About WACSI

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) was established by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa to enhance the capacity of civil society in the region. The Institute was set up in an attempt to bridge the institutional and operational gaps identified in civil society.

VISION
The WACSI is committed to the development of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as strategic partners in the pursuit of democracy, good governance and national development in the sub-region.

MISSION
The Institute seeks to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of CSOs to engage in policy formulation, implementation, and the promotion of democratic values and principles in West Africa.

About OSIWA

Established in December 2000, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) is part of the global network of 32 autonomous foundations founded and supported by George Soros. These non-profit foundations share a commitment to the advancement of open society. Based on the premise that no one has monopoly on the truth, an open society recognises the importance of different views and interests and remains forever open to improvement. In practice, open societies are characterised by the rule of law, democracy, respect for diversity and human rights, free markets, informed citizenry, and vibrant civil society.

WACSI’s role is to serve as a resource centre engaged in training, research, documentation, and policy dialogue for CSOs in West Africa. The advocacy work of the Institute is conducted through its policy dialogue process, which brings together different stakeholders to deliberate on topical issues that affect West African States. Position papers are published by the institute and disseminated to policy makers.
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Message from the Chairperson of the Board

On behalf of the Board of WACSI, we are pleased to publish the Institute’s first annual report.

In November 2006, at the inaugural meeting to launch West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI), civil society actors laid out their expectations of the institute. It was apparent from the deliberations at that meeting that the consensus was for WACSI to serve as a resource center engaged in training, research, documentation, and policy dialogue for CSOs in West Africa. With a plethora of civil society actors doing exemplary work in the region, the rationale behind’s WACSI’s emergence was to enhance the work of CSOs by serving as a convener, capacity builder, information provider and brain trust for civil society.

The Board, management and staff of WACSI are reminded of these expectations and the institute’s policies and programmes have been designed to give expression to the needs and aspirations of civil society. Though the idea of WACSI was conceived in 2005, it has taken two years of preparatory work which involved consulting with civil society, hiring competent management and staff and developing responsive programmes of activities for the institute to commence full implementation in 2007.

As you will read from this report, the process of thorough planning has created an institute that provides cutting edge services to civil society and the entire region. Within one year, the institute has become recognised as a reference point for civil society capacity building, documentation of experiences and a platform for exchanges between policy makers and civil society.

We are confident that WACSI will be a central player contributing to the progression of democratic governance, peace and development in West Africa.

I take this opportunity to especially thank the Open Society Initiative for West Africa for its commitment and support to the Institute. We also appreciate the new partnerships and collaborations that WACSI has formed. We believe that our joint efforts will result in long term benefits for the entire region.

Thank you all for joining us on this journey. I wish you a happy and prosperous 2008.

Professor Adebayo Olukoshi
Board Chairperson, WACSI
Executive Director’s Report

2007 witnessed WACSI consolidate itself as a viable institute positioned to support civil society’s work in West Africa. The response of civil society actors to the institute’s mission and mandate validates the accuracy of the vision for the institute as conceptualised by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). WACSI in many ways has been born at a critical time. Civil society actors in West Africa have come of age and there is consensus that civil society is an important partner in governance, democratisation and development.

In 2007, Civil Society Organisations (CSO) played important roles in promoting democracy, peace and good governance in the region. For example, CSOs in Sierra Leone and Togo contributed to ensuring that elections in those countries remained peaceful. CSOs were vital voices in key international issues with implications for Africa, e.g. the discussions on European Union (EU) Africa relations; monitoring the progress of meeting the Millennium Development Goals; the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to mention a few.

However, the recognition of the role of civil society has brought increased scrutiny of the sector. There are calls for civil society to espouse a level of professionalism, transparency and accountability in its institutionalisation and activities. Criticisms that civil society actors operate without check and balances have led several governments across West Africa to consider legislation which would regulate the sector. Responding to this call requires CSOs to have strong internal governance structures and specific skills to implement their mandates and answer the needs of beneficiaries. This is where WACSI becomes relevant; the institute’s commitment to building the institutional and technical capacity of CSOs is deliberate and targeted. WACSI simply aims to “support CSOs do what they do better”.

This report highlights the activities implemented by WACSI over the last 12 months through its 3 programmatic areas; Research and Documentation, Training and Capacity Building and Policy Advocacy. The Institute’s maiden courses in Corporate Governance for civil society actors, NGO management have generated wide interest and have trained actors from 14 different countries.

WACSI also plays a convening role in the region and provides spaces for CSOs to reflect, debate and deliberate on national, regional and international issues. For example, WACSI joined Ghana in celebrating 50 years of its existence as a nation by organising an important seminar to reflect on civil society’s evolution in Ghana over the last 50 years in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) civil society resource centre and the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development (GAPVOD).

The Institute also organised two important policy advocacy seminars: on Strengthening the relationship between civil society and Human Rights Commissions in West Africa in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL); and on “Meeting the Challenge of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria: Partnership Between Civil Society and the Global Fund” in collaboration with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

WACSI commenced its research and documentation activities in the last year with two documentation processes: Conducting an Institutional Needs Assessment of the West African Civil Society Organisation Forum (WACSOF); and the role of Civil
Society in Election Monitoring in West Africa: the experience of WACSOF. The institute also launched WACSERIES; a quarterly online monograph written by civil society actors in the region.

