

WEST AFRICA REGIONAL CONTROL ARMS UPDATE N°4

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Editorial

The Programme « Arms for Development », which is being implemented through our national and regional partners, is reaching the end of its second year of implementation. From 12 till 15 February 2008, the review and planning meeting will be held in Ziguinchor, in the South of Senegal.

Before the start of the meeting, partners send their progress reports, to be analysed and published by the team. Emphasis will be put on the accomplishments and lessons learned.

This fourth edition of our bulletin focuses on some of the activities realized by our partners. In view of the increase of knowledge and the increase of stakeholders in our field, the sessions on the difficulties and intervention strategies are crucial.

For that purpose, the United Nations Centre for Peace and Disarmament in West Africa elaborated a manual for training on peace and disarmament, and trained trainers from 15 ECOWAS countries, and Mauritania. Wanep, another regional partner, focused its training activities on the women in the Mano River Union.

National partners like Fosda, Afrique Enjeux developed awareness-raising and learning strategies in the field, focusing especially on communities directly affected by the presence of arms.

One of the highlights for the conflict transformation team has been the field visits in Casamance by a team composed of 4 volunteers from Oxford and the International financial director from Oxfam GB. These moments of exchange have been well appreciated by the partners.

This newsletter intends to give you an update on our activities. You have the possibility to gain much more knowledge on what we are all doing by reading the different reports.

Good reading to you all !!!!

By Mohamed Coulibaly

Regional Control Arms Programme Review/Planning Meeting in Mali

The third Review/Planning meeting of the West Africa Regional Control Arms Programme was held in Bamako from 27th to 28th August 2007. As a review, this internal OGB Partner meeting is intended to be a planning meeting, to increase transparency and accountability on both sides.

Each of the 7 programme partners sent two representatives to the meeting.

In order to emphasize the regional nature of the programme and to enhance cross learning, Oxfam GB was represented by OGB Liberia, OGB Ghana and OGB Bamako, as well as the Conflict Team from OGB Dakar. Finance and Funding from the regional office were also present to help partners build their capacity on reporting and financial aspects.

This review/planning meeting was an opportunity for the Conflict Transformation Programme team of Oxfam GB and its partners to:

- Discuss the activities that have been conducted, the progress made and difficulties encountered
- Discuss strategies to implement programmes and lessons learned
- Agree on the activities and the budget submitted for Year 2
- Present the administrative, financial and programme procedures in order for them to be better understood and applied by partners.

It was also an opportunity to analyse the achievements of the past half year by programme partners (Waansa, Unrec, Panafstrag, Wanep, Afrique Enjeux, Commission Nationale).

This analysis has shown that major progress has been made in the various programme components particularly in the area of **research** with the study by Panafstrag on harmonising national legislations on arms in West Africa and a study by the National Commission from Mali on the issue of small arms in the Sahel-Saharan regions of Mali. This research has highlighted the regional nature of illegal arms trafficking circles which cover the whole of the West African sub-region.

In terms of **capacity building**, programme partners have organised training courses on techniques for prevention and conflict management for the members of the peace management committees which are made up of respected members of the villages and which play an important mediation role.

Our partners have also conducted **advocacy and lobbying activities** to promote the ratification of the ECOWAS convention on SALW which was adopted in June 2006. These communication activities included in particular the organisation of radio programmes focusing on the issue of involving women in the peace process.

The programme is centred on two fundamental bases: **security and development**. It especially targets grassroots communities and aims to contribute to improving the security environment and also to reducing poverty which is one of Oxfam GB's principal missions. This is the reason why the programme puts special emphasis on micro- projects which make income generating activities

available to the local populations which should improve their daily lives.

The meeting looked at lessons learnt from our interventions and identified the constraints, challenges and problems. Fortunately solutions were identified together to counter these difficulties.

We are delighted with the dynamic undertaken by our partners in conjunction with the administrative authorities, the ECOWAS Commission through ECOSAP and the political leaders from the countries of the sub-region.

Regional Conflict Transformation Programme Team

Partners Section:

Foundation for Security and Development in Africa, Ghana

Enhancing Human Security Through Arms Control

The Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA), programme partner in Ghana has initiated a unique awareness-raising programme dubbed, 'Workplace Focus Group Discussion' where the Small Arms Control Team of FOSDA meets with different professional groups in the Tamale Metropolitan area once a month to discuss human rights and the negative effects of the proliferation of small arms. Ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts have been identified as one of the causes of underdevelopment in the Northern Region of Ghana. The recent upsurge of disturbances in Nanumba Traditional Area, the Gonja Traditional Area and the Dagbon Traditional Area has continued to be a matter of concern to all. As an organisation whose focus is on linking human security with development, FOSDA has embarked on a series of awareness-raising programmes aimed at meeting identifiable groups at their work places or places they congregate to educate them on the dangers associated with illicit proliferation of weapons.

Since 2006 they have been meeting once a week to discuss a myriad of issues in connection with arms proliferation in the region. These monthly programmes which are organised with the groups are supplementary to a weekly radio discussion programme in three languages (Dagbanl, Gonja and English) which also touch on the general threats to human security and how they could be circumvented in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations.

