

West Africa Civil Society Institute



Internship Report

Submitted by

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRONYMS	MEANING
PIA	Policy Influencing & Advocacy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
OSJI	Open Society Justice Initiative
ICNL	International Centre for Non-profit Law
DMR	Domestic Resource Mobilisation
WACPODIS	West Africa Policy Dialogue
FATF	Financial Action Task force
GNB	Girls Not Brides
CBO-FBO	Community based organisations, Faith based organisations
NGIP	Next Generation Internship Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
AGNA	Affinity Group for National Association
SITREP	Situation Report
YALI	Young African Leadership Initiative
WACSI	West Africa Civil Society Institute
AfDB	African Development Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on the Next Generation Internship programme I have successfully completed with West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI). I am always passionate in Humanitarian work and through WACSI I got this opportunity to undertake a six (6) months internship.

During my six months at WACSI, I worked on several activities and projects and performed a one-month Externship at Children of the Light

As an Intern, I worked as a program assistant in the Policy Influencing & Advocacy with the key responsibility of providing technical and practical assistance to the Unit in the implementation of different projects. Report writing, periodic desktop research, logistical support, technical arrangement and coordination of workshops were some of the activities I undertook.

I had the opportunity to participate in projects such as Human rights litigation training for Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI), West Africa Policy Dialogue Series (WACPODIS), the Child Marriage project, and capacity building programme for Rainforest Alliance.

WACSI should continue with this programme and engage more young people within the civil society. This programme helps interns to build and improve the knowledge they gained from their studies.

INTRODUCTION

WACSI is a regional not-for-profit Organisation that has the core mandate of reinforcing the capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the sub-region. The institute works in the 15 ECOWAS countries in addition to Mauritania, Chad and Cameroun. WACSI's mission is to strengthen the institutional and operational capacities of CSO through capacity enhancement, knowledge management and policy influencing for promotion of development, good governance and democratic values in West Africa. WACSI through its work has a vision of shaping a West Africa of efficient, effective, influential civil society functioning as strategic partners for democracy, good governance and sustainable development. The role of WACSI is to serve as a resource centre for training, research, experience sharing and dialogue for CSOs in West Africa. To achieve this goal, the institute, has three (3) programme units supported by other units such as Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Unit, Communication Unit, Administration Unit and Finance Unit to ensure the robust functioning of the Institute.

The Policy Influencing and Advocacy Unit provides unique opportunities for civil society to enhance its engagement and collaboration with policy makers, government agencies and institutions and the private sector on key policy issues across the sub-region. The Capacity Development Unit offers training and technical assistance to enable development practitioners to improve performance and value creation. The Knowledge Management Unit undertakes research to produce reports and other publications on the state of civil society in the sub-region.

NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

The West Africa Civil Society Institute is well known for its expertise in capacity building as well as its renowned Next Generation Leadership Programme. It is within this context the organisation has integrated a programme called Next Generation Internship Programme as a component of its broader Next Generation Leadership Programme to build the capacity of young professional aspiring to work in the area Civic Leadership and Governance.

The NGI is a six (6) month programme designed for young West Africans at the start of their professional career to gain practical experience in WACSI's focus areas.

OBJECTIVE OF THE NEXT GENERATION INTERNSHIP

The overall goal of the internship is to build the capacity of young potential civil society professionals within the West Africa region. In a specific manner, the programme aims to build the intern's capacity in various technical and relational areas including, Civic Leadership, Proposal writing, Report writing and Training and facilitation skills.

MY EXPECTATION BEFORE STARTING THE NGIP

After applying online for the internship and being short-listed for an interview, I was very happy and glad to work at WACSI for a 6-month self-funded internship. I therefore arrived at WACSI with various expectations including:

- ❖ Understanding the functioning of CSOs;
- ❖ Obtaining professional and practical experience working with WACSI
- ❖ Proposal writing and report writing skills
- ❖ Demystifying research methodology and analysis
- ❖ Developing communication skills
- ❖ Developing my IT and strengthening my English
- ❖ Getting experience working with people from various countries with different cultures

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME: Policy Influencing & Advocacy Unit

For this programme at WACSI, interns assigned to one of the programme units of the organisation based on their applications. I worked under the Policy Influencing and Advocacy (PIA) Unit.

