

Fundamentally, DRI will bridge the gap between systematic research and early warning analysis on the one hand, and long-term policy formulation on the other. This would support the process of adaptation and inform periodic review of the ECOWAS Policy for DRR

(§ 8.5, page 23). The needed impetus to move from policy to action will come with (a) demonstrating the political commitment (adoption of the Policy by the Council of Ministers and the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, and transmission to member states); and (b) providing the financial muscle (the disaster management window under the ECOWAS Peace Fund would serve as the principal source) to secure our future.

Conclusion: A Safer Future

Till a few decades ago, natural disasters were viewed as one-off events, unrelated to social and developmental processes. The overriding contingency planning approach emphasised disaster preparedness as a means of increasing the effectiveness of delivery of emergency relief, and as a stopgap between the disruption of development process by disaster events and the continuance of development after recovery. However, the exponential increase in the human and material impact of disaster events in West Africa and in other parts of the world indicates that the consequences are directly related to an increase in human vulnerability. In turn, vulnerability to disaster risk is often induced by the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict. This trend therefore necessitates policy repositioning to prioritise disaster prevention over reaction, and a holistic and integrated approach for the prevention of conflict and DRR.

Home-grown remedial and strategic actions that have been taken in parts of Nigeria include:

- The plant-a-tree initiative supported by government, community groups and civil society targeted at controlling deforestation, desertification and soil erosion.
- Mapping out grazing reserves in parts of northern Nigeria in order to curb north-south migration and conflict between pastoralists and farmers.
- Informing people in local languages through the media to store grains, salt, blankets, firewood, and other subsistent reserves to serve as first aid in the event of disaster.
- Government and private sector initiatives in recycling waste to clear the environmental hazard constituted by refuse dumps in cities.
- Educating people on the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, and the need for emergency preparedness (the British Council and Radio Nigeria partner on a programme, *Climate Change and You*, broadcast every Tuesday evening on the national radio network).

- Preparation and dissemination of a National Disaster Reduction Plan by the National Emergency Management Agency established in 1999, and passage of the Environmental Impact Assessment Act by the National Assembly (Ghana, Mali and Senegal have also followed suit).

While these efforts are commendable, they amount to just a drop in the ocean considering the social and humanitarian consequences of disasters. According to the *State of the World's Cities Report 2008/2009*, over one half of urban populations in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Sierra Leone live in slum areas with the associated dangers of outbreak of epidemic diseases, social unrest and insecurity. The trickle-down effect of the global economic recession on vulnerable societies in West Africa may yet become apparent with the looming drying-up of emergency relief and humanitarian aid from international agencies and donor countries. To form a buffer against this possibility, ECOWAS needs to complement and step up local and national initiatives and coping mechanisms. ECOWAS policy and initiatives should target enhancing multi-tiered and crosscutting institutional anticipatory and adaptive capacity, both at the national and regional levels.

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CLIMATE CHANGE IN WEST AFRICA: THE GENDER CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE THREAT TO AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

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The debate on Climate change can no longer be regarded as an environmental or energy dilemma, due to its increasing impact on the socio-economic, political and geographic course of human life. While the relationship between climate change and conflict cannot be clearly and precisely established, the reality that the impact of climate change threatens mostly the security of the vulnerable (mostly women and children) is undeniable. Based on this reality, this paper endeavours to discuss the gender dimension of the impact and threat of climate change on agriculture and food security in the ECOWAS West African Region. It focuses on the gender-cultural perspective of the consequences and threats to agriculture and food security. The article tries to outline the impact of climate change on the socio-economic existence of the female majority (with particular emphasis on rural women) and seeks to vividly establish its consequences on the socio-cultural essence of womanhood in the region. It also discusses regional efforts towards adaptation, risk reduction and alert, disaster relief and emergency response.

Background

The significant change in the average global weather patterns due to global warming is increasingly regarded as the cause for the forced displacement and migration of uncounted number of persons. It is also responsible for the changes in coastal boundaries and coastlines, alteration of agricultural and ecological systems and processes, changing water routes and disappearing water sources. Climate Change plays a significant role in triggering and exacerbating violent natural resource conflicts particularly in countries with ethnic tensions and poor governance, and as such it is viewed as one of the main causes of human conflict¹. Climate change is also a contributing factor to the growing trend in the downward surge from state fragility to failure. Vulnerability to the impact of climate change is proportional to the degree of exposure and the capacity to resist or adapt to challenges.

West Africa is a region with a very impressive natural resource base. Yet, widely known for its extreme poverty,² weak institutions and poor infrastructures, it is also one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change. This vulnerability is particularly evident in the agriculture and food sectors, which provide employment for about 66% of the population.³ Agriculture contributes about 30% of the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and rain-fed agriculture serves as a primary source of livelihood for the majority of the rural population. The high level of

vulnerability in the region is also determined by a very young population with about 40% under the age of 15,⁴ a growth rate of 2–3%,⁵ and extreme malnourishment for almost two thirds of the total population⁶.

Due to the disparity and highly visible contrast between wetlands and arid zones, West Africa relies significantly on its network of inter-zone supply of fresh water from wet to arid areas to support the cycle of vegetation, agricultural growth and food production.⁷ The region's five major rivers (Niger, Senegal, Gambia, Volta and Chad), which have their sources in high rainfall areas flow through to the low rainfall prone areas around the Sahel in maintenance of this cycle. Unfortunately, recurrent climate variations and drastic decline in rainfall to about 30% in the past three decades,⁸ has resulted in the continuous reduction in the flow velocity of watercourse.

The deterioration of water quality, temperature change and the unprecedented increase in rainfall in other areas (resulting in floods), have also accelerated the degradation and desertification of fertile land, thus affecting agricultural yields and food production. It is estimated that between now and 2100 the predicted losses of the overall West African agricultural sector will be in the range of 2–4% of GDP.⁹ This challenge coupled with the region's weak capacity to adapt is a major cause for alarm.

Socio-economic and socio-cultural impact of climate change on the vulnerable

Climate change poses a severe threat to the security of marginalised groups in West Africa particularly because of their incapacity to adapt to extreme changes. These are predominantly women and children; in particular the very poor and those with limited access to education, health care and other basic social services. Women represent 52% of the total population of West Africa¹⁰, they have suffered marginalisation due to the effect of discriminatory traditional practices. This situation, which has prevented a large majority of the female population from having access to equal opportunity, is primarily responsible for the low level of education and massive poverty amongst this group. In West Africa, like other parts of the continent, it is widely believed that women

should take up the traditional role of the female in the household. Particularly, rural women, are often excluded from participating or playing a significant role in the decision making of community development. It seems that issues concerning the wellbeing of women are in general given low level of attention.

