TRANSFORMING CIVIL SOCIETY THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

Annual Report 2016
WACSI
WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE

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The 2016 report of the West Africa Civil Society Institute confirms the progress made by the institute in its pioneering role of promoting civil society organisations (CSOs) in West Africa.

This promotion, which is based on major challenges in the region, focuses mainly on leadership issues and political dialogues.

The leadership issue is a crucial one because of the different political upheavals in West Africa, including recurrent social crises. The lack of adequate leadership in various aspects of socio-economic life negatively affects the management of power, good governance and democracy. WACSI's fight in this domain is crucial to the region's future.

Political dialogue with civil society actors has become an important catalyst for CSOs' awareness in the role to play in promoting good governance and the entrenchment of democracy.

These two key areas of the 2016 agenda need to be supported by strengthening political advocacy skills and by creating a platform for the actors involved to connect in order to be rooted in the society.

Therefore, WACSI is also striving to have a vision for the future based on a strategic orientation that focuses on future issues and challenges for West African civil society organisations.

My wish is that this report, like the previous ones, will be well received by WACSI's audience and in the political, intellectual and private sectors.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the staff of the Institute, starting with Mrs. Nana Asantewa Afadzinu, the Executive Director, for their dedication and exemplary work.

Prof. John Igue
WACSI’s role as an enabler of regional civil society action in West Africa and its focus on strengthening civil society actors to engage effectively, was further strengthened in 2016. The Institute implemented key strategies and activities to carry out this mandate. We are delighted to share these with you in this report.

The Institute facilitated civil society’s engagement with executive agencies and other non-state actors on issues such as drug policy reform, the Community Strategic Framework for implementing ECOWAS Vision 2020 and financing development in West Africa. With delight, WACSI also contributed to the holding of the 6th West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) Peoples’ Forum. WACSI worked closely with the WACSOF Secretariat to make it a reality with support from the Commonwealth Foundation, OSIWA and GIZ.

Grooming transformational leaders within civil society remains one of WACSI’s focus areas. The Institute invested in mentoring and coaching fellows as part of its Civil Society Leadership Institute (CSLI). It further pursued this vision, working in collaboration with IREX to run the Mandela Washington Fellowship and with GIMPA on the civil society track for the YALI West Africa Regional Leadership Centre.

2016 marked the commencement of the new global development agenda aimed at achieving seventeen sustainable development goals. In this same year, civil society at all levels, highlighted the threat of shrinking civic space as a major concern. WACSI actively participated in partnerships to strengthen African citizens voice in the SDG processes through the African Working Group and the Ghana SDG Platform as well as being a part of the Innovation for Change Network. A major part of this is the collaboration with CIVICUS on the CIVICUS monitor, gathering data on threats to civic space in West Africa.

The Institute partnered organisations such as OSIWA and Plan international and diplomatic agencies like the Embassy of France in Ghana to provide programmes strengthening civil society operations in Benin, Niger, Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Niger, Burkina Faso and Togo.

Being a champion for knowledge curation on civil society, WACSI accepted to host the International Society for the Third Sector (ISTR) Africa Network in the last quarter of 2016.

The institute enters the final year of its 2013-2017 strategy next year and looks forward with optimism.

Ms. Nana Asantewa Afadzinu
Reverend Sisters from Anawim Rehabilitation Centre participate in a Resource Mobilisation and Proposal Writing training.

A break out session during Policy Advocacy and Networking and Alliance building workshop.

Joel Loua, Elodie Appia and Octare Bayili, Next Generation Interns

Levity during an internal Capacity Building session

Colleagues brainstorming during an internal Capacity Building session

Participants from the International Society for Third-Sector Research Africa Network (ISTRAN) West African Conference

IREX Regional Manager shares a tender moment with a Mandela Washington Fellow
The year began in full stride with a historic multisectoral regional consultation on drug policy reform that brought together more than 50 government officials and civil society practitioners from 11 West African states, East African countries and regional institution such as ECOWAS and UNODC. This was the last phase of a series of National Multi-sectoral meetings across the West Africa aimed at reforming drug policy focus in the region from criminal justice to a public health orientation.