The main objective of the interactive educational programme is to raise awareness in the participants about the effects of small arms availability and its misuse on human security and development. It is also aimed at building the capacity of the participants to muster courage and join the crusade to appeal to those they know to possess guns in their homes and work places to voluntarily surrender them to the security agencies since the region is still under arms embargo imposed by the government of Ghana as a measure towards curtailing armed violence and conflicts. The right to life and to descent economic livelihood is an inalienable one that must be respected and enjoyed by all. This position was highlighted by Abubakari Iddrisu Saeed, the Programmes Co-ordinator of FOSDA Regional Office in Tamale during one of the sessions with the beneficiaries.

So far local beneficiaries have been educated to understand the repercussions of armed conflicts and the toll conflicts have on business activities and other facets of development in general. They have also been sensitized to draw the attention to the misplaced priorities of spending on arms instead of the education for their children. According to Mr. Abubakari Iddrisu Saeed, most of the money that is used to purchase the weapons that are used to perpetrate violence in the communities could be used on more productive social programmes that would result in reducing poverty in the area. Mr. Abubakari Saeed intimated that, the Northern Region of Ghana is ranked the third poorest region in Ghana. The Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) indicated that three out of ten people in the Northern Region are poor and are not able to have three square meals a day. According to him, the situation in the area becomes worse during the lean season in Ghana.

Mr. Mohammed-Shani Suhnoon, the Small Arms Project Officer, encourages the formation of more groups which makes it easy for them to be reached with very useful developmental messages. He intends to link them up to other NGOs for the possibility of accessing micro-credit support.

Mohamed Suhnoon, Fosda Small Arms Control Officer

Partners Section:

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

Training of Trainers' workshop in the areas of practical disarmament and peace-building.

The CAPP project aims at building the capacities of West African civil society organizations (CSO) in a bid to support the efforts of the governments on the implementation of measures related to practical disarmament and peace-building. To this end and following the meeting of international experts for the validation of the training curriculum, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) organized from 12 – 15 November 2007 in Lome, Togo, as a pre-test of the relevance of the training programme in the curriculum, a training of trainers' workshop for civil society and grassroots organizations.

About forty participants participated from CSOs which are active in the field of practical disarmament and peacebuilding coming from the 16 West African countries, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

The training was carried out by highly qualified trainers who were co-opted by UNREC and drawn from international and sub regional organizations as well as academic and research institutes such as UNDP, UNHCHR, ECOWAS Small Arms Unit, ECOSAP, WANEP, GRIP and WAANSA.

The training methodology included lectures, simulation exercises, role-playing and interactive discussions. Materials such as Power Point, documentary films, slides and flip charts were used. Applying the principal rules of adult education, most lecturers adopted an interactive and participatory approach in order to maximize the potential of each participant. Using the aforementioned methodology and in the presence of moderators during the daily sessions, the trainers successfully delivered within four days sixteen courses in all.

Opening Ceremony

In addition to the participants, the opening ceremony of the workshop was marked by the presence of eminent personalities representing the institutions of the Republic of Togo, the diplomatic corps and international organizations as well as many other guests. Several speeches were delivered, namely, those of Mr Rodger GLOKPOR, Programme Manager of the CAPP Project, Mr Baffour AMOA, President of WAANSA, Mr Mohamed COULIBALY, Conflict Transformation Programme Manager at Oxfam GB and Mr Tondoma LALLE, Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Security who delivered the opening address on behalf of the Minister. Dr. Ivor Richard FUNG, Director of UNREC delivered the keynote address. By and large, all these speakers commended the relevance of the initiative taken by the UNREC through this training of trainers' workshop.

Proceedings

Three lectures were delivered during the first day of the workshop.

- Lesson 1, Module 1: "The sociopolitical environment and armed conflicts in West Africa".
- Lesson 4, Module 2: "General knowledge on small arms and light weapons".
- Lesson 21, Module 5: "Capacity building for civil society".

During the second day of the workshop, four lectures were presented, including,

- Lesson 6, Module 2: "SALW Control Mechanism".
- Lesson 9, Module 3: "Practical Disarmament and peace-building".
- Lesson 11, Module 3: "Practical disarmament initiatives in West Africa". Lesson 12, Module 3: "DDR in West Africa".

The following four lectures were delivered:

- Lesson 14, Module 4: "Peace-Building".
- Lesson 16, Module 4: "The institutional framework for peace-building".
- Lesson 17, Module 4: "Peace-building initiatives in West Africa".
- Lesson 23, Module 6: "Internet".

The fourth and last day was the busiest day as five lectures were delivered by Mr Baffour AMOA, President of WAANSA.

- Lesson 26, Module 7: "Project Development". Lesson 27, Module 7: "Resource Mobilization".
- Lesson 20, Module 5: "Basis for partnership in practical disarmament, SALW control and peace-building in West Africa".
- Lesson 29, Module 8: "Implementing the training programme in West Africa".
- Lesson 30, Module 8: "Follow-up and evaluation of the training in West Africa".

The proceedings were conducted in a studious atmosphere which enabled the participants to draw the maximum benefit from the teachings of the workshop.