Despite the above socio-cultural challenges, women have been able to transform imposed societal roles to their benefit. They have used agriculture as a tool to establish a social and economic significance in society. Being primarily responsible for family nutrition and sanitation, women within the community have relied on crop yields and income from agricultural activities to maintain the wellbeing of their families and the education of their children. An estimated 70% of the agriculture labour force in the region comprises of women.¹¹ In rural areas, women control the cultivation of food crops, while the men focus mostly on cash crops.

All of this in spite of women possessing basic or no educational skills; having no access to macro-credit opportunities or adequate markets; suffering from low levels of technological inputs and, as in some cultures, having no right to land ownership.

While agriculture has played a vital role in the lives of women, the traditional biases favouring men in the ownership of available fertile land is expected to increase as the impact of climate change escalates the degradation of fertile land. Due to limited knowledge on adaptive mechanisms as well as poor access to agricultural subsidies, women will be either forced to abandon their agricultural practice and move onto alternative sources of livelihood (which are limited due to the lack of skills), or face the painful choice of enduring longer and harder labour with minimum outcome in terms of crop yields. This situation could plunge women into an extreme situation of economic and social vulnerability. Moreover, increasing land degradation and a decreasing water table also means that women will have to walk longer distances in search of firewood and safe drinking water, putting them at a greater risk of physical insecurity.

Efforts towards adaptation, risk reduction and alert, emergency response and disaster relief in the region

The environment and the ways of life in West Africa with regards to adaptation and risk reduction have been modified significantly. Most local villages and communities have adopted various measures to ensure adaptation to climatic changes such as drought, flood and temperature change. These measures vary across the regions based on location, threats, and cultural and socio-economic practices. However, while these measures have proven effective in some cases, in others they have been unsuccessful and have had negative consequences due to the lack of knowledge and expertise of the local people. For example, the increased

use of agriculture chemicals to enhance soil ability has caused land infertility in some areas and has resulted in outbreaks of infectious diseases.

National governments have initiated several institutional, policy and constitutional changes towards adaptation and risk reduction. These processes, however, are mostly not consultative and not concurrent throughout high-risk areas. While some states are putting in place mechanisms for adaptation and risk reduction, others are still far behind in this respect. One major initiative is the development of the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA).¹² The objective of the NAPA is the creation of a cooperative framework to guide the coordination and implementation of national adaptation measures through participation. Regrettably the NAPA has not yielded its desired result due to setbacks associated with the lack of funding for implementation.

From the regional perspective, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has used projections and indicators of climate change variability currently being experienced in the region to adopt a series of measures of adaptation and risk reduction. Actions taken at the regional level have focused on three priority areas:

- 1) Mainstreaming of climate change adaptation measures into programmes of national governments;
- 2) Capacity and technical institutional support to governments and communities;
- 3) Implementation of capacity building and adaptation projects and programmes with support from the international community.

In line with these objectives, during its 19th December 2008 summit in Abuja, Nigeria, the Authority of Heads of States and Government adopted various policies relating to the environment, agriculture and water resource management in the region. The policies include amongst others the ECOWAS Environment Policy and the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP). The Authority also called on Member States to effectively implement the adopted policies in synergy with other sectoral policies.

ECOWAP was developed since 2005. It aims at achieving three basic overall objectives:

- Sustainable food security and natural resource management;
- Decent remuneration for agricultural investments;
- The development of sustainable trade within the region and globally.

The programme suffered from slow implementation due to setbacks particularly resulting from lack of adequate financing and competing international agricultural initiatives. Fortunately however, its adoption by the Authority has given the programme force, which

is potentially significant to boost the realisation of the programme's aims. The adoption was followed by a request from the Authority to member states to finalise the presentation of their national agriculture investment programmes and called on the international community for its support towards this initiative. The Authority also urged the Commission to effectively monitor the 9 December Partnership meeting held between the EU and ECOWAS in Paris. The meeting was aimed towards financing ECOWAP. While the ECOWAP policy is not specifically targeted at how to address the increasing gender cultural challenges and threat to food sovereignty posed by the impact of climate change, its implementation might address some of the challenges faced by women in the sector.

In addition to the adoption of the above policies, the ECOWAS Environment programme with the support of partners in member states have drafted a Sub-regional Action Plan to Reduce Vulnerability to Climate Change as a complimentary capacity and adaptation programme of action. This programme of action is expected to strengthen and enforce the National Adaptation Plan of Actions (NAPAs). It takes into consideration regional policies and initiatives on the management of water, agriculture, forestry and environmental resources. If validated, this complimentary action plan should be guided by a number of points:

- The importance of good governance and sustainable management of natural resources;
- The need for a participative approach at all levels, notably those involving women, young people and other marginalised groups;
- The utilisation of and contribution to the broad pool of experts, local know-how and communication/information technologies available in the region.

The plan also would need to focus on:

- Supporting ongoing institutional transformations and adaptation in order to create dynamic partnerships;
- Building synergic national policies and legislative frameworks for environmental and natural resources management;
- Supporting and increasing efficiency in natural resource management;
- Empowering women and reducing poverty, especially in rural areas;
- Finally and most importantly, promoting social equity in and between the countries in the region and notably the removal of gender disparities.¹³

Civil Society organisations have played a significant role in advocating and initiating institutional, policy and

constitutional changes at both national and regional levels. Female leaders with the support of international and local civil society organisations have been very proactive in advocating and creating awareness amongst policy makers on the threat of climate change and its impact on food security.¹⁴ A week prior to the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government 19th December 2008 summit, women leaders met in Abuja to discuss issues and challenges related to the problem of food crisis, its impact to stability and women's contribution to food, sovereignty and peace in the region and to strategised advocacy and awareness raising measure aimed at influencing positively the Authority's decisions on the issue.

While this initiative is commendable and may have contributed significantly to the outcome of the summit in relations to decisions on climate change and food security, it is rather regrettable that those participating in such initiatives are predominantly the minority urban adult female population, most of whom have had access to education and thus have been emancipated from the bind of cultural and traditional discriminations. For the high percentage of women in the rural areas discriminatory traditional practices are pervasive and such initiatives do not manage to reach them nor do they alter such restrictive cultural circumstances.