Fostering partnerships and collaboration is one of WACSI’s core values and in the last year, WACSI established important partnerships with the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) civil society resource centre, the Global Fund to AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, WACSOF and the German Technical Cooperation. These collaborations have laid the foundation for deepening essential alliances to enhance the work of civil society and plans to form more partnerships have commenced.

The achievements of WACSI in 2007 were made possible by its key partner OSIWA, the Board of Directors, the dedicated WACSI team and civil society actors in the region. We are honoured by your continued support, and look forward to working together for many more years.

Thelma Ekiyor
Executive Director
WACSI at a Glance

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) was established by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) to enhance the capacity of civil society organisations in the region. The Institute was set up in an attempt to bridge the institutional and operational gaps identified in civil society.

**Vision:** WACSI is committed to the development of CSOs as strategic partners in the pursuit of democracy, good governance and national development in the sub-region.

**Mission:** The Institute seeks to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of CSOs to engage in policy formulation, implementation, and the promotion of democratic values and principles in West Africa.

The Institute’s work is carried out through three focus areas:

**Training and Capacity Building:** The institute provides training aimed at strengthening the internal structures of civil society. These include:
- Leadership and corporate governance of CSOs,
- Budget, funding and transparency
- Public Policy Processes and engagement
- Training for ‘successor generation’ in civil society
- Special training for the media
- CSOs competitiveness in the context of regionalism and globalisation
- Promoting ethics and values in civil society’s work.

**Research and Documentation:** WACSI partners with leading CSOs in the region to conduct training workshops in the following thematic areas relevant to West Africa’s socio-economic and political context. Training and Capacity building initiatives are implemented in the following areas:
- Macro-economic development
- HIV/AIDS
- Governance and human rights
- Peace and security
- Sub-regional integration trends, and Africa’s current development initiatives – New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
- Gender issues etc.

The Research focuses on mapping CSOs activities, their dimensions and impact, working on the broad range of civil society groups-Community Based Organisation (CBOs), professional groups, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Trade Unions, etc. The Institute also provides a base for reflections by leaders of CSOs that wish to embark on intellectual reflections on their practical activities.

**Policy Advocacy:** The Institute adopts a non-conventional approach to policy advocacy in West Africa. Its policy positions emanates from the policy dialogue process in which different stakeholders are brought together to share ideas and adopt policy positions on specific issues. Thereafter, a policy position paper is prepared, and then extensively circulated to relevant authorities and the general public in the sub-region. The Institute periodically commissions policy position papers to examine the specific issues within its mandate, which will serve as the basis for discussion and debate by stakeholders before being adopted, and disseminated. As such, the policy Advocacy Agenda of the institute is mostly of a proactive nature, rather than reactive.
List of Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>APRM</td>
<td>Africa Peer Review Mechanism</td>
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<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community Based Organisations</td>
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<td>CCM</td>
<td>Country Coordination Mechanism</td>
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<td>CHRAJ</td>
<td>Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<td>GAC</td>
<td>Ghana AIDS Commission</td>
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<td>ECOWARN</td>
<td>ECOWAS Warning and Response Network</td>
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<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FBOs</td>
<td>Faith Based Organisations</td>
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<td>GAPVOD</td>
<td>Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development</td>
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<td>GHANENGO-RBM</td>
<td>Ghana Network of Non Governmental Organisations in Rollback Malaria</td>
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<td>GTZ</td>
<td>German Technical Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>HRCSL</td>
<td>Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>ICTJ</td>
<td>International Centre for Transitional Justice</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Developmental Goals</td>
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<td>NACP</td>
<td>National Aids Control Programme</td>
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<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Partnership for Africa’s Development</td>
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<td>Open Society Initiative for West Africa</td>
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<td>POSDEV</td>
<td>Pan African Organisation for Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>UNAIDS</td>
<td>United Nations &amp; AIDS</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>WACSI</td>
<td>West African Civil Society Institute</td>
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<td>WACSOF</td>
<td>West African Civil Society Organisation Forum</td>
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<td>WADR</td>
<td>West African Democracy Radio</td>
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Poor governance continues to be a challenge in the region. It has become clear that governance deficit accounts for the single most important explanatory factor for continuous underdevelopment of West African states. The concentration of powers in the hands of the executive; politicisation and the institutionalisation of mediocrity in state bureaucracies; massive corruption and flagrant fiscal indiscipline; inadequate civic education and programs for citizen and nation building; and the politicisation of the military are key challenges to effective governance in West Africa.

The youth employment is another challenge in West Africa. Unemployment is rife among the region’s youth population, resulting in mass migration out of the continent. The sub region is also experiencing pressure on environmental resources, partly due to the unregulated non-sustainable exploitation of natural resources; and partly due to population growth, urbanization, and use of obsolete technologies for farming, and climate change. The rate at which West Africa’s environment is being recklessly exploited increases the vulnerability of the sub region to environmental disasters such as drought, floods, desertification, among others. Finally, HIV/AIDS spread and prevalence continues to be a threat to human security in the region.

