FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

GENDER AND SECURITY POLICY IN WEST AFRICA

by Ecoma Alaga

A working paper

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About this paper

In order to integrate gender more systematically into its regional work in West Africa, FES had commissioned gender analyses of its thematic project areas in 2010. The paper at hand is an extract of the gender analysis on FES's regional project on security policy. It summarizes those general parts that might also be of interest to others working on security policy in West Africa.

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1. Introduction

The last decade since the adoption of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 has witnessed increased efforts at international, regional and national levels to systematically integrate gender perspectives into peace and security discourse, policy and practice. This is in recognition of the i) differing experiences and impact of conflict, violence and insecurities on the lives and livelihoods of women, men, girls and boys; ii) roles (both current and potential) which women and men can contribute to peace and security processes at all levels; and iii) significance of gender in addressing structural issues of inequality/inequity which fuel conflict, violence and insecurities by undermining efforts to eradicate poverty, enhance economic growth and democratic governance, and achieve sustainable development.

Today, even in highly patriarchal African societies, it is widely accepted that the incorporation of gender perspectives as a governance and human rights principle in all sectors (security inclusive) is essential for i) enhancing institutional and operational effectiveness by increasing responsiveness to the specific needs, concerns and aspirations of men and women; ii) ensuring representativeness and the optimal participation of all (and indeed both gender groups) towards the pursuit of peace, security and development; iii) underscoring democratic and good governance principles of equality, non-discrimination, respect for human rights, transparency and accountability; and iv) ensuring compliance with international, regional and national commitments which most governments are parties to. However, despite the acceptance in 'principle', the dilemma confronting especially most security actors and institutions is how to systematically incorporate gender perspectives in their functions in a consistent and sustained manner that facilitates transformative changes and translates actions into real benefits for men, women as well as the state and its institutions. It is against this backdrop that this paper is published to offer a gender focused situational analysis on security in West Africa and to highlight some good practices recorded thus far.

2. Clarification of Concepts

In this section, a number of key concepts are clarified in order to provide nuanced understanding and mitigate any ambiguities. This is particularly crucial because the definitions associated with concepts such as security, security sector reform and governance, gender, human security, sex, security sector, among others are varied and in some instances often used interchangeably.

Gender

Gender refers to the social construction of female and male identity[1]. It refers to the socially constructed roles of and relations between men and women and differs from 'sex' which refers to biological characteristics which define humans as female or male.[2] In day-to-day parlance gender is often used interchangeably with sex however in social sciences it refers specifically to socially constructed and institutionalized differences[3], whether real or perceived, which have been valued, used and relied upon to classify women and men and to assign roles and expectations to them.

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[1] Ministry of Women's Affairs, New Zealand: http://www.gdrc.org/gender/framework/what-is.html
[2] http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/dossiers/trade-and-gender/what-is-gender
[3] G. Argyrous and Frank Stilwell, *Economics as a Social Science: Readings in Political Economy*, 2nd ed., (Pluto Press, 2003), in the feminist economics section, pages 233–243

Gender Roles

Gender role refers to the set of attitudes and behavioral norms that are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific gender group or identity within a specific culture[4]. It is socially constructed, is a product of socialization experiences, and is often politicized and manipulated to result in the oppression of people of a particular gender group.

Gender Analysis

Gender analysis is a systematic process of considering the impact that a development policy, programme or project may have on women/girls and men/boys, and on the economic and social relationships between them.[5] It provides a basis for robust analysis of the differences between women's and men's lives (their roles, statuses, positions and privileges)[6], and this removes the possibility of analysis being based on incorrect assumptions and stereotypes. Gender analysis therefore seeks to examine the differences in women's and men's lives, including those which lead to social and economic inequity for women, and applies this understanding to policy development and service delivery. It aims to achieve positive change for members of a disadvantaged gender group. For instance with regards this FES analysis, it has been observed that women are largely excluded from security processes and therefore the gender analysis will largely aim to achieve positive change for women. It must be noted that gender analysis aims to achieve equity, rather than equality.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the public policy concept and process of assessing the different implications for women and men of any planned policy action, including legislation and programmes, in all areas and levels.[7] It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.[8] Its ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Gender Equality

Gender equality is first and foremost a human right.[9] It refers to the equal valuing of the roles of women and men. It does not imply that women and men are the same, but that their interest, needs and priorities should be valued equally and accorded equal treatment.[10] It works to overcome the barriers of stereotypes and prejudices so that both sexes are able to equally contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political developments within society.[11] However it must be recognized that equal treatment will not produce equitable results, because women and men have different life experiences.

Gender Equity

Gender equity is the process of being fair to both women and men. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must often be available to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent a particular gender group from otherwise operating on a level playing field.[12] Not only do gender equality

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[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_role
[5] www.acil.com.au/glossary.htm
[6] www.nrcm.org.mw/gender/concepts.html

[7] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender mainstreaming
[8] United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) 1997
[9] http://www.unfpa.org/gender/
[10] http://www.ippf.org/en/Resources/Articles/What+is+gender+equality.htm
[11] www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au/globaled/go/cache/.../517
[12] http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_difference_between_Gender_Equality_and_Gender_Equity

approaches take into consideration the differences in women's and men's lives; it also recognizes that different approaches may be needed to produce outcomes that are equitable. Equity leads to equality.

Violence against Women

Violence against Women (VAW) is a form of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.[13] It constitutes a whole range of issues and is manifested in different forms at several levels, from the domestic to the state and the international community; and is rooted in structural inequalities and patterns of discrimination against women in everyday life.[14] Violence against women is a tool for entrenching the institutions of patriarchy and is used to perpetuate continued male dominance and control over resources and decision making.[15] Violence against women is not only a health and human rights issue[16], but also a security challenge.