Conclusion

As the impact of climate change uncovers more obviously the threat to food security in the region, it is vulnerable people, the poor and marginalised (mostly women and children), who primarily depend on subsistence food production for their livelihood, that are faced with immediate dangers. For the majority of the adult female population, most of who are heads of the household and who have maintained their social and economic status in the society by their huge participation in the agricultural sector, climate change represents a huge threat to their social, cultural, economic and physical wellbeing. The management and control of agricultural investments and risk reduction mechanisms have mostly excluded this section of the population of women. While regional, national and community efforts at tackling the threat of climate change on agriculture and food security is commendable, it is however quite unfortunate that the participation of those worst affected have not been effectively promoted.

The adoption of very good policies is significant in dealing with the imminent threat of climate change. However, the lack of synergy between the policy makers and the policy beneficiaries poses a serious threat to achieving the policy goal. Moreover, the lack of women participating in policy making and programme development is detrimental to their ultimate success. This paper concludes, therefore, on the need for the development and implementation of a gender-cultural

risk reduction and adaptation strategy to climate change, which pragmatically addresses constraints faced by women in the agricultural sector. It also emphasises the need for a pro-active initiative that interactively targets all stakeholders in the area of policy development, in order to generate a more holistic and achievable regional approach to the crisis.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Ownership and control of natural resources such as land and water.
- 2 The region plays host to 14 of the world 30 countries with the lowest human development index and to 14 of the world least developed countries. About 50% of its total population lives below the poverty line of less than a \$1 a day.
- 3 IUCN - 2004.
- 4 Sub-regional Action Programme to Reduce Vulnerability to climate change in West Africa, Pat II The Strategic Action Plan.
- 5 Ibid
- 6 World Fish Center; Fish and Food Security in Africa.
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Ibid
- 9 Boko, (2007) Cambridge University Press; pg. 433-467.
- 10 Quarterly Review of African Renaissance of West African women; NO.03, September 2008.
- 11 World Fish Centre; Fish and Food Security in Africa.
- 12 The National Action Plan is a strategy developed for the least developed countries 12 out of 14 of which formed part of the region (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, The Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone).
- 13 Sub-regional Action Programme to Reduce Vulnerability to climate change in West Africa, Pat II The Strategic Action Plan.
- 14 2nd meeting of the mechanism of women leaders for peace and sustainable development in West Africa.

MANAGEMENT OF WATER BODIES IN WEST AFRICA AND ITS IMPACT ON FUTURE SECURITY IN THE ECOWAS SUB-REGION

Ebenezer Ofori Asiedu

Introduction

Use of water resources – lakes and rivers - in countries across the West African sub-region is increasingly posing a threat to the security of local peoples and member states. Blessed with enough water resources and good vegetation, West Africa should never experience food shortage. But the recent world food crisis in 2008 affected the region harder than most other areas of the world, a situation that witnessed the continuous rising costs of basic food items. This became a security risk as social unrest increased in most member states through demonstrations, some of which ended in violence causing loss of lives and properties.¹ Furthermore, even though hydro-power is acknowledged as among the cheapest sources of energy, the 2006–2007 energy crisis experienced in parts of West Africa (the third since the early 1980s) also brought in its wake the realities of poor management of the rich water resources the sub-region is endowed with.

With projections that by 2025 one-third of the world's population would “face severe and chronic water shortages”,² it goes without saying that countries with poor water management will be hard hit, notwithstanding their rich endowments. The implication of acute water shortages in the West African sub-region could be even more daunting as the possibility of inter-state disputes over trans-boundary water sources are likely to intensify. With increasing dissipation of major water bodies due to increased demands for both domestic and industrial use, as well as agricultural and energy needs, the present situation poses real threats to security within the region. As most of neighbouring countries rely on some of the trans-boundary water bodies for overall water needs, the problem of poor water management represents a risk both internally and for Inter-state relations. Misuse of water resources within individual countries may compromise water provision for food and health needs. Besides, disputes and subsequent inter-state conflicts over water usage could have debilitating social and political effects within the whole region. These are real challenges that require careful monitoring.

This paper looks at ways in which water bodies are managed within member states of the West African sub-region and what could be done to preserve them in the

face of fast dissipation, and as a result of environmental degradation. It further argues that there could come a time when, if not appropriately checked, this would give way to inter-state conflicts. The cause of such conflicts would be adequate access to **water** or the lack of it. The paper concludes that instead of allowing water stress to become a cause of regional and state conflicts, West Africa should adopt the use of water management mechanisms as the driving force for regional cooperation and integration. An interstate agreement on the management of major lakes and rivers within the sub-region could provide long-lasting benefits to all member states, in line with the mission of the ECOWAS.

Management of Water Resources within the Sub-region

It is a general knowledge that most of the member states within the West African sub-region have adequate water resources. However, the problems facing West Africa lie in the realm of management. According to Niasse et al³, the high level of interdependence on water among West African countries, combined with poor awareness of policy and decision-making, may lead to tension and possible conflicts among states over water resources. It has also been suggested that occurrences such as “devastating floods, proliferation of floating weeds along watercourses, and the deterioration of water quality are likely to contribute to straining relations between countries in West Africa.”⁴

Among the trans-boundary water bodies that have been identified as potential causes of disputes are the River Niger, the Volta Basin and the River Gambia (between Senegal and the Gambia). Research, however, suggests that West Africa has a number of trans-boundary water management arrangements and water laws that seek to regulate the use of some of its major basins by the respective riparian states within the sub-region.⁵ Water bodies with management structures in place include the River Senegal, the River Niger and the Volta basin.

Riparian states of the River Senegal include Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. About six trans-boundary water agreements are known to have been signed after independence among these states, between 1963 and 1978. The major internal drivers are joint

management and water development. In addition, about four transnational agreements have been signed with third party countries,⁶ indicating some level of legal prescription to regulate the joint management of water resources. These arrangements led to the creation of the **Inter State Committee** in 1963 and the **Senegal River Riparian Countries Organisation** in 1968. The latter collapsed mainly as a result of political disagreements among governments of riparian states.⁷

Like the River Senegal, the River Niger, also boasts a good number of agreements, ten in total that were signed between 1963 and 1990. These agreements sought to create or modify the joint management architecture among riparian states, culminating in the establishment of the **Niger River Commission** (NRC) in 1964 between Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. This Commission became moribund and in its place the **Niger Basin Authority** (NBA), was established in 1980. One of its objectives was the promotion of regional cooperation. However, like its predecessor, the NBA suffered from a lack of human, technical and financial means as well as poor political will on the part of member states.