The long-term capacity development programme supported by OSIWA designed to strengthening the operational, advocacy and monitoring and evaluation capacities of 26 civil society organisations from Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea and Niger came to an end. The Institute also initiated a three-year capacity development programme for 15 selected CSOs in Ghana supported by the Embassy of France in Ghana dubbed, “Strengthening the Professional Skills of CSOs in Ghana”.

Some key highlights of the year included onsite coaching of alumni of the Institute’s middle-level leadership programme, the Civil Society Leadership Institute (CSLI), coordination of the West Africa Drug Policy Reform Project, provision of technical support to the West Africa Drug Policy Network (WADPN) and partnership with IREX to implement the West Africa based programme of the Mandela Washington Fellowship (MWF) for Young African Leaders. In addition, the Institute, in partnership with Plan International provided technical expertise and identified critical capacity gaps that need to be addressed for the growth of the West Africa Child Rights Coalition members in Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo.

The Institute remains committed to an agenda of a strong and resilient civil society, contributing to global meetings and discussions on the increasing threats on citizens’ freedoms and operations of civil society. The Institute contributed to the Innovation for Change Global Network, supported by USAID and Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), aimed at supporting, strengthening, and connecting civil society actors through a system of regional civil society support hubs.

**Statistics of key activities for the year 2016**

- **3** Scheduled courses
- **2** Funded Capacity Development Activities
- **245** Beneficiary organisations
- **287** Civil society practitioners trained
- **18** Representation of countries in the region
Vandalark R. Patricks has stood firm against acts of intimidation against free speech and corruption in Liberia for close to a decade. He is the founder and executive director of Campaigners for Change International (CFCI), formerly SURE-Liberia. As a member of Concerned Liberians against Corruption and Impunity (CLACI), a coalition of Liberian human rights defenders aimed at addressing issues of corruption and ensuring accountability for human rights violations, he has fiercely spoken against injustices and increased citizens’ awareness particularly in natural resource governance.

Vandalark, an alumnus of WACSI’s Civil Society Leadership Institute (CSLI), was groomed to strengthen his leadership capacity. “Before I participated in CSLI, I felt rough around the edges but this experience has made me more focused and aware of my own leadership abilities,” stated Vandalark. The CSLI is designed to facilitate transformational leadership through an approach that focuses on individual and organisational development and community impact.

Vandalark championed the movement to increase citizens’ awareness and oversight in natural resource governance in Liberia.

However, things took a turn for the worst in the first week of February 2016. The Liberian Government charged Vandalark with sedition and criminal libel against the Liberian President, H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf for highlighting various human rights abuses and rampant corruption within the extractive sector. Specifically, Vandalark had criticised the Government over the handling of the death of Harry Greaves, Jr., the former Managing Director of the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company, whose body was found at a beach in January 2016. A week later, a team from WACSI, as a part of the coaching phase of the CSLI programme, visited Vandalark. During our interaction, the team expressed their concern about the news regarding his potential arrest and detention. In his usual defiant manner, he remarked, “a key takeaway from the CSLI was the importance of remaining resilient in times of uncertainty as one pursues the public good.” At that moment, it became obvious to the team that he was determined to face the storm. A week after this interaction, Vandalark Patricks was arrested on 23 February 2016 after participating in a meeting where he urged members of civil society to take part in a peaceful protest on 11 March 2016. He was detained until 1 March 2016, during which he suffered medical complications. The human rights defender was denied permission to seek essential medical treatment abroad, until 28 March 2016 when he was allowed to travel to Ghana for treatment.

His campaign and subsequent arrest attracted international attention. His plight was referenced in a letter dated 15 April 2016 from the UN panel of Experts on Liberia, addressed to the President of the United Nations Security Council. The report expressed concern about tensions that were building in spite of assurances from the Government of Liberia in maintaining peace and stability in the wake of the drawdown of United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Vandalark participated in the 2016 International Society for Third Sector Research Africa Network (ISTRAN) Conference, which took place from 19-20 April in Accra. WACSI had the opportunity to interview him where he reiterated the significant contribution CSLI made to his leadership skills. With a smile on his face, he said, “I am passionate about the pursuit of justice, I was born a fighter but the leadership training I received at WACSI made me understand that in order to make a difference you must lead from the front, pursue the public good and when you make strides always make sure your feet are still grounded. I remain resolute, focused and a firm believer in a prosperous and free Liberia.”