Security

Security is a public good that is necessary for ensuring individual and collective safety, stability and development. It is the primary function and responsibility of the state to deliver this public good, 'security', to its people and communities in an appropriate and accountable manner as to prevent conflict and foster development. Wherever this public good is deficient, the opposite appears, that is the rule by force, which in

turn tends to contribute to the eruption of violent conflict.[17]

Human Security

Human security is an emerging paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities whose proponents challenge the traditional notion of national (state-centered) security by arguing that the proper referent for security should be the individual rather than the state. Human security holds that a people-centered view of security is necessary for national, regional and global stability.[18] Its criticism notwithstanding, human security could be said to transcend traditional military-centered notions of security to include a concern for the welfare of vulnerable groups in society, particularly women and children.[19]

Security Sector

According UN Secretary-General (2008), the security sector is "a broad term often used to describe the structures, institutions and personnel responsible for the management, provision and oversight of security in a country. It is generally accepted that the security sector includes defense, law enforcement, corrections, intelligence services and institutions responsible for border management, customs and civil emergencies. Elements of the judicial sector responsible for the adjudication of cases of alleged criminal conduct and misuse of force are, in many instances, also included. Furthermore, the security sector includes actors that play a role in managing and overseeing the design and implementation of security, such as the ministries, legislative bodies and civil society groups. Other non-state actors that could

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[13] Beijing Platform for Action
[14] Marie Vlachova and Lea Biason, 2005,Women in an Insecure World, Violence against Women facts, Figures and Analysis
[15] Juma, M and Alaga, E (2010), Gender Training Manual for the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF)
[16] http://www.who.int/gender/violence/en/

[17] Jaye, T and Alaga, E (2010) Module on Security Sector Reform and Conflict Prevention, a publication of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
[18] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_security
[19] Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS): http://www.fasngo.org/terms.html

be considered part of the security sector include customary or informal authorities and private sector services"[20].

Security Sector Reform

The UNSG (2008) defines security sector reform (SSR) as a process of assessment, review and implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation led by national authorities that have as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the States and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law[21]. For OECD-DAC, SSR focuses on the security system/sector and is described as including all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions -- working together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance, and thus contributes to a well-functioning security framework.[22]

Security Sector Governance

Security sector governance (SSG) simply emphasizes the governance element of SSR. It reflects the broad notion of security because it does not cover the military alone, but acknowledges the predominance of non-military security forces and of the important role of oversight institutions. The concept of governance is crucial to understanding the process of SSR in any country; it is an integral part of the overall debates about reforming or transforming security agencies whether in stable, democratic, or post-conflict societies. Governance is about processes and systems and not just structures. This implies that SSR should include all governance systems, processes and structures in any given country in order for its security sector/system to become democratic, effective, and efficient. This is crucial because in many countries, the Executive Branch controls and supervises the security sector and uses it as a tool for suppressing its own citizens; it serves the interests of the regime in power and without control and supervision from the other branches of government such as the parliament, the security sector becomes repressive, unaccountable, and undemocratic.[23]

ECOWAS Region

The ECOWAS region is one of the five regional groupings in Africa. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of fifteen countries, founded in 1975. Its mission is to promote regional peace and security in order to facilitate "economic integration in all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters.[24]

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[20] Report of UN Secretary General: "Security Peace and Development: the role of the United Nations in Supporting security sector reform", 23 January 2008, paragraph 14

[21] Ibid, paragraph 17

[22] Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC), 2005, Security System Reform and Governance: DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, p.20; http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/8/39/31785288.pdf

[23] Jaye, T and Alaga, E (2010) Module on Security Sector Reform and Conflict Prevention, a publication of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre

[24] http://www.comm.ecowas.int/sec/index.php?id=about_a&lang=en

3. Situational Analysis

Africa's recent history is replete with sad episodes chronicling the legacies of failing states characterized by self-entrenched leaders, new so-called freedom fighters, warlords, and private armies. The failures of economic development and governance on the one hand, has generated new security challenges including transnational organised crimes such as trafficking of humans, drugs and weapons; growing youth crisis; contentions over land, water and other natural resources; chieftaincy disputes; militarism, piracy and terrorism; environmental degradation; corruption and marginalization; and religious extremism among others. On the other hand, military insecurity and violent conflicts perpetrated by the new rebels have claimed millions of lives and displaced millions of ordinary Africans. The majority of war-related deaths are civilians as the senseless violent conflicts and wars transform homes, villages, towns, and cities into battlegrounds. Significant numbers of child soldiers are also engaged in these new battlefields; and sexual violence, particularly rape increasingly employed by both regular and irregular armies alike as a method of warfare and political oppression with impunity. This grim picture is made grimmer with the apocalyptic HIV/AIDS pandemic claiming the lives of many Africans.

However, the situation has not been utterly negative. For the first time in history, a majority of African countries are living under some semblance of a democratic government; median per capita incomes have increased by 80% over the last 40 years (from $1088 to (1800)[25]; oil prices have increased by six-fold since 2002[26]; infant mortality rates have declined by 75% since 1960[27]; and there is increased efforts

to improve collaboration at the continental level as to collectively address common challenges.

As a region, West Africa has experienced the collective security challenges highlighted above as well as its own distinct (in)security problems. As captured by Yoroms (2004)[28], the trajectory of security dynamics in the sub-region can be seen at three levels. In the first is a context where insecurities was driven by colonialism i.e. the politics of divide and rule, economic flight and the existence of colonial states which were highly linked to their home governments yet lacked key institutions which were present in the developed social structure. The transfer of power to the local *petit-bourgeoisie* in the sub-region only served to exacerbate the problem as in their quest to monopolize power, the new 'elites' exhibited political behaviors characterized by misappropriation of public funds, unethical practices, thuggery, deceit and political violence[29].