The Volta River basin is an area at high risk of. This is because apart from serving as a major source of irrigation for farming by inhabitants along the river, the Volta basin also serves as a single major source that provides hydro power for most of the riparian states. Ghana, for instance, supplies electric power to Togo and Cote d'Ivoire from the Akosombo Dam. Three agreements were signed between 1994 and 2004 between the riparian states, which include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, and Togo. The Akosombo Dam, located in Ghana and constructed in the mid-1960s on the Volta basin, derives its source of flow from upstream Burkina Faso. In 1998 reduced water levels in the Akosombo Dam led to an energy crisis in Ghana. Ghana accused Burkina Faso of increasing water withdrawals and obstructing the flow of the River Volta as a result of the construction of a dam on the Volta River at Ziga.⁸ The ensuing heightened tension increased the need for an exchange of information and for cooperation on the use of the common water resource. This in turn led to trans-boundary water management arrangements amongst the riparian countries. However, reduction in the water levels in the Akosombo Dam and the subsequent energy crisis in 2007 rekindled similar sentiments, indicating the lingering conflicting undercurrents between the two riparian countries.

The above examples illustrate how, since independence, attempts have been made to address the management of water resources within the region. Such efforts, however, have yielded few results, if any. The lack of substantial progress in water resources management could be attributed to a number of reasons. Many of the agreements were facilitated and championed by external political forces, which had their own geostrategic

interests at stake (especially those agreements prior to the end of the Cold War). There were few local inputs thus making it difficult for local participation in the ensuing established structures and institutions. Also, the joint management institutions and structures put in place suffered from a lack of human, technical and financial means as well as political will from member states. It is equally worth noting that most of the external drivers and initiatives concentrated on the management of transboundary water resources as opposed to management of water resources that largely fall within member states.

The suggestion is that if only half of the efforts and assistance expended on establishing joint transboundary water resources management among riparian states had been spent on ensuring prudent management of the numerous water resources within states' territorial boundaries, the skills, competences, expertise and political will which would have been developed over time could have been leveraged on in the management of transboundary water resources. This would also have ensured the use of local knowledge and thus involved local ownership component in such transboundary joint management structures.

In support of the reasoning cited above is the fact that much emphasis was placed on development of hydropower, and to some extent irrigation outlets, at the expense of the development of other water sectors. Thus the completion of construction of major dams for energy and irrigation purposes was seen as a prerogative by most countries involved in such joint transboundary water management arrangements. As such, development and preservation of water bodies did not travel beyond the water resources commonly shared by countries within the sub-region, and a greater number of water bodies have been lost incrementally. Consequently, a situation has arisen where water resources are dissipated and are not sufficiently large and able to support the objective of being dammed / building dams to supply the energy or irrigation needs.

Impacts of Inefficient Management of Water Resources in the Sub-Region

Though very much endowed with rich fresh water resources, the lack of proper management has made the West African sub-region prone to food shortages, and thus poses threats to food security. Water resources which could be used for domestic and industrial consumption and usage, as well as irrigation purposes to help in all year-round production of food crops and other agricultural produce, are still in abundance in most member states. However, poor management of such resources have denied the citizenry such benefits and have exposed the region to emerging food security risks. The recent world food crisis and its impact on the sub-region, coupled with the rising cost of living and the related violent protests in some member states serve

as a case in point. The West African sub-region has been identified as prone to severe and chronic water shortages. The current situation is likely to inflame sentiments over the use of transboundary water resources and could directly impact on the relations between member states and efforts towards regional cooperation and integration. These are early warning signals for ECOWAS, as intangible as they might appear now, to try and tame the situation, and if possible nip it in the bud before it engulfs the region. Indeed, the energy crisis experienced by some West African countries (Ghana, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Republic of Benin, Niger, etc.) between late 2006 and most part of year 2007 presents itself as a classic case. Once again the crisis came about as a result of poor management of available water resources leading to water scarcity which then affected not only farming but also the major dams that provide hydro-power.

The ramifications of this scarcity were enormous. Costs of running businesses increased due to expensive alternative sources of energy and the consequent rise in inflation; industries which could no longer rely on expensive alternative sources of energy had to close down or downsize their workforce, leading to massive job loss and rise in unemployment. This in turn led to increased crime rates and increased proliferation of small arms and light weapons as individuals had to resort to personal protection. The cumulative effect was a heightened feeling of insecurity within some member states.

It is clear that water scarcity poses a significant and urgent set of internal security challenges. In addition, the sentiments over the use of the Volta basin by some of the riparian states that aroused during the period were such that if not properly managed, could have led to disputes and even strained relations between some of the states sharing the Volta basin.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The problem of scarcity of water resources may be viewed, as a consequence of environmental degradation, which affects cropland and pasture, and also impacts directly on food and water scarcity. However, the proper management of water resources within the sub-region could help minimise the impact of a water deficit on the entire sub-region. The management of large water bodies is an enormous challenge and efforts aimed at finding effective solutions need strong political will. The threats that improper management of water resources poses both at national and regional levels must also be acknowledged and dealt with. Strategies for water resource management should therefore be based on a participatory approach that involves users, planners, politicians, policy and decision makers, as well as civil society groups at all levels – sub-regional, national and local.

The following suggestions are proffered as some of the measures that could be adopted especially at the sub-regional level, which would in turn impact on national programs dealing with water resources management:

Establishment of an ECOWAS Trans-boundary Water Resources Management Authority at the ECOWAS Commission to regulate the use and management of trans-boundary water bodies in ways that will encourage cooperation and integration. The Authority would ensure that existing scant expertise and resources within the sub-region are harnessed for efficient use and to the benefit of all member states. It would ensure that promotion and dissemination of appropriate use and adaptation of scientific technologies, techniques and measures are efficiently and effectively accessed by member states in managing their water resources. It would also support and sustain the transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise from the regional to the national and local levels.

The Authority would further organise regular capacity building trainings for technicians in member states in the development and management of water resources at the national level. It would further ensure the promotion of inter-country technical assistance workshops to help build internal capacities of countries less equipped with resources. A cost-effective way of achieving this mandate would be by setting up training schools that can train technicians for this purpose. The regional Water Resources Management Authority would thus become the resource and facilitating centre through which staff of national bodies and institutions would be trained and re-skilled.