The issues stated above are a snapshot of what West Africa and its people have to confront. Responding to these challenges demand multi sectoral approaches and collaboration. The responsibility of governance is not for governments alone. Civil society and private sector have to collectively ensure that governance is proactive in addressing the persisting developmental socio-economic threat to the people in the region.

Civil society has played various roles in West Africa’s growth and development. Their interventions in the social and political arena is justified and legitimised by different reasons. The first is the decline of the State in its role to provide the basic needs to the populations. Recent macro-economic policies have exacerbated the economic situation leading many countries to an unprecedented level of poverty in the region. Besides this, the lack of adequate foundation for the transition from one party autocracy to multi-party democracy has further stressed the fabric of states. In most countries, there are weak political parties, which often go into dormancy after elections. As a result rather than elections contributing to greater regime legitimacy and vibrant democratic culture, they have increasingly become a catalyst for conflict.

Civil society has made key contributions in the region to complement, inform, influence and challenge governments by pressing for public services, pushing to improve the performance of the state, lobbying for the rights of excluded groups as well as campaigning against corruption and engaging in public-private partnerships etc. Civil society has also contributed significantly to altering the traditional conceptualisation of governance across the sub region.

Whilst acknowledging these laudable contributions by civil society, many CSOs have also been criticised.
Whilst acknowledging these laudable contributions by civil society, many CSOs have also been criticised of not adhering to the principles of good governance, democracy and accountability. CSOs have been accused of siphoning donor’s funds, practicing internal nepotism, and a lack of commitment to the communities and voices they claim to represent. These criticisms have led to calls for a code of conduct or mechanisms to regulate CSOs activities. This ongoing debate is highly controversial and often results in exacerbating the already tense relations between CSOs and government, and as seen in Ghana over the proposed ‘Trust Bill’.

One issue is however incontrovertible that civil society has to ensure that it “cleans its house.” Self regulation has been promoted by many activists in the region such as Pan African Organisation for Sustainable Development (POSDEV). WACSI also believes in the ability of CSOs to be accountable to itself, its constituencies and the laws that govern the State.

Thus, the Institute’s policies and programmes are structured towards ensuring that the potential of civil society is enhanced, its institutions are strengthened and its actors have the requisite skills to achieve objectives.

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1 Trust and Non-Profit Making Civil Society Organisations Bill 2007 was proposed by the government of Ghana to regulate the activities of NGOs/CSOs in Ghana
Delivering Knowledge to Empower CSOs in West Africa

Building Capacity of CSOs for the Development of West Africa

Regional Training Needs Assessment Workshop
WACSI organised a “training needs assessment workshop for civil society organisations” on 20 to 21 September 2007. The workshop built on recommendations from WACSI’s inaugural workshop in November 2006, where civil society actors urged the institute to organise a regional training needs assessment workshop to:

- Analyse individual and collective skills and capacity needs among CSOs.
- Map out existing training initiatives and methodologies in the region along thematic lines.
- Examine strategies to develop common region-specific and indigenous training methodologies and approaches.
- Identify avenues for collaboration between WACSI and training organisations in the region.

The workshop brought together 30 representatives from civil society organisations in the region to identify specific training and capacity building needs required to improve their productivity and impact.

The workshop also reviewed the types and calibre of training initiatives in the region and critically assessed existing gaps and challenges encountered by civil society in the area of training and capacity building. Some of training needs identified include:

- Corporate governance
- NGO management
- Project management
- Fundraising
- Communication for development
- Report and proposal writing etc.

Regional Training Workshop for Civil Society in Corporate Governance
In accordance with its mandate to strengthen the internal capacity of CSOs in West Africa, WACSI organised a training workshop on corporate governance from the 24 - 26 October 2007. The session targeted senior management and board members of a cross section of civil society actors in the region.

Before the training, the board of the organisation was there just for profiling. After training there is greater involvement of board in the management of the organisation with their specific duties well described.

(Message from a participant)
The training which was facilitated by Psychon HR; experts in organisational psychology, addressed the challenges civil society face ranging from weak internal accountability systems and procedures, and weak or ineffective evaluation frameworks, and poor financial management. The training workshop brought together thirty (30) participants from CBOs, Faith Based Organisations, Youth Groups, Women’s groups and Regional Networks. The outcomes of the workshop include:

- Increased awareness among the participants on how to institute accountability and transparency systems;
- How to set up Boards and the roles of Board members;
- Enhanced ability to design functional financial management mechanisms.

**NGO Management Training for WACSOF**

WACSI organised a workshop on NGO management for WACSOF aimed at mitigating the management weaknesses identified within the Forum. The objectives were to:

- Create awareness of management challenges CSOs face in the region.
- Help create a dynamic and sustainable WACSOF leadership that leads to significant community impact.
- Highlight on preferred donor-driven NGO management structures and processes which make fund accessibility successful.

Twenty (20) members of WACSOF drawn from the different bodies of the Forum (Executive Committee, National Platforms and the Secretariat) attended the workshop. The workshop provided skills in:

- Programme and Project Management
- People Management
- Organisation Management
- Strategic Management
- Financial Management
- Corporate Governance
- Community Management
- Image and Advocacy.