The second level is a context which was characterized by post-colonial states which lacked the capability to manage and administer the structures that had been inherited from the colonial administrations; resulting in internal contradictions and crisis that generated a bout of insecurities arising from state failure and/or collapse. What followed was an era that was characterized by dictatorships and one party state, endemic corruption, inter-state conflicts and military coups and counter-coups which heightened militarism and militarization. As a matter of fact, except for Cape Verde and Senegal, all countries in the sub-region have experienced at least one coup; and in some up to six.

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[25] Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre: Trans-Sahara Security Symposium; Statistics presented by Brig. General (Rt) Russ Howard, 2008
[26] Ibid
[27] Ibid

[28] Yoroms, G., Survey of Regional Security and Security Sector Reform in West Africa; in Sanda, J. (ed) 2004: Democratic Governance and Regional Security in West Africa ; FES Publication
[29] Bangura, Y. (1987): Structural Adjustment and the Political Question, in Olugbemi, S. (ed): Alternative Political Future for Nigeria, NPSA, Lagos, pp 24-25

The third level is the post cold war context in which new security challenges emerged as characterized by mass revolutionary pressure; arms transfer; rise in ethic militias, criminality and terrorism; trafficking in drugs, humans and arms; illegal mining and fishing; oil bunkering; money laundering; cyber crimes; youth unemployment; piracy and other maritime security issues; rising electoral fraud and disputes such as being witnessed in La Cote D'Ivoire after the 2010 presidential election; democratic reversals (including the recent unconstitutional changes of government in Niger, Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry over the last two years). Within this context has also been insecurities arising from intra-state conflicts and wars which have had severe impact on civilians, including deaths, displacements and the utilization of sexual violence as a method of warfare. Within this context rising poverty and disease such as HIV/AIDS can also be categorized as security threats as it exacerbates the insecurities of ordinary men and women within the sub-region.

In the subsequent section, a more detailed situational analysis of these security threats is carried out in order to highlight its differing effect and impact on men, women, boys and girls in the sub-region.

3.1 The Gender Dimensions of (In)Security in West Africa

From the above, it is clear that the threats to security in West Africa are largely intra-state in nature; rendering State and military centered security almost irrelevant. The referent of security is no longer just the State, but also the individual (human) and their security is linked to their all-round development (economic, political, social and ecological); access to justice including respect for their human rights and the rule of law; a conducive environment in which to operate; and in situations of complex emergencies, rapid and sustained humanitarian assistance. An understanding

of the differing impact of insecurities on men and women is thus crucial for effectively meeting the human security needs outlined above. It is against this backdrop that this section analyzes the gender dimensions of the human security challenges in West Africa.

3.1.1 State Failure and the Proliferation of Non-State Actors:

Most African states were built and sustained by the patronage system. Resources to sustain this system are depleted. Also, most state institutions are not functioning. The state can no longer provide basic services such as security, water, education, health and sanitation, and roads. The absence of these necessities has increased popular discontent. Consequently, the false foundations of most states in West Africa are crumbling as their military and political elites undermine them. In addition, tension between the one-party undemocratic (and autocratic) states and pressure from Western donors for African states to democratize and promote good governance plays a part in the increased unstable conditions in the sub-region as this for instance fuels electoral insecurities as power holders resort to all kinds of activities to perpetuate themselves in power.

From a gender perspective, it can be said that the foundations upon which African States are built and sustained is highly gendered. The lack of societal consensus on fundamental issues, the unrepresentative and repressive governance approaches utilized by the State, coupled with the destabilizing impact of economic and social disparities have resulted in conflicts between and among genders. Political power has become a currency for accessing State resources; resulting in the systematic exclusion and marginalization of minority and vulnerable groups such as men from minority ethnic groups, women

and youth from key public governance sectors.

Furthermore, in light of its inadequacies, State security apparatuses have been mobilized for state/regime protection at the expense of citizens' human rights and respect for the rule of law. Their failure to provide security for citizens has resulted in the privatization of security and proliferation of non-state security providers whose activities are most often unregulated and unchecked by the State --thus doubly jeopardizing the security of citizens (men and women alike). In most cases, the recourse to traditional security providers[30] promotes discrimination and violence against particularly women and girls due to prevailing stereotyped cultural norms about the roles and relations between and among men and women.

At another level, it is important to note that the proliferation of non-state actors has also opened spaces for citizens' participation in different sectors including in monitoring and influencing government policies and actions. This third sector, also called the social economy sector is the area where one finds not-profit, non-governmental organizations that are involved in diverse activities to among others give a voice to the 'voiceless' and provide the platforms for marginalized groups, including women, youth, the disabled, and minority groups, etc to both State and the private sector.

3.1.2 Youth Bulge/Crisis:

The growing youth bulge in the sub-region has been identified as a current security concern for a number of reasons. The first is as a result of the crisis of the State (as discussed above) and its impact on youth vis-à-vis bad governance and corruption which impede their access to education,

healthcare, employment, participation in decision making and leadership, and fosters rural–urban migration and brain drain in the quest for greener pastures. The second has to do with the crisis originating from youth and impacting on society as it relates to the participation of young people in violent conflict, gang warfare, criminality and other kinds of violent behaviour. For instance, as noted in the UNDP report, between Liberia and Sierra Leone there were at least 40,000 young men and women who are trained combatants. Guinea trained and armed over 3,000 youths in 2000 and never disarmed and rehabilitated the young people at the end of the insurgency; and at least 8,000 young people fought on all sides during the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire[31]. Ethnic militias and political thugs in Nigeria are young men and women who decry the government for its non-responsiveness to the developmental needs of the Niger Delta.