The ECOWAS Trans-boundary Water Resources Management Authority would work closely with existing river basin agencies, water users, civil society groups involved in water management and preservation. It would liaise regularly with research institutions, policy makers, economists and community representatives. It would also communicate with development partners and donors to design a regional framework for water management. If such a form of collaboration were in place, it would be within the remit of ECOWAS to establish future projects for the transfer of water from water-rich regions to water-deficient areas. The development of such large-scale irrigation projects may ensure continuous food production and guarantee food security within the region.

For the ECOWAS Trans-boundary Water Resources Management Authority to function and operate efficiently, an ECOWAS Water Fund needs to be established to assist in securing funds for the management of water bodies at the regional level. This should be a revolving pool fund, similar in structure to the Peace Fund, to be sustained exclusively by the contributions of the ECOWAS Commission and development partners at a level that is enough to

sustain reapplication for expanding coverage, as well as operating and maintaining the existing facilities. At the regional level, the ECOWAS Commission would source for funds from development partners as well as levy an agreed percentage on its major source of funding – the Community Levy – into a pool from which management of water resources, especially transboundary water resources, could be drawn.

This arrangement should be separated from other bilateral arrangements that member states will have with development partners in ensuring sound management of water bodies within territorial borders of countries. What this means is that the ECOWAS Water Fund will be mandated to focus only on transboundary water resources, leaving territorial water resources entirely to individual countries to manage. Thus the regional initiative would seek to complement the efforts of member states at national level. Any efficiently managed water resources within and between member states in the sub-region could thus serve as a catalyst for agricultural industrialisation and pave the way for future food security. It could be used as a pathway for cooperation and development within the sub-region, and a driving force behind ECOWAS' integration.

Even though poor management of water bodies in the sub-region has had some negative impacts on the security situation in the ECOWAS sub-region – food security with it attendant strife, as well as increased tensions between riparian states – the effective implementation of the above recommendations would go a long way in helping to avert and nip in the bud any future humanitarian crises that could engulf the region as a result of lack of proper management of water bodies. Thus the projected intensification of inter-state disputes emanating from trans-boundary water resources and food insecurity resulting from lack of proper management of water bodies within the sub-region would surely be given way to cooperation among member states, leading to the maintenance of peace and general security within the sub-region.

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AVERTING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN WEST AFRICA: THE ROLE OF THE ECOWAS'S COUNCIL OF THE WISE.

Salama Njie

According to scholars, poverty, political instability and recurring disasters have led to a precarious life for millions of people in West Africa. Conflicts that ravaged the sub-region in the past two decades could have been averted if proper mechanisms had been put in place. As a result the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to set up the Council of the Wise.

This paper will examine the role that the Council of the Wise could play in averting humanitarian crises in West Africa. It will explore the concept behind the Council of the Wise and will discuss its formation and mandate in mediation, reconciliation and management of conflicts in West Africa and will examine the vital role that the Council could play in averting or mitigating humanitarian crises in the sub-region. An overview of what constitutes a humanitarian crisis will be presented and conclusions will be drawn indicating that the only remedy to the numerous crises in West Africa is to set in place the right set of political and conciliatory measures.

Humanitarian Crisis: An overview

The term 'humanitarian crises' is understood to mean any situation in which there is an exceptional and widespread threat to human life, health or sustenance.¹ Such crises tend to occur in situations of vulnerability in which pre-existing factors such as poverty, inequality, and lack of access to basic services are further exacerbated by a natural disaster or armed conflict that vastly increases their destructive effects. The food security crises in West Africa and other slow onset and acute natural disasters affecting the sub-region have revealed new challenges for humanitarian, development and political actors. The sub-region has recently witnessed numerous armed conflicts that caused untold suffering and losses. The recent conflicts in Sierra-Leone, Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia, and Niger Delta in Nigeria for example, had significant consequences for the development of the sub-region. As displaced people continued to flow into neighbouring countries their presence stepped up the pressure onto the inadequate and already fragile infrastructure of the receiving countries, which may take years to recover.

West Africa has experienced a notable return of peace, and security in recent years, and the total number of victims of natural disasters has steadily declined over the

twenty-year period from 1960-1980; yet, overall human security remains fragile.² Numerous natural disasters continue to threaten the brittle political scenario of the region. Ecosystems are being seriously disturbed by human activity due to deforestation, soil erosion, and rapid urbanisation. The harm done by natural disasters, such as locust invasions and floods are being aggravated by social problems such as armed robbery and cross border crimes. In less developed countries, which often have been the theatre of protracted civil wars, these events can have devastating, long-term implications.

It is worth noting in brief the humanitarian crises in West Africa and their country specific causes:

Niger Delta (Nigeria)

The Niger Delta Crisis could be a test case for the Council of the Wise if they are to achieve their stated objectives. The claims and counter-claims arising out of the recent military operation was not properly addressed by both the Nigerian Government and the ECOWAS Commission. Reports stated that recently "troops on intensified their offensive against Okerenkoko, another community in Delta State, razing down all buildings in the all-out confrontation against militants... Community leaders said over 200 homes in Okerenkoko, the second largest settlement after Oporoza in Gbaramantu were left desolate by the Joint Task Force (JTF)." In addition, the nation is also faced again with a situation where members of the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) are being caught in the frontlines. The harrowing accounts of NYSC members fleeing the war zone calls into question, afresh, the continuing suitability of an important national institution. The country is facing serious problems. The Council of the Wise, through the President of the Commission should avert such humanitarian crises through dialogue between the parties involved. Instead they are silent on the Niger Delta issue despite the havoc it has caused. There is clearly a humanitarian crisis in the theatre of conflict, and the government's response must be swift, thorough and compassionate.

Côte d'Ivoire

- The volume of internally displaced people
- Delays in the electoral and disarmament processes
- Increase in food prices and food scarcity

Guinea

- The Impact of the conflict in the region
- The volume of refugees
- The military take-over

Liberia

- The impact of the conflict in the region
- Resettlement and return of refugees
- High cost of living
- The recent locust invasion: the Council of the Wise had not paid attention to the recent locust invasion in Liberia, which caused a humanitarian crisis. The ECOWAS Commission donated US\$ 100,000 to the government of Liberia to assist citizens who suffered losses caused by millions of ravaging caterpillars in the Sanoyea District of Bong County. Victims who lost their homes, farms and sources of livelihood due to the devastation caused by caterpillars, are now moving to other districts such as Zota and Suakoko.