The WACSOF is a network of civil society organisations from the 15 member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Membership is drawn from a cross-section of civil society organisations and activists. Established in December 2003, WACSOF was organised to galvanize the emerging ‘civic’ powers and facilitate constructive partnership with state authorities, political parties, as well as ECOWAS. The overall aim of WACSOF is to provide a CSO complement for ECOWAS’s efforts to foster democratic transition, peace, security, and development in member states. It is hoped that with established democratic culture would create a favourable environment for socio-economic development. WACSOF is a platform where CSOs will dialogue, identify their comparative advantages and disadvantages, build dense associational networks, develop institutional effectiveness and democratic culture, and increase CSOs visibility and relevance in both national public spaces and at ECOWAS forums.

*Source: www.wacsof.org*
Creating and Sharing Knowledge through Research and Documentation of CSO Interventions

Needs Assessment Study of WACSOF

WACSI conducted a comprehensive needs assessment study for WACSOF to assist the forum in its restructuring process. The aim of the assessment was to identify critical areas where the forum can be strengthened to fulfil its mandate as an intermediary between civil society and governments in West Africa. The needs assessment study was conducted through participatory approaches involving all the stakeholders in the process (WACSOF Secretariat, National Coordination, Executive Committee, Governments and Regional Bodies' officials in charge of CSOs among others). Four countries were visited (Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal, and Sierra Leone). The findings of the assessment will be utilised by WACSOF and its partners to enhance the effectiveness of the Forum in achieving its mandate.

The Role of Civil Society in Election Monitoring in West Africa: The Experience of WACSOF

WACSI aims to document the experiences and contributions of civil society in the region for new knowledge generation and sharing. As such, the strategy of WACSI is to encourage lead CSOs like WACSOF to “tell their stories” themselves. WACSOF's mandate is to promote democracy, good governance and human rights in West Africa. Within this mandate, the Forum is committed to election monitoring and observation to ensure free, fair and transparent electoral processes in West Africa.

WACSOF election process monitoring and observation strategy is implemented through the deployment of trained national and international observers. This cost effective strategy enables WACSOF to be engaged in a process of long-term observation by following the pre-election, election and post-election activities in target countries. The election observation is the most tangible achievement of WACSOF's contribution to democratization processes in the region. By all indications, WACSOF strategy is unique as it promotes non-state actors providing objective reports and assessments on electoral processes. However this strategy and experience has not been properly documented for future learning and sharing of experiences.

As part of its collaboration with WACSOF, WACSI has undertaken to document the elections observation and monitoring experiences. The aim of this study was to reflect and analyse the WACSOF’s approach, methodology and results highlighting achievements and challenges. The study covered legislative and presidential elections in three French speaking countries: Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Togo. It has adopted experience documentation methodology, which aims at drawing lessons learned and the highlighting of achievements. The study was conducted through participatory approaches involving all the stakeholders engaged in WACSOF elections process monitoring activities in each visited country.

The study revealed that WACSOF has a credible image as an elections observer in the visited countries. The Forum has become recognised for its impartial and independent reporting of elections, which brings a different voice to the process.

Development of a Regional Database on CSOs in West Africa

Civil Society Organisations in West Africa have exponentially increased over the last decade with informal and formal configurations, working at all
levels in the region. While this has produced positive outputs in terms of CSOs mobilisation on a broad range of issues, it has also introduced networking and collaboration challenges among CSOs as there is limited knowledge of actors in the field and their areas of specialisation. This situation often leads to duplication of efforts. Though there are some initiatives of databases at national level, the need for a reliable and up-to-date regional information system on CSOs in West Africa persists. Thus, WACSI has developed a database on CSOs working at different levels in the region. The database compiles basic data on CSOs working at regional, national and local levels, and has designed to allow easy access via the internet. The tool is available in French and English.

The current version provides information on CSOs in: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea (Bissau), Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The information in the database will be upgraded periodically and aims to cover all the fifteen countries of ECOWAS and the Cameroon, Chad and Mauritania.

Publishing WacSeries, Vol. 1, October to December 2007

WACSI has initiated its quarterly online publication titled “WacSeries”. The aim of the series is to highlight the contributions of CSOs to democracy, governance and socio-economic development in West Africa. The series documents all the areas of interventions by CSOs in the region. Each issue will focus on one topic.

The first edition of WacSeries documents the role of civil society in Sierra Leone’s 2007 elections.

Publishing Standards Setting Handbook for CSOs in Ghana

In Ghana, the numbers and influence of NGOs/CSOs has grown considerably, leading to the recognition of this sector as an unavoidable partner in the country’s socio-economic development. However, the invaluable work of CSOs has brought in its wake some degree of mistrust among the communities. The integrity, the accountability, the transparency, and the legitimacy of CSOs in Ghana are often questioned.
Hence, it has become necessary for the CSO community to commit to the principle of self-regulation, subscribe to some standards of operation, and establish an ethical code of conduct which members of the sector will agree to and comply with.