An evaluation of the substantive and technical organization of the workshop was carried out by the participants followed by the handing over of participation certificates. In addition, the participants adopted a motion which requested from UNREC and its partners to find the ways and means to organize a training of trainers' workshop as an annual event.

The participants also promised to maximise all their efforts in order to ensure a proper replication of the knowledge acquired at the national level.

Cappa Team, UNREC

Partners Section:

Afrique Enjeux, Senegal

Exchanges between projects : a source of learning

The conflict programme in Casamance has had two successive visits from colleagues from Oxford: a team on a so-called “communication tour” made up of four people and the International Finance Director of Oxfam GB. This might seem normal but this is not so if we take a closer look. The conflict programme, implemented in Casamance since 2000, has never generated so much interest from Oxford. In six years no external person from Oxford has ever visited the programme’s projects. The trigger seems to have been the arrival of the Trustee Richard TAYLOR in May 2007.

So what is there to see, you might ask? Why are these projects so interesting to the partners?

In fact there is nothing exceptional except that the projects being carried out perfectly espouse Oxfam GB’s aims and integrate the needs and rights of the communities. For more than a year now, thanks to PAISUD and above all to PARSED financed by the Swedish Development Agency as part of the “Arms For Development” Programme, the many activities that have been implemented on the ground use an approach that is both inclusive and participative. This includes: the creation of local peace management committees, the organization of cross-border dialogue, training in peace building and financing micro-projects to support the process of people returning to their lands and rebuilding their villages. All these activities follow a process that involves the communities living along the border between Senegal and Guinea Bissau.

The visitors were impressed with the sense of commitment and support from the people as well as the relevance of the approach and the already visible impact of the projects being carried out. Ms Mc Garva, the Financial Director of Oxfam GB made the comment that *“from this visit, I now understand what goes into conflict projects and the Control Arms Campaign; up until now these interventions have just be theoretical for me. I had to come to the field to understand the relevance of the approach and its real impact. Through this I have seen and now realise that a conflict project integrates several key objectives and values to Oxfam GB (integration of gender, poverty reduction, good governance, capacity building for local people, respect for human dignity, etc.). That is what is so great!”* Genny, one of the members of the “communication tour” team made similar remarks and declared that *“what is so remarkable is the passion and enthusiasm with which the people are embracing these projects! This motivates us even more and shows that the work we are doing upstream contributes to making positive change in the lives of people”*.

These few comments on what we just see as normal as it is our daily work, teaches us two things:

- There is a huge gap between the theoretical knowledge of development issues and the realities on the ground. Theory and strategies should feed more into action and not simply evolve into a narrow mindset of intellectual thought.
- Exchanges are sources for learning and change.

They are sometimes more formative than all those seminars and workshops. And thus they should be more highly prized.

Samba Barry, Conflict Transformation Programme Officer, Senegal/OGB

Partners Section:

West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP)

Conducting Monitoring Visit in Sierra- Leone

In November, Alimou Diallo, WANEP Regional Programs Coordinator for Network and Development visited Sierra Leone to monitor the Voices of Women radio discussion program. He visited Freetown and Kenema, the Eastern Provincial capital where he witnessed live broadcast of the November VOW episode and interviewed beneficiaries.

The Regional Secretariat of WANEP conducted a three – day monitoring visit to Sierra Leone to assess the WIPNET Project. The main objective was to obtain first hand information in view of assessing the level of implementation for the period of March 1st-November 20th 2007 and measure its impact vis-à-vis enhancing community women's participation in influencing decisions at local and national levels.

The monitoring mission revealed tremendous achievements in terms of implementation of the year two planned activities with appreciable quality of service delivery for completed activities. However, recommendations were made to enhance documentation of all radio discussion programmes on CDs and in text. The translated WIPNET training manual in Kreole was also reviewed and recommendations made for final editing before publication and dissemination.

By Alimou Diallo, WANEP Regional Programme Coordinator

Regional Conflict Transformation Programme

A synergy of actions for better programme delivery

After a year of implementation, one of the main learning from the regional conflict transformation programme is the harmonisation of partner reporting to respond the funding agency's requirement on this and its budgetary classification. This was the reason why the regional finance team gathered programme partners, Oxfam programme officers, finance and funding staff to agree on ways of being better at working on good standards and harmonise ways of working from November 5 to 6, 2007.

The meeting was also an opportunity to have the same perception of some key programme concepts and to review the different roles of finance and programme staff within the programme. This will avoid facing the same challenges during the 2nd year of the regional conflict transformation programme. Results from this gathering will be key to the identified next steps that are the implementation of new working tools, the review of fund transfer process to avoid partners have delays in carrying out projects and the evaluation of the workshop learning.

Key Events for Upcoming Months

- 13 - 15 February 2008** : Regional Control Arms Review/Planning Meeting in Ziguinchor
- 18 February 2008** : Meeting of Civil Society National Network on Small Arms in Senegal
- 26 - 28 February 2008** : Transborders Meeting in Kayes
- March 2008** : WAANSA and Conflict T. Programme Team Visit to Liberia
- March 2008** : ATT Capacity Building Workshop for WAANSA Members