In framing youth bulge as a security concern, it must be stated that the issue of youth crisis is in itself problematic. This is because there are differing views of what age group constitute youths. However, it must be noted that as a social construct this is the age when identity is questioned and refined; and in West African societies this process is influenced by a number of socio-cultural factors which in turn presents crucial gender dimensions for understanding issues relating to the youth. Generally in West Africa as elsewhere in Africa, the concept of youth is intrinsically linked with the idea of transition from childhood to adulthood.[32] This implies a shift from a phase of life in which the individual needs protection, sheltering and guidance to one of self-determination, maturity, independence, responsibility and accountability for decision-making[33]. During this stage, societal expectations and

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[30] Alaga, E, (2009): Security Sector Reform and Protection of Women in Africa, Seminar Report, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA): http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/reports.html

[31] http://www.youthconverts.org/projects.html
[32] Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and Development in Crisis? A UNDP Publication 2006
[33] Ibid

personal aspirations of young men and young women begin to diverge; and as was aptly captured in a joint report UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, "the world expands for boys and contracts for girls"[34]. Girls begin to experience new restrictions and the attitudes, behaviour, conduct and, in particular, the sexuality of young women begins to be more closely watched, and even 'policed'[35]. Cultural norms dictate that females are sheltered at the stage of puberty, for reasons such as purity and marriage, stigma or family reputation. Consequently in many societies, young women are relegated to private domestic spheres and are neither visible nor actively engage in public governance processes.

For young men, the transition from boyhood to adulthood has different defining markers as often boys are left to 'prove their manhood'. In many societies, it is also socially and culturally acceptable for the stage of youth to be longer for young males than for young females, and for young males to be visible. During this time, young males are likely to gain much more autonomy and mobility than their female counterparts; and given the prevailing erroneous predication of African States, the economy, civil society and the community on the notions of adulthood, young men often have more opportunities to participate in the public order than their female counterparts.

3.1.3 The Plunder of Natural Resources and the Question of Resource Governance:

West Africa is richly endowed with both human and vast natural resources; however this has largely not benefitted the majority of its peoples because of weak institutions, poor management, political instability and high levels of corruption. The paradox between the vast resource wealth and poverty of its people pose great challenges

for the sub-region. Central to these challenges is the issue of the 'resource dependency complex'[36] in which West African States are immersed and its implication for politics. Another challenge is that of the resource-conflict nexus, particularly the ways in which resource endowment features as a cause, trigger and/or driver of violent conflicts as in the case of Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Liberia. Here, resources are conceptualized as a source of finance for conflicts and an object of contestation; drawing attention to the issue of resource management and governance which has implications for conflict, stability and security in the sub-region.

Resource governance has to do with the institutional processes and mechanisms for managing and regulating the extraction and transformation of natural resources and the social distribution of the benefits and liabilities[37]. As indicated in the FES Regional Security Policy document, resource governance becomes much more imperative when one considers emerging security issues bordering on "climate change, environmental degradation, and population growth which will further aggravate conflicts over scarce resources such as arable land, water, fishing and hunting"[38]. Where governance is inclusive and participatory, effectively mediates competing demands on natural resources, and prevents environmental degradation and resource scarcities, the prospects for peace, security and development is higher. On the contrary, where governance is undemocratic and poor, alienating and exploiting the majority, feeds into inequalities and inequities, and where resource extraction is wanton threatening the environmental basis of the livelihoods of the people, the likelihood of violent conflict is high.

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[34]UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO (2003:2).
[35] United Nations World Youth Report (2003).

[36] Obi, C. (2010): Natural Resource Governance and Conflict Prevention in Module on Conflict Prevention, KAIPTC
[37] Ibid
[38] FES Regional Strategy for West Africa, 2010, pg 21

In this regard, effective natural resource management is a tool for conflict prevention and both natural resource management and conflict prevention have their related gender issues. With regards to natural resource management, it is worth noting that the subsistence and livelihoods of male and female rural dwellers is largely dependent on agriculture, livestock rearing and fishing albeit with variations from one country to the other. However at the economic level, there are huge differences between the opportunities for men and women. For instance, in most West African societies women are not allowed to own and/or inherit land; access to, and effective control over, natural resources such as land, water[39] and forests are important indicators of gender power relations where women are in a marginalized position in terms of ownership, utilization and control. Women are rarely involved in large the scale mining and extractive sector but are more engaged in small-scale mining which is often associated with unsafe working conditions, historically unregulated policy environment and the lack of appropriate mining technology. In comparison to their male counterparts women also suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate change and environmental degradations on account of their gender roles which increase their domestic burdens and vulnerabilities. Men are however more prone to gun-related deaths and violence arising from violent conflicts over water stresses and ecological changes.

With regards conflict prevention, the lack of education (not necessarily in terms of secular education) impedes the access of particularly rural men and women to information in relation to early warning mechanisms and resources. At the formal level, the experience of the ECOWAS early warning and response network (ECOWARN) show that men have been more involved in conflict prevention; from the data collection, analysis to response-taking stages. This is in spite of the rhetoric about "engendering early warning" which has resulted in the development of gender-sensitive indicators to complement existing socio-cultural, political, environmental, economic and military indicators.

3.1.4 *Ethno-Politicization:*

Ethno-politicization has been a growing phenomenon in West African politics. It is usually utilized by politicians who exploit social divides in their desperation to rule. Ethno-politics driven by social, political, and economic exclusion is behind the xenophobia in Côte d'Ivoire, and behind inter-ethnic and inter-communal violence in Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal. The primary actors and direct victims of violence arising from ethno-politicization are men. This is mainly because the bulk of politicians and those engaged in politics and political parties at the strategic levels are men. A recent study by WACSI (2009)[40] affirms that from demographic considerations, there is a huge gap and representation deficit for women within party structures in West Africa. Women are entrenched in women's wings of political parties and this circumscribes their leadership potential to subsidiary roles.