It is our pleasure to celebrate an inspirational change maker, Vandalark Patricks, a 2015 CSLI fellow. As an institute, we are always inspired and encouraged by the exploits of our CSLI fellows. We believe we are on the right side of history and remain committed to working with like-minded partners to groom the next generation of Africa’s civic leaders.
The Policy Influencing and Advocacy unit had a very productive 2016. As part of WACSI’s five-year strategic plan, the unit implemented several programmes and activities to engage policymakers, building civil society capacities in policy influencing, and actively participating in policymaking processes across West Africa. These sought to build CSOs’ capacities as well as convene discussions with key stakeholders on pertinent issues affecting CSOs in West Africa and beyond. Five capacity building programmes as well as two policy dialogues were organised through its Policy Dialogue Series (WAC-PoDiS). Here are three key highlights of the year:

WACSI Policy Dialogue Series (WAC-PoDiS): WACSI strives for excellence in creating spaces for civil society actors to discuss and address challenges confronting the sector and specific policy affecting their thematic fields. This year, WACSI convened two WAC-PoDiS in Accra, Ghana and Abuja, Nigeria respectively. In Accra, the dialogue under the theme, “Raising civic consciousness for participation in elections in West Africa: Strategies, Opportunities and challenges” was attended by 38 participants from 20 civil society organisations. The vibrant discussions, led to the generation of key recommendations for government and civil society; while the second forum themed, “Financing our Development: Strategies for Domestic Resource Mobilisation for Agenda 2063 and SDGs, localisation and dissemination of the 17 goals, and promoting the multi-stakeholder engagement and advocacy planning with other members of the group. WACSI also serves as a key member of the CSOs platform on SDGs in Ghana, specifically on Goal 16 (governance and institutions) and 18 (advocacy).

Work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): As a member of the Africa Working Group (AWG), the unit continues to participate regularly in strategic meetings on the SDGs and provide technical support. We need input to working documents, review of indicators, integration of Africa Union Agenda 2063 and SDGs, localisation and dissemination of the 17 goals, and promoting the multi-stakeholder engagement and advocacy planning with other members of the group. WACSI also serves as a key member of the CSOs platform on SDGs in Ghana, specifically on Goal 16 (governance and institutions) and 18 (advocacy).

Amplifying the Voice of the People

Statistics of key activities for the year 2016

| Training on Policy Advocacy and Engagement | 5 entries |
| CSOs trained | 72 |
| Policy dialogues | 2 |
| Participants from 75 CSOs | 98 |
| Capacity strengthening programmes in Networking and Alliance building | 2 |
| CSOs networking and alliance building | 47 |
Financing African Development Agenda through Local Resources

Development goals, a phrase that is used repeatedly in civil society, government and non-profit circles. It is simple, to move a country or region forward, development goals must be set. Goals are often put forth in regional and global accords such as the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, Vision 2020 of ECOWAS and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. These are laudable steps in the right direction but these will only become a reality with one key ingredient, resources. Without resources, development agendas remain just another well crafted ‘text’ that has no connection or impact in the lives of the people. With the traditional model of Western finances propping up development in Africa fading away, it has become imperative for African governments and citizens look inward to power and fund own development goals. Thus, local resource mobilization remains an essential requirement to turn African goals into realities. It is not only a feasible approach to solidify ownership over development strategy or strengthen the bonds of accountability between governments and their citizens, but also the only strategy that give government full control to design development programmes based on the real needs of the people without any influence by external forces.

WACSI, through its WAC-PoDiS platform, convened development actors across the region in Abuja, Nigeria, to discuss and share innovative strategies through which government, private sector and citizens can mobilise resources locally to drive development plan at national level. The forum which held on 19 August 2016 under the theme: “Financing our Development: Strategies for Domestic Resource Mobilisation for Agenda 2030 in West Africa and the Role of Civil Society” attracted the participation of 55 development partners from 9 countries in West Africa.