Sahel (Mauritania, Mali and Niger)

- Drought
- Political instability

Guinea Bissau

- Political instability
- High cost of living
- Drug trafficking
- Rising youth unemployment

Humanitarian crises and peace processes

The dramatic scale of humanitarian crises suffered in many of the countries that saw armed conflict during the course of the years have, once again, demonstrated the close connection between humanitarian crises and war. Fighting prevents ordinary people from returning to their homes often forcing them to live in areas prone to drought or flooding, thus multiplying the devastating effects of natural disasters.

Famine and displacement are weapons of war that are knowingly used in many parts of the globe and limiting access to humanitarian aid in war zones is often a tactic adopted to weaken one faction or the other. Too often peace agreements do not manage to provide access to basic services and necessities for those displaced by wars and conflicts, nor do they help to change the structures that serve to perpetuate inequality and injustice. Is peace really possible without a response to the related humanitarian crises?

The legality of the ECOWAS Council of the Wise

Article 20 of the ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of 1999 provides the legitimacy for the founding of the Council of the Wise. The Council comprises of a group of eminent personalities who, on behalf of ECOWAS, can use their good offices and experience to mediate, conciliate and facilitate in conflict situations in West African countries. Paragraph 48 of the Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) further elaborates on their role by stressing the importance of preventive diplomacy in the management, resolution and peacekeeping phases of conflict in West Africa.

Mandate

In consultation with the President of the Commission and in cooperation with the Special Representatives, Envoys and mediators, as well as ECOWAS Zonal Bureaux and other ECOWAS agencies in Member States, the Council, depending on the circumstances is mandated to do the following:

- Advise the President of the Commission on all issues pertaining to the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in West Africa.
- The Council of the Wise shall undertake such actions deemed appropriate to support the efforts of the Mediation and Security Council and the president of the Commission for the prevention of violent conflicts;
- The Council of the Wise may, as and when necessary and in the form it considers most appropriate, pronounce itself on any issue relating to the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region;
- In carrying out its mandate as outlined above, the Council of the Wise shall act at the request of the President of the Commission.

Recommendations

Avert crises and conflicts

Many conflicts in the region are much localised and take place along borders in which the Council resided Such as the Mano River Region (Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Guinea Conakry, Cote'D'ivoire, The Council therefore should adopt a more proactive stance in determining emerging conflicts. It should engage in preventive diplomacy to anticipate and limit political instability, which has been the main cause of humanitarian crisis in West Africa. The Council is an innovative tool and ECOWAS members could use it to champion changes in their respective countries.

Addressing the effects of climate change and the need for collective action

In regard to crises brought on by natural disasters, the emphasis should be on developing a culture of 'disaster preparedness' in and for high-risk countries, on both the theoretical and practical level. In this vein the Council of Wise should closely work with the ECOWAS department of humanitarian affairs to develop effective early-warning systems that predict and help prepare for natural disasters, in particular for drought-related famine. Implementation of such early-warning systems remains a problem in most member countries, despite policies being already in place due to lack of capacity and funding. ECOWAS and the international should therefore consider assisting these countries with the necessary training and funding to implement the programmes.

ECOWAS should also engage with the international community to monitor changing climatic patterns, and to plan effective, and lasting responses to recurring environmental disasters. African governments need help in providing a long-term response.

It is said that a hungry person is an angry person. Hunger was caused by natural cyclical reasons, such as drought and poor administration of resources, but also by structural causes. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) were better equipped than the Security Council to propose solutions in that regard, but questions of governance, modes of farm production, and the supremely unfair agricultural practices of developed countries also had a role in today's debate.

Experience shows that attempts to make people, places and property less vulnerable do work. Fewer human lives are lost, less material harm is done, and when a new disaster does strike, the level of humanitarian aid is lower.

Promoting democratic governance

Governance itself is an indicator of the country's political state. Bad governance is a sign of lack of democracy, declining respect for human rights, and may be a cause of conflict. Food insecurity is often a consequence of poor governance and hunger is both a cause and an effect of conflict. Food shortages and inadequate food distribution are known causes of instability and increase the potential for conflict. Equally, lack of food, poverty, and increasing disease due to lack of immunisations may cause people to seek refuge in neighbouring countries increasing political and social unrest.

By working closely with ECOWAS' Department of Democracy and Good Governance, the Council of the Wise could ensure that the Protocol on Good Governance is implemented. This will minimise the injustices that most of the West African leaders continue to place on the poor and innocent people.

ECOWAS has over the years gained the confidence of the international community for its intervention in Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Togo, and Guinea-Bissau. With the

establishment of the Council of Wise to further promote peace and prevent conflict, a more proactive step has been taken to secure peace in the region. However, to achieve its stated objective, the Council should develop closer working relationships and engage actively with grass-root organisations. West African countries are still fragile and drastic measures must be taken to address the root causes of conflict, which includes high cost of living, youth employment, and armed robbery, drug trafficking, proliferation of small arms and light weapon and invasion of locust. The Council's main task should be to implement effective policies that advocate for democratic governance.

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FREE MOVEMENT, MIGRATION AND XENOPHOBIA IN ECOWAS: A CALL FOR MORE ATTENTION

Jimam, T. Lar

Introduction

Heads of Government of sixteen West African states established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975, with the understanding that it would serve as a catalyst for regional economic growth and development. While ECOWAS gained credibility in the last decade of the 20th century for its attempts to manage intra-state conflict in the sub-region, particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire, the Community has equally been pursuing the original goal of its founding fathers. In 1979 the member states signed a Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment of Businesses. Subsequently two supplementary protocols have been signed in July 1985 and May 1990. International migration and the movement of persons in West Africa predates the colonial era. While the pre-colonial states were not constructed along the same borders of colonial partition, over the generations people have migrated in response to political, economic and environmental factors. This continued unabated during the colonial and post-colonial periods.