3.1.5 *Bad Governance Including Democratic Reversals:*

In several countries in West Africa corruption remains at the heart of governance, contributing to the misappropriation and looting of state resources by political leaders.

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[39] While general conflicts are declining, land/water based conflicts are on the rise and growing in severity. This is related to the fact that 80% of 284 watercourses in Africa involve cross-border dimensions and there is increasing population pressure (human and animal) and the decreasing stock of resources (climate change, desert creeping, losses of biodiversity).

[40] The Status of Women's Leadership in West Africa (2009); a publication of the West Africa Civil Society Institute (2009)

Democratization is only paid lip service as insufficient knowledge and training for efficient electoral processes and the inability of political parties to sustain viable democratic processes become opportunities for electoral malpractice. The weak judicial system, coupled with the tendency for political leadership to manipulate constitutions and perpetuate itself in political office, create room for instability and the outbreak of violence as recently evident in Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Niger. Bad governance breeds corruption, exclusion and marginalization, inequality and inequity, violates human rights, disregards the rule of law and represses the opposition and media such that there is not oversight of the government and/or checks and balances. All of these constitute hurdles to the progress of individuals and the effective functioning of state institutions. Men and women alike are affected by the impasse created by bad governance; however women are likely to be worst hit because of the added effect of discriminatory cultural practices.

3.1.6 *Sharp Economic Decline:*

Despite West Africa's huge human and natural resources, it is classified as one of the poorest regions in the world[41]. The nexus between under-development and instability is palpable in the region. Impoverished youths and communities are convinced by warlords to fight for their own freedom by unseating governments. In the process they destroy the meager political and economic infrastructure of the country; thus, further exacerbating their impoverished conditions.

There is a crucial gender dimension to the problem of economic decline in West Africa. First it is associated with income decline including increased unemployment

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[41] West Africa Observer, SWAC/OECD, No. 1, January to March 2009; http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/15/42677552.pdf

(due to job losses), reduced remittances and access to credits and loans; increase in unpaid labour time; higher food prices; reduction and/or adjustment in government spending which for instance affects the delivery of basic services in the area of health, nutrition, education, etc. Both men and women are affected by these; however for men it may also result in humiliation and the loss of their self esteem due to their inability to fulfill their gendered obligations e.g. providing household income. This in turn increases child abuse and intimate partner violence (with mostly affects women).

3.1.7 *Popular discontent in the Military and the Challenge of Security Sector Governance:*

Over the years, military institutions across the sub-region have been used as 'personal guards' to entrench the tenure of autocratic regimes including in terms of quelling any opposition. Consequently most military institutions were themselves characterized by corruption, nepotism, and tribalism/ethnicity. They violated the human rights of citizens with impunity, disregarded the rule of law and took over power forcefully. At the broader level, this militaristic traits of military institutions imposed severe restrains on the fundamental freedoms of men and women alike, including in terms of arbitrary arrests, detention and often murder of opposition members. In some instances, the security forces have been known to perpetrate sexual violence against women and girls as the 28th September 2009 massacre in Conakry showed. At the institutional level, male personnel from minority ethnic groups and women in general have not been exempt from this nefarious culture. Male personnel from minority ethnic groups have in the past been arbitrarily been dismissed, denied promotion and/or physically assaulted. There have been individual instances of sexual harassment of female personnel and more generally, they

have been sexually harassed and victimized, and the militarist and highly masculine institutional culture have neither promoted nor protected the rights of female personnel. For instance, a recent assessment that was undertaken by the Women Peace and Security Network Africa (WIPSEN-Africa) revealed that women are underrepresented in security institutions (for instance no security sector institution in West Africa has at yet attained 20% recruitment target of women); there are less than 8% women in senior ranking and decision making positions within the sector[42]; there are no mechanisms and clearly defined procedures for investigating sexual harassment; there exist prevailing institutional norms that undermine women's participation in the operational (e.g. combat) units; and there is very weak oversight capacity within parliament and civil society to monitor and check on these excesses.

In a bid to ensure that the military (and indeed the entire security sector) deliver on their mandate to provide "accountable[43]" security to both citizens and the state, a majority[44] of African governments have considered some degree of reform of their security institutions. In itself this is quite laudable as the 'reform' or 'transformation' of the security sector can serve to buttress good governance and improve the performance of the sector. It is a vital tool for development, as no other reform -- political, economic or social-- can take root without security. However, the intensity and breadth of the reforms vary from country to country depending on number of different variables e.g. level of external pressure, status of the conflict (e.g. in 'peace', conflict, or post-conflict), etc.

Often, the need for reforms has been more pressing and wide-ranging in post-conflict countries as the experiences of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire have shown. The conditionality put forth by external partners[45] and/or levels of citizens' participation in the reform process have also been crucial for determining issue areas of focus. For instance, in the context of South Africa, Sierra Leone and Liberia, consultations with women's groups and/or the requirement that gender be included in the terms of reference of assessment teams have led to some gender-related security sector reforms.

3.1.8 Rising Gender and Sexual Based Violence (SGBV):

The culture of systematic and widespread sexual violence is now widely accepted as both a national and international security matter. Yet in especially national discourses around security (and more recently in security sector reform and governance), sexual violence tends to be considered a marginal issue, and/or a side-effect of insecurity rather than a key form of insecurity in itself. Consequently rather than solely preventing and/or responding to sexual violence, security sector institutions themselves tend to perpetrate sexual violence. Sexual violence is highly gendered act. Although a majority of victims of sexual violence are women and girls, men and boys are also targets of sexual violence. However, it is worth noting that due to stigma and cultural stereotypes, there less data is available on male victims.