Among other critical issues deliberated upon during the meeting were; a) the current state and challenges envisaged in holistic implementation of the three-developement agenda, b) available local funding sources and strategies to harness the opportunities to drive socio-economic and the SDGs, c) specific role of civil society in the domestic resource mobilization; and d) practical recommendations on how to move from ‘words’ to ‘action’.

The discussion was facilitated by Nana Afadzinu, Executive Director of WACSI; while Hilary Ogbona, Regional Coordinator for Africa, United Nations SDG Action Campaign; Oladayo Olaide, Deputy Director, McArthur Foundation, Nigeria; Udo Jude Ilo, Country Officer and Head of Nigeria Office, Open Society Initiative for West Africa; and Oluseyi Oyebisi, Executive Director of Nigerian Network of Nigerian NGOs teased out multiple innovative ways through which government can mobilise resources locally to fund the SDGs in their respective presentations. Some of the key recommendations proposed at the end of the forum include;

- Government should deploy smart and equal taxation system
- Government, civil society and the private sector should implement the recommendations spelt out in the report on the High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows.1
- Citizens, religious organisations and Africa’s wealthy citizens (philanthropists) should be encouraged to direct specific giving to funding the SDGs
- CSOs should embark on effective resource management, and start to mainstream the SDGs into their existing programs;
- Government should put measures in place curb illicit financial flows and eliminate corruption; and
- Uphold the global principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ with human capital at the centre. Where local communities are fully engaged, they will take ownership of the implementation process and make significant contributions.

With the accompanying fall in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the global financial crunch, domestic resource mobilization appears as the ultimate and most viable option for financing the SDGs in Africa. WACSI is confident that, West Africa can fund most of its development agenda without the relying solely on Western donors, only of development actors including private sector can collaborative strategize on a domestic approach that favours each country.

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Through the Knowledge Management Unit, WACSI carried out its signature Policy Research Methodology and Analysis training in September 2016. Twenty-six civil society and public-sector professionals from Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia, Tanzania and Kenya participated in the training, which aimed at enabling CSOs in Africa to conduct thorough policy research and documentation. The course was tailored to train practitioners in research and documentation skills, communicating evidence-based research, research methodologies and field research techniques to bolster the research and documentation capacity of CSOs.

WACSI boasted a historic first by organising the first 2016 ISTR Africa Network (ISTRAN) West African conference themed “Civil Society and a Renascent Africa: A stocktaking”. The conference was organised in collaboration with the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR) and the Institute of African Studies (IAS) of the University of Ghana. It examined the impact of civil society as a key player in Africa's renaissance, with discussions focused on the associational history of civil society, its contributions and role in the African integration agenda and the growing philanthropic culture. It brought together 56 participants from 12 different countries including Kenya, South Africa, UK and the Netherlands, with the majority from West Africa.

Through the unit’s bi-monthly situation report, WACSI has been able to connect citizens with the current development trends and responses to issues on civil society and citizen engagement across Africa, specifically in West Africa. Twenty-three (23) situation reports were published in 2016 and disseminated on WACSI’s various communications platforms.

As a research partner of CIVICUS, WACSI is responsible for collecting information on the state of citizens’ rights to freely assemble, associate and express themselves, in 9 West African countries. The Institute collects data and analyses information to provide weekly updates to the Civic Space Monitor, an online tool for tracking the state of civic space across the globe. This partnership has deepened WACSI’s research agenda on the enabling environment for civil society's development effectiveness. The Institute provided 32 updates to the Civic Space Monitor in 2016.

Statistics of key activities for the year 2016

- 32 Updates CIVICUS Monitor
- 23 Situation Reports
- 26 Civil society practitioners trained
- 3 Publications
Pa Abdou Sarr, an artist, left his native land of Gambia to Senegal to be able to pursue his true passion, activism for persons living with disability (PWDs). He had to leave his home due to the challenging civic space for activists in the Gambia and relocated to Senegal.