WACSI's PIA Unit as it named indicates is the unit that provides technical support to different group Non-governmental organisations, Community Based Organisations, Faith-Based Organisations (NGOs, CBOs, FBOs) to participate and discusses, engage policymakers and institutions in policymaking processes. The Unit focuses on two main streams; Connecting and Convening; and Policy Influencing.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES PERFORMED

As a programme assistant in the Policy Influencing and Advocacy Unit, my responsibilities was mainly focused on collecting relevant information to support training preparation; contribute to and programmes, assist in the development of checklist for different projects, assist in the coordination of training and workshop programmes, including handling of logistics and other duties as detailed in this report.

DAILY AND WEEKLY DUTIES

My daily activities included but were not limited to:

- **Periodic Desktop Research for the Situation Report (SITREP):** This was about collecting daily information about the state of civil society and the practice of good governance and democracy in West Africa in order to produce a bi-weekly situational report. I was monitoring three West African countries Guinea, Gambia and Chad to provide a bi-weekly SITREP.
- **Formulation of Reports and Minutes:** This was one of my first activities I performed; it was about writing activity reports such as staff meeting and unit meeting.
- **Planning and Coordination of Workshops:** I participated in the preparation and coordination of the PIA unit workshops and training for different projects as Child marriage, Human right litigation training, Wascpodis, Rainforest Alliance, ICNL for the proper functioning.

These are some of the activities among many others that I performed during my six (6) months internship at WACSI.

PROJECT SUPPORTS

During my internship period at WACSI, I had the opportunity to work with colleagues on different projects such as:

- **Child Marriage:** This ongoing project is one of the priorities of the PIA unit, child Marriage project is funded by Ford Foundation to end child marriage in West Africa basically in six countries such as: Guinea, Niger, Mali, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. The objective of this project is to strengthen the capacity of the civil society groups, coalition and network working to end child marriage. The project aims to provide capacity strengthening workshops in advocacy, networking and alliance building to these groups, as well provide technical assistance towards strengthening existing (or create new) national coalitions in these countries. The project also seeks to support

CSO coalitions to identify advocacy entry points as well as develop effective strategies to engage in high-level advocacy opportunities at all levels. I worked with the team to coordinate different convening and trainings under this project.

- **Human rights litigation training:** This project, which was implemented in partnership with Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) sought to capacitate lawyers with litigation course from different countries, I worked on the application list for applicants, compiled applicant per region, worked on the travelling log, worked on coordinate and logistic with the team.
- **WACPoDIS:** For this project based on the domestic resource mobilisation two dialogues, one dialogue between the development partners and civil society organisations in Ghana and the second dialogue with government on the role of an enabling policy Environment for Domestic Resourcing. I worked on the logistic and coordination, sent invitation letters to participants and follow up with them. The main objectives were to involve civil society organisations, donors, philanthropists and government together and find which strategies they can use to diversify resources at the national level.
- **RAINFOREST Alliance:** Rainforest Alliance is a sustainability program for coffee, cocoa, hazelnuts and tea, which works with the collaboration of existing brands. Through this program, farmers are trained to improve their productivity, the quality of their products and efficiency, taking care of people and the environment. WACSI has since 2018 provided capacity building support to Rainforest Alliance partners in Cote D'Ivoire. As part of implementing the capacity building, I assisted in preparations for the Advocacy, Lobbying and Networking training and Training in analysis and research on social policies.
- I worked on the training learning needs assessment which involved a statistical analysis of participants' self-identified capacity gaps. I also worked on the post evaluation reports on the overall impressions, the objective met, the level of satisfaction with the tools used by the facilitators during the training. I analysed the new knowledge, skills and techniques acquired by participants during the training as well as the training methodology including discussion and sharing, assessment training methodology specifically practical exercises, rate their level before and after the training. The post evaluation report that I wrote, effectively assessed the knowledge gained by participants during the entire training.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

These projects and activities have provided me with practical knowledge and skills that will greatly contribute to the achievement of my career goal. Attitude to work in the wide and cultural environment, IT experiences, coordination of workshops and trainings, research skills, Minute and report written, leadership influence, assistant secretary.