In West Africa, sexual violence is a growing phenomenon[46] and the scourge is much more profound in conflict and post-conflict

[42] Gender Assessment of Security Sector Institutions in West Africa (2010): A WIPSEN-Africa Publication (Supported by the Urgent Action Fund)
[43] As qualified by the UNSG in the 2008 SSR Report
[44] A survey of forty-three of Africa's fifty-three countries by Hutchful and Fayemi in 2005 shows that a majority of African governments have considered some degree of reform in their security institutions.

[45] Though this is usually not ideal and cannot guarantee success
[46] IRIN, 2008: Liberia: Special Court for Sexual Violence Underway - http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77406

environments[47] as it has involved mutilation, sexual slavery and gang-rape of particularly women and girls. For instance in Cote d'Ivoire, a 2003 study by UNFPA showed that 31% of girls admitted to having been forced or coerced into non-consensual sexual relations[48]. In Guinea Bissau, Amnesty International reported that acts of sexual violence against women had been perpetrated by Senegalese soldiers at military checkpoints and in the barracks[49]. In Liberia, sexual violence was committed against women, men, girls and boys by all parties to the conflict. As a matter of fact, it is estimated that 40% of the population was affected by sexual violence during the 14-year conflict in Liberia[50]. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF estimated that over 250,000 women were raped during the conflict in Sierra Leone[51]; for which HE President Koroma publicly apologized to women on 27 March 2010[52]. Impunity for acts of sexual violence, chronic poverty, the lack of livelihoods opportunities and weak rule of law and justice mechanisms all combine to foster increased sexual violence. Thus sexual violence, not only has physical and psychological impacts but also socio-economic and political consequences.

3.1.9 *Transnational Organised Crimes: Trafficking, Money Laundering, Cyber Crimes:*

Transnational organised crime is an increasing threat to the national security of particularly democratic regimes. As a result, the fight against international organised crimes is not only a matter of national security, but one that calls for increased regional cooperation and the adoption of a common approach to resolution. Organized crime is no longer considered a delicate problem of criminality which has become spread and structured to a certain extent, but a phenomenon operating on a wide scale likely to harm the functioning of society and politics worldwide, although its effects vary depending on certain conditions.

A wide ranging inventory of organized criminal activities include the supply of illegal goods and services, such as the production and trafficking of drugs, trading in weapons, children, organs, illegal immigrants or nuclear material, gambling, usury, forgery, hired killings and prostitution; the sale of stolen property, especially luxury cars, animals and works of art; helping out legitimate companies in illegal matters such as breaking environmental or labor laws; the use of legal networks for illicit activities including the management of transport companies for drug trafficking or construction investment to money laundering; finally, systematic predatory action such as piracy, extortion and kidnapping. All of these activities are gendered; as can be deduced from the experiences in the Sahelian countries of Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania where men have been abducted, detained and/or killed. While women and men (as well as girls and boys) are victims as well as actors and perpetrators of these acts; the losses are more skewed against men because of their higher level involvement in criminal gangs, militias groups, etc.

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[47] Open Society Institute International Women's Program, Concept Note for Seminar on *Accountability for Sexual Violence: Innovative Strategies at Work in Africa,* March 2010: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women/events/sv-20100217
[48] United Nations Security Council Resolution , S/2006/835 pg 20
[49] Amnesty International, July 1998, Guinea Bissau: Human Rights Under Fire; and Amnesty International (April 1999) Guinea Bissau: Protecting Human Rights: A New Era?
[50] Refugees International, 2004, Liberia: Major Effort Needed to Address Gender-based Violence, http://interaction.org/newswire/detail.php?id=2567
[51] UNICEF, 2005
[52] http://69.4.229.6/drwebsite/publish/article_200515154.shtml

3.1.10 Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, Piracy and broader Maritime Security Issues:

Public discourses on security at especially international levels are hype with the issues of terrorism and counter-terrorism as a growing and urgent security concern. However, there has been little to no consideration of how these measures impact gender. It is important that focus placed on the gender dimensions of terrorism and counter-terrorism because these acts encompasses differing impacts on women and men, as well as affect gender stereotypes, including those on sexual orientation and gender identity. For instance, in Africa, there is the misconception that it is men who engage in and are largely affected by acts of terrorism. While this is somewhat true, it is also important to note that women are not only victims of terrorism and counter-terrorism measures, but may also be volitional actors in perpetrating acts of terrorism.

Experiences from other parts of the World highlight the centrality of gender to the discourse on this subject. This is because terrorism and counter-terrorism have had adverse gender-related human rights impacts on men and women individually and collectively. For instance, this may include adverse socio-economic impacts on female family members of men who have disappeared or detained; the bartering by governments of the human rights of women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals to appease terrorist and extremist groups; restrictive terrorism financing laws which undermine donations to charities and organizations that provide relief for gender-related violations; the use of sexual violence and other interrogation techniques that result in the emasculation of male detainees; restrictive immigration control and asylum procedures which may increase vulnerabilities of men to illegal migration and women to trafficking; delays at checkpoints which may increase risks of

child birth for pregnant women; deaths of both male and female suicide bombers; and the militarization of state security (especially border management) agencies and institutions which is attended by the harassment of and extortion from women and men at especially cross-border communities; among others.

The growing cooperation between terrorists and militia/rebel groups[53] in the Sahel (e.g. Niger, Mali and Mauritania)[54] as well as in Nigeria and Gabon (which have witnessed increased sea piracy and the sprouting of terrorist groups) highlight the risks of addressing issues of terrorism and counter-terrorism as a stand-alone. The activities of organised transnational crime syndicates are largely financially motivated and aimed at making profit. They are increasingly relying on terrorists groups to aid their safe passage and terrorist groups rely on these local rebel/militia groups for information, etc. These relationships are often underpinned by socio-cultural affinities including marriages and religion; further drawing attention to security dilemmas associated with poor civil-military relations in the sub-region.