In Ghana, a CSO standards setting project coordinated by the POSDEV has been established. It aims to promote self-regulation among the NGOs and CSOs operating in the country. The main objectives of the project are:

- To demonstrate that NGO/CSO community is able and disposed to voluntary self-regulation.
- To promote organisational and institutional learning within organisations.
- To improve the quality and sustenance of services provided by NGOs/CSOs to the Ghanaian public.
- To ensure transparency, accountability and good governance in the operation of NGOs/CSOs by voluntary self-regulation.

The project has constituted Standards Commission comprising the heads of local and International NGOs all over the country, with the major role and responsibility of ensuring a peer review process for the award of seals/certificates to peers in compliance with the 35 Standards.

As a standards setting and knowledge-based institute, WACSI is participating in the project. WACSI’s involvement in the project is two-fold:

1) To build the capacity of CSOs which have identified areas of weaknesses as a result of the Standard’s assessment process;
2) to publish the Standards Setting Handbook to provide CSOs with information of the process in a “user friendly” format.

WACSI has edited and printed 1,000 copies of the Handbook. The printed version will be disseminated to donors, CSOs, and the media. WACSI will be engaged in publication of an online version on www.wacsi.org.

**Regional Resource Centre**

WACSI aims to serve as a knowledge base for civil society in the region. Therefore, the institute has commenced a process of establishing a regional resource centre. During the last quarter a consultant was hired to provide assistance in stocking the resource centre with literature, and multi-media materials on thematic areas relevant to civil society. The resource centre has now stocked books and donated publications from civil society, the World Bank and UN and other institutions. The centre is open for civil society’s use.

**Website**

WACSI has also developed a website (www.wacsi.org) that outlines its vision, mission and scope of work, activities, staff and board. The website also provides linkages to WACSI’s partners; OSIWA, West African Democracy Radio (WADR) and WACSOE. Since its development, the website has drawn attention to the institute and raised awareness of its mandate.
Key Recommendations

Strengthening Civil Society collaborations with Human Rights Commissions: The Case of Sierra Leone

- Civil Society and Human Rights Commissions should view their collaboration as necessary since both sectors profess to safeguard the rights of citizens. The example of Ghana where civil society is directly involved in the processes of the CHRAJ was highlighted as a best practice.
- Sierra Leone is in a post conflict stage, therefore collaboration between civil society and the HRCSL should prioritise working on issues that will prevent a resurgence of violence. It is important that the Commission and civil society in Sierra Leone work together to ensure the full implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations.
- The HRCSL suffers from human resource and skills gaps, therefore civil society with its broad expertise in human rights, peacebuilding, gender mainstreaming, fund raising and organisational development should partner with the Commission to build its capacity in these areas. Civil society actors should also provide “pro bono” services to the Commission to assist with the human resource challenges.

Engaging and synergizing CSOs for effective policy advocacy within West Africa

Policy Advocacy Seminars

WACSI fulfils its aim of positioning civil society to influence policies by organising policy advocacy platforms and seminars. These seminars provide the space for civil society to enhance its engagement and collaboration with policymakers and institutions working on critical issues affecting the region. In 2007, four (4) policy advocacy seminars were organised.

Strengthening civil society collaborations with Human Rights Commissions: the case of Sierra Leone

WACSI organised a roundtable discussion with the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) on 18 October 2007 on strengthening civil society collaborations with Human Rights Commissions. The central aim of the discussions was to assist the newly formed Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone in examining avenues for involving civil society in its work. The seminar brought together a cross section of actors from Sierra Leone and across West Africa to identify strategies for future collaborations with the Commission. The seminar also provided a platform for the HRCSL to learn from the experiences of the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) in Ghana and its interactions with civil society. The well attended seminar brought together the Chair of...
HRCSL and commissioners and well as the Head of the CHRAJ and officials. Human Rights activists in Ghana and Sierra Leone and other civil society actors made presentations on strategies for enhancing the collaboration between human rights commissions and civil society. The seminar also discussed the importance of sharing experiences between human rights commissions in the region. For example, the Ghanaian Commission has gained experience working with civil society and can serve as a reference point for other Commissions. It was noted at the seminar that the Sierra Leone Commission faces a number of challenges and partnership with civil society has the potential to address these challenges. Specifically, the seminar identified training in human rights and peace building, lobbying and advocacy, public awareness processes, documentation of Commission's progress and monitoring, as some of the areas civil society can contribute to the Commission's work.

“Meeting the Challenge of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria: Partnership between Civil Society and the Global Fund”

WACSI in collaboration with the Global Fund and WACSI organised a seminar on “Meeting the Challenge of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria: Partnership between Civil Society and the Global Fund” on 26 November 2007. The central aim of the seminar was to provide a platform for a cross section of actors to reflect and deliberate on strategies for enhancing collaborations aimed at addressing the HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria in West Africa. The seminar also examined avenues through which a cross section of civil society actors in West Africa can develop and enhance partnerships with the Global Fund.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria was created to dramatically increase resources to fight three of the world’s most devastating diseases, and to direct those resources to areas of greatest need. As a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities, the Global Fund represents an innovative approach to international health financing. Although CSOs are at the forefront of the fight against these diseases, there is need for them to enhance their engagement and collaboration with policy makers and institutions working on fighting these critical health issues affecting the region.
The debate and discussions at the seminar focused on the contributions of civil society to the Global Fund’s activities, the nature and type of funding available for civil society, and the criteria and procedures for accessing the Fund. The seminar also highlighted the institutional weaknesses within civil society that has affected their ability to access and utilise funds.