MAJOR CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

The challenges I encountered during my first days at WACSI were around the language. I saw myself in new environment where everybody was bilingual and speaks professional English. Second thing was about being creative, at WACSI everybody is creative expecting some new ideas. As an intern, you are given opportunity to show your value and talents in bringing something new out of you.

At the beginning it was so hard for me and I had no idea about where to start from. As time went on, I got used to it and became more familiar to WACSI's work.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION WITHIN WACSI AND SOLUTION

The Institute is working hard to achieve its goal and mission through the contribution of its entire staff. But there is still some improvement needed, especially to IT department and server room service delivery. WACSI should think about getting a fulltime assistant to avoid challenges encountered during the IT officer's absence.

EXTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

As part of the Next Generation Internship programme, the intern participates in a one-month externship at another organisation to gain more experience. I had the opportunity to spend my one-month internship period at Children of the Lights from 21 May to 21 June.

Children of the Light is a non-government organisation (NGO) that has been operating in Ghana, West Africa, since 2005. The organisation has a vision to help children break out of the harsh cycle of the inadequate education and poverty so that they may grow to reach their full potential.

Children of the light runs year around educational programs, for children aged 4 to 16 years in one-on-one and small group learning settings. In addition, children also enjoy numerous special programs which include language, arts, performing and fine arts, social studies, mathematics, science and sporting activities.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

At Children of the Light, I worked under the direct supervision of the Executive Director Mrs Jeanette Mary Brown Opoku, and I sincerely thank her and all the staff for their support and guidance.

- ❖ Thought children from Tuesday to Saturday on different programmes (reading, arts, Maths, Science to enhance their level each end of the month).
- ❖ Raise awareness within the community for parents to let children come and learn in the centre
- ❖ Categorised reading books per level for children and follow them during the reading period.
- ❖ Participated in organising a monthly competition to evaluate children level per programme.
- ❖ Thought children the child policy protection for their well being
- ❖ Participated in organising the Traffic Safety lessons for children
- ❖ Work on Saturdays budget to provide food for children
- ❖ Sensitise children on how to fight against deforestation

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

At Children of the light, I learnt teaching pedagogy, the community development work (awareness, sensitisation, children care), how to save trees and fight against deforestation, Child protection. It has been a good experience especially been within the community and children.

INTERNSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

After spending 5 months of this internship programme at WACSI these are some few recommendations for the improvement of the internship.

- ❖ WACSI should consider relocating the Interns' accommodation closer to the office to minimise the distance travelled by interns.
- ❖ WACSI should consider partnering with other organisations to ensure the smooth placement of interns for externships.
- ❖ Mandate someone who will be in charge to follow-up on the Interns schedule Programme for achievement.
- ❖ Establish a good workplan so that the Interns can also work with the other units for more experiences.

CONCLUSION

My internship allowed me to know how civil society works and how to work in a cultural environment like WACSI. I can say that I have learnt a lot through this internship, I have been able to gain new experiences, skills and knowledge which will be helpful for my future career. I truly hope that with the knowledge acquired at WACSI, I am going to be more effective, because the internship helped me to find out what my strengths and weaknesses were in terms of performance in a work environment and helped me to know what skills and knowledge I must improve as a young civic leader.

I finally want to thank all the Staff for the guidance, support and the family spirit they gave me during my Internship. It has been a good moment shared with WACSI staff.