3.1.11 Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons:

The proliferation of small arms is a threat to peace, security and development; and a problem West Africa has been plagued with following the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and the Casamance region of Senegal. In the aftermath of these wars and armed conflicts, small arms and light weapons continue to play a major role in fuelling organized crimes in the sub region. Men, women, boys and girls all experience gun violence in different ways.

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[53] Rollins, J. and Wyler, L., (2010), International Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Security Threats, U.S. Policy, and Considerations for Congress, Congressional Research Services
[54] Pham, J., (2008), Criminal Networks in West Africa: An Emerging Security Challenge: *worlddefensereview.com/pham052908.shtml*

Globally, there are higher percentages of men who are either perpetrators or victims of SALW violence[55], which is aligned to the societal (gendered) expectation that men should defend and protect their pride, reputation, families, country or property. In this regard, SALW thus become a tool and/or symbol of courage, masculinity or power. Like men, women are both victims and perpetrators of SALW violence. Some women conceal and transport weapons (sometimes using the guise of their gender roles such as carrying babies).

In light of the above, it is imperative that the incorporation of gender into security processes be coherent and systematic at all levels. As demonstrated from the discussion above, such systematic interfacing is essential for addressing both the structural and systemic causes of insecurity, inequality, inequity and violence between and among men, women and the State. All of which have implications on governance and for the FES this can best be addressed within the context of good and democratic governance at both State and regional levels. The incorporation of gender perspectives into all spheres of governance --social, economic, security, environmental, etc-- is critical if the causes and impact of insecurity are to be holistically tackled.

3.1.12 Electoral Violence and Insecurity:

Although electoral systems are important instruments for the consolidation of democracy, the conflicts and violence that have become associated with the electoral cycle constitute a major source of insecurity in West Africa. This is because of the tendency of the system to reduce politics to a zero-sum game where 'losers' are excluded from government. Therefore elections depict power relations and at the centre of this is interplay of the gendered power relations between men and women that is brought about by entrenched social

roles which have made it difficult for men and women to share power, privilege and status on the basis of equality.

In the pre election phase, gender dimensions are discernible in the institutional and legislative frameworks. National constitutions and electoral laws do not prevent any man or woman from participating in the electoral process. However cultural norms and practices allows for discrimination on the basis of gender. This is because social interaction and relations between men and women extend to the electoral process. As such, a woman seeking to be elected must first get clearance from the existing leadership structures in the community. These structures are, for the most part, male dominated, and the woman has to get the endorsement of the male family members and the wider community. The same does not always hold true for men, who endure a lighter level of scrutiny in their quest to vie for electoral posts. This is because women's social and political interactions are pegged to that of men, particularly husbands.

Female aspirants face the challenge of choosing where to vie for election, as they have to convince the members of the communities of their marriage and their communities of birth that they are fit enough to lead. Overcoming the hurdle of family and societal endorsement to present oneself for nomination leads directly to another hurdle with strong gender dimensions: the party nominations. Generally, political parties have women's wings and gender desks, but these are separate from the mainstream political activity and do not influence the party nomination processes substantially. For this reason, political parties rarely nominate women for elective positions.

The women who survive the party nominations have to then contend with the challenges around the campaign period. In the campaign stage, there are gender stereotypes around the personal roles of

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[55] World Health Organization, *Small Arms and Global Health* (WHO: Geneva), 2001

the women. A general perception shared by men and women is that the campaign trail is unsafe for the personal security of women. For this reason, the society does not encourage the active participation of women in campaigns. This view is not restricted to the aspirants, but also embraces the electorate.

These prevailing gender relations also influence the participation of the voters in the process. In the voter targeting strategies in the campaigns, a lot of emphasis is on how the candidates hope to correct the pre-existing structural anomalies in the society. These anomalies reflect the gender interactions in the society that are also evident during the campaign. Electoral campaigns involve large sums of money and are also a time of displaying societal leadership roles. Men are constructed as being superior to women in society and often given greater capacity than women to mobilize a variety of material resources and assume cultural roles of leadership. Voters regard female and male candidates differently and gender biases can affect the electoral prospects of women candidates. The gender stereotypes in the society affect the substantive issues that female candidates emphasize in their campaigns.

In the post election phase, especially where this is marred by conflict and violence, women are again the most affected by sexual violence which is used as a tool of political oppression and is intended to subdue and humiliate men as was seen in the post-elections violence in Kenya. The other aspect to be considered is in the arena of violent hostilities and the role of combatants. In most instances, it is men who take up arms and take part in the post-elections violence; resulting in higher fatalities among men.

3.2 Policy Frameworks relating to Gender and Security

At the normative level, there exist significant numbers of policy and legal instruments that call for the incorporation of gender perspectives into peace and security. This section basically lists a number of policy frameworks relating to the integration of gender perspectives in security that are applicable to the West Africa sub-region. These are structured at three levels: sub-regional, regional and international.

3.2.1 *Sub-Regional (ECOWAS):*

- ECOWAS Gender Policy (2004)
- Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999)
- Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001)
- Draft Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces and Security Services in West Africa (2006)
- ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2008)

3.2.1 *Regional (African Union):*

- African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981)
- African Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)
- African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004)
- African Union Gender Policy (2008)
- Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (2002)

- The Constitutive Act of the African Union (2001)

- The Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy (2004)

- The Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy (2006)

3.2.2 *International:*

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979)

- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)

- The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (1994)

- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 52/86 on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Measures to Eliminate Violence against Women (1998)

- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000)

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000)

- United Nations General Assembly Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (2000)

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 on Sexual Violence (2008)

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1888 on Women, Peace and Security (2009)

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1889 on Women, Peace and Security (2009)

From the list above, it is clear there is no dearth of policy instruments to give credence to the significance of incorporating gender perspectives into peace and security processes and structures in the sub-region. The major problem is the lack of implementation of these frameworks and the alignment of policies that specifically relate to gender and/or women's rights to policies, procedures and institutions working on peace and security. However, further field research needs to be conducted on each of the security threats listed /or discussed above to generate accurate and current sex disaggregate statistics and specific examples (best practices, etc) which can serve as a baseline for the development of gender indicators to monitor and gauge progress that will be made by actors in any of these areas in the future.