The Recommendations from the seminar include:
• The need to strengthen the relationships between the Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) and the CSOs
• The importance of providing or reinforcing the institutional and operational capacity of CSOs
• The Global Fund should revise its procedures for accessing the fund to take cognisance of the institutional difficulties experienced by CSOs in West Africa
• The need for more interactions between civil society and the Fund to improve implementation at all levels.

Regional seminar on “Reflecting on civil society’s evolution in Ghana over the last 50 years”

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Civil Society Resource Centre in Ghana and WACSI in collaboration with the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development (GAPVOD) organised a two-day regional seminar to reflect on fifty years of civil society’s evolution in Ghana and their contribution the country’s growth and development in Accra, on 8-9 December 2007.

The objective of the seminar was to provide a platform for a cross-section of over 100 civil-society actors to reflect on the progress, challenges and future of civil society in Ghana. Participants at the seminar were drawn from Ghana and across the West African sub region and included government representatives,
donor agencies, UN agencies, international non-governmental organisations and the private sector. The Honourable (Mrs.) Akosua Frema Osei Opare, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment in Ghana delivered the keynote address for the seminar.

Objectives of the seminar were:
- To provide a platform for a cross-section of actors to reflect on the progress, challenges and future of civil society in Ghana.
- To identify strategies for strengthening collaborations and partnerships amongst civil society in Ghana.
- To evaluate and improve the relationship between civil society and other sectors, e.g. private sector, donor agencies, and government.

The seminar covered the following themes:
- “Before we were called Civil Society”: An overview of popular participation prior to the emergence of structured civil society in Ghana.
- Safeguarding human rights in Ghana.
- The role of women in Ghana’s past, present and future.
- Assessing the role of civil society in the achievement of the MDGs.
- The relationship between civil society and traditional systems of governance.
- Reporting a nation: The state of Ghanaian media.
- Civil society and private sector relations in Ghana.
- Regional collaborations and challenges: An assessment of Ghanaian civil society’s contributions to democracy, peace and security in the sub region.
- Forging closer working relations between donors and CSOs.

Hosting the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) Workshop on Reparations

The International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) through its New York and offices across the world assists countries pursuing accountability for past mass atrocity or human rights abuse. The Center works in societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict, as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved. The Centre is committed to building local capacity and generally strengthening the emerging field of transitional justice, and works closely with organizations, namely CSOs, providing comparative information, legal and policy analysis, documentation, and strategic research to justice and truth-seeking institutions, nongovernmental organizations, governments and others. In West Africa, the Centre works extensively in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

WACSI hosted a two-day workshop organised by the ICTJ on the 4-5 October 2007 in Accra to reflect on the “Reparations in West Africa” as a transitional justice process. The participants were drawn from ICTJ’s staff and CSOs in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Africa.
Institutional Building

Building a reference and sustainable resource base institute for civil society in West Africa

The success of WACSI in its mandate will largely depend on the quality of its human resources and the effectiveness of its administrative and financial rules and procedures.

Staffing Process
To ensure high level of delivery and standard, the Institute has appointed qualified, experienced and competent staff from across the region. In July 2007, WACSI appointed an Executive Director; Ms. Thelma Ekiyor, a Nigerian citizen with wide experience working with civil society across the African continent. In October 2007, Mr. Thierry Kokou Kpehor, a Togolese citizen joined the Institute as Head of Research and Documentation from the United Nations. In addition to the senior management, WACSI Secretariat is composed of:

• Mrs. Katherine Adarkwa – Finance and Administrative Officer
• Mrs. Adama Sirah Bah – Executive Assistant
• Mr. George Adu Mintah - Protocol Officer / Driver
• Mr. Bethel Kwame Boateng - Office Assistant

WACSI’s institution building strategy involves maintaining a strong and efficient secretariat with core staff and hiring associates and resource persons to support implementation of its activities. The following individuals and institutions supported the Institute’s work in 2007:

• PsychonHR
• Ms. Ini Onuk
• Mr. Lansana Gberie
• Mr. Jacob Enoh Eben
• Ms. Elizabeth Nsarkoh
• Ms. Nana Ama Drowaa Adubofour
• Mr. Constant Gnacadja
• Mr. Siaka Coulibaly
• Mr. Charles K. Vandyck
• Mr. Allan George Lassey

Strategic Planning for a Sustainable Institute
WACSI organised a two-day strategic planning workshop to commence the process of developing a 5-year plan. The workshop was attended by WACSI’s management and staff, two WACSI board members, and regional and national civil society organisations. The two-day working session built on previous processes including the initial planning process in 2006, WACSI’s inaugural workshop in November 2006, and a Training Needs Assessment workshop organised in September 2007.