As ECOWAS strives to deepen sub-regional integration and cross border cooperation in West Africa, there are emerging trends, which point to xenophobic tendencies and that, if not checked, could trigger internal conflicts and humanitarian crisis. At the root of xenophobia are issues of fear. Xenophobia is derived from the Greek words *xenon*, which means stranger, and *phobos* which denotes fear. The term xenophobia thus describes the fear of others. It is often expressed through anger, hostility, and violence, against people who are viewed either as strangers or settlers from another race, and or ethnicity and in our case study area nationality.¹

This is not entirely a new phenomenon; there have been historical cases across the sub-region.² This paper seeks to use this emerging trend to attempt an assessment of the ECOWAS protocol on Free Movement of Persons. It questions to what extent the futuristic objectives of ECOWAS transformation from a community of states to a community of people have been reflected into national country context. This is particularly important because the success of the protocol is a pre-condition for

achieving sub-regional integration. The paper is divided into two main sections. Section one identifies the main trends of migration. It identifies the factors that have informed historical and current migration trends across the sub-region and provides an analysis of such trends. Section two examines the rise of xenophobic tendencies and situates them within the process of ECOWAS implementation of the protocol on Free Movement of Persons.

International Migration in West Africa: Historical Trends

Despite the arbitrary breakup of several cultural groups in sub-Saharan Africa caused by European colonial powers re-drawing the political map of the region, socio-economic relations among these groups continued with no factual recognition of the new boundaries. Chumbow³ states that within the partitioned countries there is:

“An invisible but clearly discernible ethno-cultural boundary in the shadows of visible national boundaries, the former clearly undermines the latter as it penetrates into the various national territories and defiantly crosses national boundaries. This invisible boundary is maintained and nourished by the linguistic identity that cuts across the well-safeguarded national frontier. Linguistic identity across the border is therefore a powerful force to be reckoned with.”

As the sub-region gradually moves towards full integration, ECOWAS has recognised the leading role border communities have played in preserving cultural identities. Speaking at the opening of a workshop on cross border co-operation organised by the Sahel and West African club, the ECOWAS President Muhammad Ibn Chambas commended border communities for advancing regional integration. Chambas observed that:

“Activities in some of these communities where people inter marry and trade among themselves without hindrance, have drawn our attention to their potential in the acceleration of the integration process... The border communities are actually showing us the real way to go about unifying our people and their markets.”⁴

The cross border movements of communities living

on the border line of neighbouring countries is a product of historical cultural affinities as is the case of the Ewe, Yoruba, and the Hausa on the Ghana/Togo, Nigeria/Benin and Nigeria/Niger borders respectively. However, a trend of formal inter-West Africa migration developed over time as the result of various other social and economic dynamics. In the post-colonial decades migration across the sub-region was driven by labour demand and environmental changes, in particular desertification. The direction of the movement has been north south, east west and west east. Workers from Burkina Faso, Liberia, Nigeria, Mali and Togo all traveled to their destinations, the cocoa plantations of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.⁵ Cote d'Ivoire's post-independence leader Felix Houphouet-Boigny encouraged immigration from around the sub-region and introduced incentives such as the right to work and vote and property ownership to attract immigrants. In the 1970s as Nigeria enjoyed the benefits of the oil boom, it emerged as a major destination for immigration from around the sub-region. The expansion of the construction industry, roads and infrastructure, health and education attracted skilled and unskilled labour from Ghana, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Niger and Chad. These workers came through official and unofficial routes, and by 1982, numbered about 2.5 million.⁶

West Africa is bordered to the north by the Sahara desert. The continuous southward encroachment of the desert has considerably expanded the region's arid zones. This has in turn negatively affected the livelihood of agriculturalist and pastoralist who have been forced to migrate southwards, often crossing over to neighbouring countries and establishing new settlements.

Along with political stability comes economic growth and development. More current and recent sub-regional international migrations are largely situated within the very dynamic context of West Africa's political and social transition. As individual countries undertake moves towards more transparent and accountable democratic governance, migrants travel in search of better economic prospects. However, variation between achievement and failure is rather stark: while some member states carry the tag of political stability, others continue to struggle under the shackles of social instability and economic mismanagement. West Africa's complex political scenario has produced a fair share of forced migrants, a category driven by conflict.

A second category of migrants consists of businessmen taking full advantage of the ECOWAS Protocols and Frameworks on Rights of Residence and Establishment of Businesses. They range from major financial operators expanding banks and big financial institutions⁷ to small-scale petty businessmen in search of new markets. Another category to be considered is that of migrants engaged in transnational criminality. Transnational criminality is a global problem, with various levels and networks of operation. West African criminality is largely

organised and has close connections with politics. Key activities are human trafficking and the illicit trade of drugs. While West Africa serves as a source for human trafficking to the European markets, in the structures of the trade in drugs the sub-region is mainly used as a conduit for drugs from Latin America to European countries. The West African connections also engage in advance fee fraud, money laundering, illicit smuggling of diamonds and weapons, forgery and prostitution. Criminals take advantage of the ECOWAS frameworks to facilitate their movement across the sub-region, and they have operational variations ranging from small-scale crooks to major international dealers.

The foregoing illustrates how migration within the West African landscape is a phenomenon with historical connotations. Equally, xenophobic tendencies have also been prevalent in the sub-region within this historical context. The ECOWAS implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and the Establishment of Businesses which is itself a driver of current trends of migration, as it has been earlier referred.

The Free Movement Protocol and Rising Xenophobic Tendencies

The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the Right of Residence and Establishment of 1979 and its Supplementary Protocols of July 1985 and May 1990 are the key policy frameworks for West African sub-regional international migration development and management. Community citizens in possession of valid travel documents are allowed entry into member states without a visa for a period of ninety (90) days. Member states, however, have the right to refuse entry to immigrants they deem as 'inadmissible' under national laws. The provision on the Rights of Residence also allows Community citizens the right to entry and residence into all member states without the need for a visa. The implementation of the protocol has been carried out in phases. From 2003 to date several member states have launched a new common passport, this has been part of the efforts of the governments to fully integrate the region. Despite these major strides full implementation of the Protocol remains one of the major challenges for the ECOWAS Commission. ECOWAS President, Mohammed Ibn Chambas regards it as the major impediment and stumbling block to full sub-regional integration. In response to questions from a Nigerian daily in Abuja Dr Chambas noted that:

'Whenever I speak in public, one of the questions I get is the difficulty that ordinary people face when they try to move around in the region from one country to another. The cross border obstacle they face, particularly at the frontier where the processing of documents is extremely cumbersome and fraught with harassments, intimidation and, often times, plain extortion. Then on the highway you still find a lot of unauthorised checkpoints and road-

blocks. All of these stand in the way of free movement of persons, especially with regards to free movement of goods.⁸

While disputes of entry at the borders continually constitute a challenge to the implementation of the Free Movement Protocol, the key focus of this paper is to strike a balance between the immigrants' right to free movement and residence within the host member state, and the host governments' responsibility to its citizens.