4. Gender in Security Sector: Good Practices from Elsewhere

As noted by Alaga (2009)[56] an assessment of initiatives that have been aimed at integrating gender perspectives into security related policies and projects reveal that efforts in this area have been approached in a piecemeal manner; and centered around a) policy review and/or development including the development of e.g. sexual harassment policies, institutional gender policies, enactment of rape law (as in Liberia) and/or the review of institutional policies to include gender-inclusive language; b) gender training for security personnel; c) the establishment of gender

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[56] Alaga, E. (2009), Security Sector Reform and the Protection of Women, UNOSAA Publication

structures within security institutions such as specialized units namely the Women and Children Protection Unit; Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit, Family Support Unit, and the Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit within the police forces in Liberia, South Africa, Sierra Leone and Ghana respectively to address issues of sexual and gender based violence; d) drive to increase female enrolment within security institutions including through the application of quotas as in South Africa where the Police Force and National Defence Force have recently increased their recruitment target for women to 40 percent and in Liberia where the Police Force has a target to increase female enrolment by 20 percent. In Liberia, the Police Force has further introduced an accelerated learning programme for young women in order to meet this set target.[57]

Still on the issue of increased female recruitment, female security staff associations can potentially serve as veritable tools for facilitating increased enrolment of women e.g. through mentorship and other forms of CIMIC[58] engagements. It is for this reason that WIPSEN-Africa and the Geneva-based Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) began to engage umbrella associations of women in the security sector in Liberia (Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association -LIFLEA) and Sierra Leone (Women in Security Sector in Sierra Leone-WISSSL)[59] and women's groups in community sensitization campaigns that aimed at changing cultural stereotypes about security being a male preserve as well as to portray women in the

security sector as role models who young girls can aspire to emulate.

As a strategy to generate political will and institutional commitment for gender equality and women's empowerment within the security sector, WIPSEN-Africa and DCAF have also engaged heads/senior-ranking officers of the Ministry of Defence (MoD)/Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) to among others review the Sierra Leone Defence White Paper to incorporate gender perspectives as well as develop an institutional gender policy and gender training manual to guide and build capacity for the development of a gender management system within the MoD/RSLAF. This has culminated in an on-going initiative to establish an Equal Opportunities (Gender) Unit within the MoD/RSLAF to be situated in the Office of the Chief of Defence Staff as to have the requisite influence, authority and resources to attain its mandate.

With regards the element of governance and the current limitations of Parliamentarians to exert their oversight powers, the African Security Sector Network (ASSN) and its affiliate bodies like the Conflict, Security and Development Group (CSDG) at King's College, University of London; the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF); Africa Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR); and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) have played a critical role in introducing the governance element of SSR. For instance, they have been working with the Liberia Parliament since 2004 to build and strengthen their capacities for democratic control/oversight of the security sector. Sadly, however, work in this area did not include a focus on gender until 2008 when WIPSEN-Africa and the Gender Programme of DCAF got on board. By which time there seemed to be some fatigue among the parliamentarians and a feeling that gender was merely being added on for no reason. This goes to re-emphasize the need for the

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[57] This entails recruiting high schools drop out and enrolling them at the Stella Maris Polytechnic which has an accelerated learning programme that enable the dropouts obtain high school certificates which is a requirement for recruitment into the LNP.
[58] CIMIC: civil-military relations
[59] The formation of WISSSL was facilitated by a joint project between WIPSEN-Africa and DCAF on Gender and SSR in West Africa

inclusion of gender perspectives right from the design and planning phases as well as the importance of systematic collaboration and partnership with women/gender structures and/or programmes throughout the project process.

The South Africa experience however depicts a different picture. This is a situation where the security reform process was highly inclusive, consultative and participatory including in terms of engaging women and other marginalized groups. Collectively all these stakeholders defined their common vision of a secured South Africa and the role of the different security agencies in achieving this vision. Relevant oversight machinery such as parliament and civil society where fully involved in this process; culminating in a better understanding of their oversight functions including as it relates to accountability to all gender groups.

5. Conclusion

The inclusion of gender considerations into security policy initiatives in West Africa is imperative in the quest for human security and the democratization of security policy. While many normative and policy frameworks exist in the region, there are still few effective strategies to fully domesticate them, in order to allow for gender sensitive security sectors. In the same vein, institutions and agencies at local, national and sub-regional levels need to effectively integrate gender into their work program and planning processes. This requires building and/or strengthening capacities of their staff, conducting a gender assessment to identify gaps and developing instruments to practically illustrate how gender can be integrated into their annual work program as well as those of the affiliates.

MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
NOPSWECO	Network on Women, Peace and Security in ECOWAS
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIF	International Organization of French-Speaking Countries
PCRD	Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SDGEA	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SSG	Security Sector Governance
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nation Office of Drugs and Crime
UNDCP	United Nations Drugs Control Programme
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa
UNREC	United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
VAW	Violence against Women
WACI	West Africa Coast Initiative
WACSI	West Africa Civil Society Institute
WAJO	West African Joint Operations
WANSED	West Africa Network on Security and Democratic Governance
WAPCCO	West African Police Chiefs Committee
WAPWA	West African Police Women Association
WCPU	Women and Children Protection Unit
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPSEN	Women Peace and Security Network Africa
WISSSL	Women in Security Sector in Sierra Leone

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