The objectives of the workshop were:

• To design a comprehensive 5-year plan of themes and activities for WACSI
• Develop a long-term strategy for WACSI’s collaboration with civil society, government and the private sector
• To design an informed Monitoring and Evaluation framework for WACSI

The strategic planning session covered the following were:

• Development of specific activities for WACSI’s core thematic areas
• Mapping of potential collaborations and partnerships
• Positioning WACSI to respond to West African regional context
• Designing an effective Monitoring and Evaluation framework for WACSI

The workshop created a platform for WACSI’s staff to reflect on the vision and mission of the organisation and reach a common understanding the strategies to achieve the goals of the institute. It also enabled civil society actors and board members to forecast and provide insights into the sort of activities WACSI should implement in the future.
**Insights on the Importance of WACSI to Civil Society Platforms in West Africa**

*By Prof. Oumar Ndongo, General Secretary of WACSOF*

The WACSOF was established in 2003 as an institutionalised platform of civil society organisations and networks from across the West African sub region with diverse backgrounds and experiences in human rights, peace and security, democracy and good governance, education, trade and commerce, health, and gender equality among others. Since then, WACSOF has provided an official corridor of dialogue for civil society groups in the sub region to engage with both national authorities in West Africa and the sub regional organisation, the ECOWAS.

Since its inception, WACSOF complemented the work of ECOWAS and member states in promoting regional peace and security, integration and economic development. In line with Article 8 of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance which calls on member states to use the services of civil society in electoral processes to educate and enlighten the public on the need for peaceful elections devoid of all acts of violence, WACSOF has been at the forefront of efforts advocating for free and fair elections and monitoring elections to provide an objective evaluation of the process across the region.

Much as a lot can be said for WACSOF in terms of its role in improving electoral processes within the sub region, it has failed to expand its scope beyond this area. A cursory glance reveals that apart from the difficulty in getting support to activate work in other thematic areas, the ability of WACSOF to pursue its agenda to the fullest has been greatly impeded by the inadequate capacity at all levels.

However, over the past year stakeholders have called for a change in scope of WACSOF’s work, to make the Forum’s impact felt at all levels of West African society. As a result, the mandate given to the new General Secretary of the Forum is to develop national platforms as well as expand thematic areas to other sectors apart from election observation missions.

There are efforts in place to provide a clear mandate to the WACSOF Executive Committee, to strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of the Secretariat based in Abuja, Nigeria.

Undoubtedly, these changes in themselves will not produce results unless there is commensurate and appropriate capacity building for various actors to meet tasks and challenges ahead. It is in this light that the collaboration with the WACSI is more vital and timely. It is indeed a necessary relationship which will help both institutions achieve their core objectives on a single platform.

WACSI’s goal to enhance the capacity of civil society in the West African sub region and bridge the institutional and operational gaps identified in the operations of civil society organisations within the sub region is one that is relevant for the current restructuring processes WACSOF is undertaking.

The importance of this collaboration for both organisations cannot be underestimated. While
WACSOF provides a platform for civil society in the West African sub region to interface with the ECOWAS Commission, WACSI will ensure that WACSOF is given the required capacity to interact with the Commission qualitatively and productively for the greater good of community citizens. Capacity building and networking therefore provide the obvious and immediate reasons why a WACSOF-WACSI collaboration is strategic and beneficial to both institutions.

Of paramount importance is also the aspect of research and advocacy which is one of WACSI’s core objectives. Most of WACSOF’s core members are engaged in advocacy across the various thematic areas. These campaigns must be grounded in facts and substance. Research then becomes the means to arriving at the facts that will provide the basis for positive engagement.

Also, much of the work that has been done by civil society organisations in the sub region has not been properly documented for knowledge and experience sharing. Consequently, civil society groups keep reinventing the wheel and not building on the work of others. Documenting the work of CSOs in the sub region will then reduce duplication and set civil society engagement on the path to growth. Again, the knowledge base on various areas in which CSOs are engaged will be deepened. Indeed WACSI’s Resource Centre will become a one-stop research library for WACSOF and its members.

So far, the collaboration has taken off successfully with WACSOF benefitting tremendously from separate workshops organized by WACSI on Corporate Governance and NGO Management in October and December 2007 respectively. In fact, the NGO Management course was specially designed and organized for WACSOF’s Executive Committee, National Chapters and the Secretariat. This has brought significant insights to how changes can be made in the Forum.

WACSI is also supporting WACSOF to document experiences in Election Observation. It is hoped that this document when published will become a veritable source of reference for CSOs in the sub region who are engaged in electoral matters.

In order to tailor their training programmes to meet the needs of civil society groups in the sub region, WACSI has done a Needs Assessment of WACSOF to identify the real challenges of its various structures so as to respond to them appropriately.

More importantly, WACSOF’s engagement in a project initiated by WACSI and supported by GTZ and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre on crafting a flagship annual Conflict Prevention Training Programme for CSOs in the sub region and beyond will assist WACSOF in concretising its work in this area.

Future training programmes in Proposal writing, Fund raising and Project Management, for instance, will help expand the operational capacity of WACSOF so as to meet the expectations of her stakeholders.

Although the benefits from such collaboration may not be immediately manifest, it is hoped that the quality of WACSOF’s output a few years from now would make it worth celebrating. It is hoped that this model of collaboration is emulated by more civil society actors in the region.