A PWD himself, Pa lives his life by the mantra, “disability no inability”, and founded Felix Africa Handi Arts (FAHA), which promotes social and economic inclusion of PWDs through research, arts and cultural exchange. In recent years, the funding sector has become increasingly difficult to navigate yet Pa found creative ways to fund his organization, his art. FAHA is run through income generated by Pa Abdou’s artwork, which includes beautiful displays of African paintings.

It was this art that brought him to Accra, Ghana in August 2016 for an exhibition organised by Alliance Française in light of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities which was to be held on December 03, 2016. Pa, always looking for ways to further his work for PWDs, looked to take advantage of his presence in Ghana. He walked into WACSI’s secretariat and requested to participate in the Institute’s Policy Research Methodology and Analysis training. Inspired by his story, the Institute offered to support his participation in the training.

WACSI’s training program offers civil society organisations (CSOs) in West Africa, the ability to conduct serious policy research and documentation. The course’s refreshing multidimensional format, has research methodology as an overarching strategy and exposes participants to the more operational aspects of policy research, namely policy analysis.

Pa joined participants from twenty-six civil society organisations from across the region including Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Burkina-Faso.

“The training enabled me to know more about and to analyse the existing policy frameworks relevant to PWDs. As such, I will be able to gear my organisation’s work towards such policies and if necessary, conduct additional research to fill in the missing gaps,” said Pa gleefully. Pa also raved about the real-world examples provided by practitioners as well as the experiences shared by the diverse group of participants.

WACSI celebrates great West African citizens who are engaged in their communities despite the challenges they face. Pa Abdou Sar’s story embodies the Institute’s vision of a West Africa of efficient, effective, and influential civil society functioning as strategic partners for democracy, good governance and sustainable national development.
In 2016, WACSI continued to strengthen its partnerships with various stakeholders to ensure the growth of civil society in West Africa. With new and existing partnerships, WACSI undertook several major projects and programs essential to the capacity building of civil society. We worked with organisations like OSIWA, Commonwealth Foundation, IREX, International Society for Third-Sector Research, Ford Foundation, CIVICUS and ECOWAS to name a few.

We believe that in building the civil society we envision, it is essential to leverage on the expertise, knowledge and resources of our partners, ensuring maximum impact and self-sustenance of a vibrant and active civic space.

We strategise with our partners, ensuring our common goal is in view when planning our programs. Here are some of the highlights of our achievements:

**CIVICUS Monitor:** Through partnership with CIVICUS, WACSI now manages content provision the West Africa portal of their civic space monitor. Charged with monitoring the civic space in the region, WACSI delivers research assistance, providing information on any violations and closing of civic space in the region to be uploaded on the monitor.

**ISTRAN Conference:** In collaboration with Ford Foundation and Africa Women Development Fund (AWDF), WACSI successfully organised the International Society for Third Sector Research Africa Network (ISTRAN) conference in Accra Ghana. The conference aimed at bridging the gap between academia and practice, bringing together academics from all over the world and 38 civil society organisations from the region to make research functional, providing solutions and models for development on the continent.

**West Africa Drug Policy Network (WADPN):** The partnership between WACSI and the WADPN was a particularly fruitful one in 2016. Together we made some great impact, affecting drug legislation in Ghana, Cape Verde and Guinea to shift from a criminal justice to public health approach in dealing with drugs. We also successfully ran the Support Don't Punish campaign, focused on raising awareness around providing medical and psychosocial support for drug addicts instead of criminal punishment.

We plan on continuing these fruitful relationships and to build new ones, to strengthen even further, civil society in West Africa.