As indicated previously, xenophobic tendencies in West Africa are by no means a recent phenomenon. Several West African states have had xenophobic manifestations at various periods in the decades after independence. In most prominent cases government failures and economic recessions were blamed on illegal immigrants and in some instances legal immigrants were attacked and deported. Until the late 1960s, as the Ghanaian economy prospered and flourished, the government entertained and encouraged immigrant participation in the national economy, paying little attention to the immigrants' residence status. Unfortunately, when the fortunes of the economy turned sour, following a drop in cocoa prices - the country's main income earner, internal revenue decreased and unemployment rose. The government blamed the economic woes on the immigrant population and took drastic action. The Aliens Compliance Order was enacted, which gave illegal immigrants two weeks to legalise their status or leave the country. Consequently about 1.5 illegal immigrants were expelled from the country. Most of those expelled were fellow West Africans from neighbouring countries, of which a large number were Nigerians.⁹ On a similar line with the Ghanaian situation, following Nigeria's oil boom in the early 1970s excessive government capital was expended on economic, social and infrastructural development, with demand for labour exceeding supply, a massive influx of immigrants legal and illegal from neighbouring countries crossed the border to pick up available jobs. When oil prices dropped in the early 1980s, Nigeria suffered a recession. Similar to Ghana, illegal immigrants were blamed for high inflation and unemployment. The Nigerian civilian administration was quickly losing support amongst its citizens, and in January 1983 desperately responded with an expulsion order for illegal immigrants. This did not save the situation and the administration was overthrown in a bloodless military coup in December 1983, the military junta carried another expulsion order in 1985. It is estimated that about 1.5 million immigrants were expelled from Nigeria. Geographical proximity meant that most of those expelled were West Africans. Ghanaians were the most affected, as at the time Ghana was going through severe economic recession.¹⁰

Other cases of xenophobia occurred more recently within the sub-region. A prominent case is the much reported 'ivorite'¹¹ theory and policy in Cote d'Ivoire, which has been seen as one of the causes for the

country's civil war. As indicated earlier, for decades Cote d'Ivoire attracted workers from its neighbours, particularly Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria and Ghana. The fall of cocoa prices meant economic austerity for the once buoyant labour demanding economy, and a creeping resentment for immigrants burst into the open in post Houphouet-Boigny era. This resentment was also meted out to citizens particularly in the northern region of the country, as new laws no longer recognised their citizenship status. Alassane Quattara a Muslim from the north and former Prime Minister was disqualified from contesting elections on the grounds of nationality. The ongoing political stalemate in Cote d'Ivoire where the continued postponement of national elections is linked to questions of citizenship is a problem, which traces its roots to xenophobic tendencies.

In July 2005, 44 Ghanaians' and 9 others were reportedly killed in Gambia. Four years after the killings, the families of the deceased are yet to get the full story of what occurred. It is however important to note that there is a Special ECOWAS Committee investigating the killings. In July 2002 several Nigerian-owned businesses in Freetown-Sierra Leone were attacked in riots by rampaging youths who were out to avenge the death of a businessman allegedly killed by Nigerian fraudsters.¹² Such cases have reoccurred in Freetown, where alleged criminality of some unscrupulous and dubious elements is taken out on innocent businessmen because they are believed to be of the same nationality with the suspected criminals. While on a trip to Sierra Leone in November 2008 I gathered anecdotal accounts of anti-Nigerian attacks in Freetown, the grievance was in response to alleged ritual killings.

The above examples are indicators of patterns occurring almost anywhere across the sub-region. When things begin to go awry - political uncertainty, social decay, economic down turn, increase of crime rates, employment crises and capital flight - immigrants become easy targets of attack.¹³ Although some of the examples reported occurred before the ECOWAS Protocol was operationally implemented and in some cases long before it was even conceived and ratified, recent cases are occurring despite its implementation. This suggests that there is some disconnect in the implementation process.

The protocol has been officially adopted and although it was met with many challenges, it is now formally operational at border entry points. However, it is clear that the wider population within member states is unable to understand and fully appreciate the provisions of the protocol, in particular those who have had neither reason nor opportunity to travel beyond their national borders.

The genuine need to achieve a balance between the integration of immigrants and issues of personal and social security are tough challenges for host

countries. Local citizens may feel the need to express their concerns over the activities of immigrants. However, xenophobic tendencies are dangerous and attacks must be condemned in their entirety. Coordinated action at all levels is required. It is vital that awareness is promoted and conscience among the citizens of the ECOWAS community. Promoting collaboration between existing ECOWAS institutional organs and civil society organisations is a potentially powerful tool for advocacy and raising awareness.

It is not an entirely unfounded fear for citizens to express their concern on the activities of immigrants, particularly where issues of physical and social security are involved. Nonetheless, xenophobic attacks must be condemned in their entirety. The development is dangerous and requires coordinated action at all levels, as there is a genuine need to achieve a balance between integration (free movement) and host country concerns, particularly stability and security. What is by far more important is to promote awareness and 'conscientising' Community citizens. Existing ECOWAS – civil society collaboration is a potential vehicle for advocacy and awareness.

Regional and international initiatives have been promoted with a view to eradicate xenophobia and all forms of intolerance. Most recently in August 2008, representatives of African governments and The United Nations met in the Nigerian capital Abuja, to discuss racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia on the continent. The meeting was in preparation for the Durban Review Conference, which was held in April 2009, at the United Nations Office, in Geneva. The main objective of the process is to evaluate progress and assess implementation – at national, regional and international levels – of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa.

Conclusion

International migration and xenophobic tendencies are not new phenomena in the West African sub-region. This paper highlights that xenophobic tendencies across the sub-region are indeed on the rise. Clear political choices need to be made. To take a path of denial means to risk the worse. Alternatively, well thought-out coordinated policies can help bring Community citizens on board to become the driving force behind the implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement and the Rights of Residence. This is crucial at a time when West Africa like other regions in the South is just beginning to feel the effects of recent economic downturns. Co-operation among Community Member States and its citizens could make the difference between the last time major West African economies relapsed and now.

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