We can do more by working together, than by working apart!
Picture Gallery of Activities

Liberian Dance Troupe, from the Budumburam Refugee Camp in Ghana


Above: Dr. Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, Director of Global Partnerships at the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Geneva, Switzerland delivering the keynote address to participants, Meeting the Challenge of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria: Partnership between Civil Society and the Global Fund”, Accra, Ghana, 26 November 2007

Left: Family photo of participants, Corporate Governance training session, 24-26 October 2007
Left to right

Mr. Shigeki Komatsubara, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Ghana, addressing participants of Civil Society Networking Evening

Mrs. Nana Tanko, Executive Director, OSIWA, giving a solidarity address at the Civil Society Networking Evening

The WACSI Board Member, Mrs. Esi Sutherland-Adby welcoming guests to the Civil Society Networking Evening

Left: Cross section of participants, Meeting the Challenge of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria: Partnership between Civil Society and the Global Fund”, Accra, Ghana, 26 November 2007

Left: A cross section of participants to Corporate Governance training session, Accra, Ghana, 24-26 October 2007
Communiqué: Regional Seminar on “Reflecting on Civil Society’s Evolution in Ghana over the Last 50 Years”
La Palm Beach Hotel, Accra Ghana
November 8 -9, 2007

COMMUNIQUÉ

We, the representatives of civil society actors in Ghana and across West Africa, government representatives, donor agencies, the media, and the private sector, gathered in Accra, Ghana to reflect on the evolution and contributions made over the last fifty years and formulate strategies for strengthening collaborations and partnerships in Ghana:

Recognizing, the role of civil society in fostering democracy, good governance, peace-building, socio-economic development and gender equality in general,

Acknowledging the exponential increase in the number and contributions of civil society towards economic and social development, empowerment of the citizenry, promotion and awareness creation and protection of the rights of the marginalized and the poor,

Stressing the primary responsibility of the state to protect its citizens from human rights violations and crimes against humanity,

Concerned about the progress made in Ghana of the MDGs before 2015,

Noting the critical role of the media as an agent of democratization in Ghana and its place within the civil society,

Commenting the involvement of Ghanaian women in the promotion of gender equity, advancements in legislation and practices that promote women’s rights,

Realizing the important role that traditional governance systems play within the Ghanaian society,

Acknowledging Ghana’s key position in the attainment of regional peace and stability within the sub region,

And noting that a lot still remains to be achieved in enhancing the contributions of civil society in Ghana and across West Africa,

Recommend that:

National Level

• Government should hasten the implementation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). CSOs must be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of progress made on issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and gender equality in the MDGs.
• Government should hasten the implementation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). CSOs must be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of progress made on issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and gender equality in the MDGs.
• The activities and successes of civil society in Ghana
in all areas of endeavour should be documented for ease of reference and to build credibility.

- Civil society should mobilize and actively engage in pre-election advocacy, election monitoring and observation especially during the upcoming 2008 Ghanaian elections.
- Donor agencies and organisations should ensure that their relationships with civil society are not only financial but practical, by engaging with CSOs on the realities of their work and impact in Ghana.
- Civil society should clearly define and strategically negotiate for the principles around which relations with donors are centred.
- Civil society must redefine its position and continuously evaluate its operations in area of accountability, transparency and internal governance.
- There is urgent need to strengthen Ghana’s civil society’s local capacities to mediate in conflict and manage differences through conflict resolution training, mediation services and dialogue facilitation as well as the alleviation of social tensions and conflicts by challenging racism, xenophobia and discrimination, whilst promoting tolerance and a culture of peace.
- Civil society must advocate for a National Broadcasting legislation to regulate the national media.
- Private sector and civil society alliances should be forged for community development.
- Collaborations between civil society organisations working on human rights and government agencies such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) should be forged and sustained.
- Civil society should use the influence and potential of the traditional systems to forge in roads in areas of HIV/AIDS, FGM, and violence against women.

Regional Level

- Civil society must continue to play a critical role in peace-building and the prevention of conflict bearing in mind Ghana’s history, by addressing issues of structural violence; promoting human security through initiatives for social and economic development, human rights monitoring, promotion of the rule of law and preventing environmental degradation, participating in political processes, policy dialogues, mentoring, advocacy, campaigns and protests, thereby making governments and state structures more responsive to the needs of their citizenry.
- Focus should be placed on regional and alternate resources for the funding and operationalisation of civil society.
- There is need for civil society to improve their knowledge base of ECOWAS, its provision for CSOs and its workings in areas of peace and Security;
- Stakeholders should be engaged on the functionality of the ECOWARN.
- There should be formation of sub-groups on thematic areas to forge stronger engagements in sub regional activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, Equal Opportunities Commissions, Gender Commissions, the media, civil society and research institutions should be watch dogs monitoring the implementation of the MDGs and the implementation of regional and international mechanisms.

Capacity Building

- Strengthen the collaboration of networks across the region through training programmes
- The setting up of a People’s Law school for basic legal and judicial literacy within Ghana.
- Build the capacity of civil society on legal issues and government policies on the implementation of international charters and protocols.
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