**IREX TESTIMONIAL**

Since 2014, IREX has proudly partnered with WACSI to strengthen the leadership and professional skills of young people across Africa through the Mandela Washington Fellowship, flagship Program of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). In 2016, IREX and WACSI worked hand-in-hand to provide professional development opportunities to over 380 Fellows from 21 countries in West and Central Africa. WACSI’s regional networks and expertise were instrumental in furthering the goals of the Fellowship. Their technical support in the planning and execution of all programme activities was invaluable, making them a cherished partner to IREX. We look forward to a lasting partnership with WACSI to drive progress toward growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across sub-Saharan Africa in the coming year.
In 2016, OSIWA provided institutional support to WACSI to continue strengthening its institutional and operational capacity and enable it to respond adequately to the capacity development needs of civil society organizations in West Africa. This partnership has, among many other things, enabled WACSI to successfully improve the technical and institutions capacities of 70 CSOs in 2016 to ensure their sustainability and enhance their performance; promote an enabling environment for Civil Society development effectiveness; promote and increase networking, collaboration and partnership building within the civil society sector, between civil society and other development partners and continue to developing as an effective regional institution recognized as a leader in the civil society sector that responds to the needs of its stakeholders.

This partnership has equally been celebrated through WACSI’s instrumental role in the ongoing drug policy reform in the Sub-region. WACSI has successfully helped set up the West Africa Drug Policy Network (WADNP); a coalition of more than 600 CSOs from the 16 West Africa Countries, supporting drug policy reform in West Africa by building the capacity of local CSOs to address the impact of drug trafficking on democracy, governance, human security, human rights and public health. This initiative has since then been scaled-up to build on successes and generate evidence-based research in Benin, Ghana and Senegal and be used to engage community citizens and government officials on approaching drug policy formulation and implementation from a human rights and public health perspective.

WACSI has been very innovative in its successive strategic plans to fulfill its mandate and make the CSOs more vibrant and robust. The Institute has been able to build strategic partnerships with the Commonwealth Foundation, ECOWAS, IREX, The Ford Foundation, Africa Lead, Civicus and the West Africa Democracy Radio (WADR, another OSIWA spin-off). WACSI has also been keen on diversifying its funding base as well as exploring avenues for collaboration with the private sector.

OSIWA is pleased to work with WACSI and celebrates its existence as a key resource for training, research, experience sharing and dialogue for CSOs in West Africa.

In 2016, WACSI performed admirably, achieving a lot with limited resources. The Institute also did so responsibly and with the utmost transparency. Ernst & Young Chartered Accountants auditing WACSI’s finances for fiscal year 2016.

“In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of West Africa Civil Society Institute as at 31 December 2016, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the requirements of the Companies Act, 1963 (Act 179).”

Signed by Kwadwo Mpeani-Brantuo (ICAG\P\1152)
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young (ICAG\F\2017\126)
Chartered Accountants
Accra, Ghana.
Dated: 28th August, 2017
## Statement of Comparison of Budget and Actual Amount

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| **OUTFLOW**                  |                  |                            |          |         |         |
| Knowledge Management         | 665,933.68       | 471,244.23                 |          | 176,808.65 | 194,689.45 |
| Capacity Development         | 2,441,756.84     | 2,072,633.28               |          | 452,058.98 | (241,766.02) |
| Policy Influencing           | 1,553,845.26     | 871,552.75                 |          | 401,914.92 | 230,367.41 |
| Outreach & Governance        | 887,911.58       | 513,001.81                 |          | 547,568.52 | 1,584,829.97 |
| General Admin                | 1,849,815.79     | 1,612,644.51               |          | 593,164.51 | (303,368.40) |
| **TOTAL**                    | 7,399,263.15     | 5,246,641.00               |          | 2,189,399.00 | 1,661,958.48 |
| **DIFFERENCE**               | 1,668,831.95     | 672,726.31                 |          | 2,008,846.71 | (100,048.70) |
AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

I have learnt a lot of things specifically on research. I learnt about how to edit or review a research paper, I also did administrative and work participated in all the programmes in the unit. I worked in a team and I learnt how to work with people and communicate well.

Eunice Dossou Kpédétin

It was a great opportunity because when I was coming in I did not have any administrative experience, but now I am confident that I am ready and able for work. WACSI taught me women can also be successful in whatever position you place them – it has given me confidence that I can also achieve whatever I set my mind on.

Fatoumata Kombadouno

The internship was very good. I learnt a lot and I had the opportunity to learn from the experience of all the staff of WACSI. The work I was doing had a lot of impact in the region and networking and meeting high level personalities was amazing.

Chamrid Kpadonou