



WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE

**NEXT GENERATION INTERNSHIP REPORT**

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**JANUARY-JUNE 2019**

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I want to acknowledge God for his guidance and protection throughout the entire six months spent at WACSI as part of the first phase of the NGIP 2019. I am also grateful to everyone especially colleagues who contributed to building my skills in diverse ways and provided their unlimited support to ensure that I can have an optimum learning experience. This programme will forever have an impact on my professional life and career trajectory.

I, therefore, want to express my profound and sincere gratitude to:

- The Executive Director Nana Afadzinu for her leadership and this internship opportunity that has enabled me to strengthen my professional skills.
- The Head of Administration Katherine Adarkwa for her assistance in helping us integrate smoothly into WACSI.
- The Head of Capacity Development Unit, Charles Kojo Vandyck, who despite his tight schedule gave his constant support and advice to advance my professional and personal

growth throughout this period. I appreciate his feedback, constructive criticism and general concern about my wellbeing which always made me reflect and strive to be better.

- The Programme Officer of the Capacity Development Unit, Leandre Banon for his relentless effort, direction, correction and supervision in ensuring that I built relevant skills. I am thankful for his patience and his willingness to provide answers to my endless queries.
- The Office Assistant, Ibrahim Gbadago who always provided desired assistance and resources when needed.
- To my fellow interns, volunteers and national service personnel who made invaluable inputs to daily activities and made the learning experience worthwhile.
- The entire staff of WACSI for their unconditional assistance during this period.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

CSOs	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
WACSI	WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE
OSIWA	OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE FOR WEST AFRICA
YES	YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SYNERGY
YALI	YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE
SDG	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
YL4SC	YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Next Generation Internship Programme Instituted by the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) is designed to develop the skills of young West Africans to contribute to the development of the Civil Society Sector and West Africa as a whole. This programme offers interns seeking to gain experience and become key actors in the civil society sector six months of intensive training annually at the beginning of their professional career.

During my internship placement with WACSI, I worked with the Capacity Development Unit where I assisted, participated and coordinated in several activities for the institute. Some of the key activities I was a part of during this period included: Change the Game Local Fundraising Course; Consultative Forum on Domestic Resource Mobilisation for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ghana; Results-Based Monitoring & Evaluation and Communicating Impact; Organisational Governance and Sustainability Workshop for CSOs; Cyber-security Workshop for Social Justice Advocates; Annual New Year School; YALI training cohorts 13 and 14; Human Rights Litigation Training and the Development of the Alternative Funding Models Guidebook..

The internship placement provided me with an opportunity to undertake a one-month placement at the Youth Empowerment Synergy (YES Ghana) where I gained relevant knowledge and skills associated with their past projects on the People's National Youth Policy and Youth Manifesto as well as ongoing projects on Youth Leadership for Social Change and the SDG Youth Action Campaign.

The experience at WACSI has helped me have a deeper understanding of CSOs and their role. It has enabled me to develop skills such as proposal writing, concept notes, reporting, minutes taking, developing budgets, coordinating and managing project activities, managing the reception, carrying out research, training and facilitating amongst others. It has been a great boost to my professional and personal development.

This report is a summary of my six months internship experience at the WACSI and comprises the activities and trainings I was a part of, the knowledge and skills gained from this experience, the challenges and constraints that held me back as well as the recommendations I suggest to make the next generation internship even more enriching for the next cohorts.

## **ABOUT WACSI**

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) is a not-for-profit organisation established by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) in 2005 to reinforce the capacities of civil society in the sub-region. WACSI envisions a peaceful and prosperous West Africa where development is driven by its people. Its mission is to strengthen civil society in West Africa to be responsive, collaborative, representative, resilient and influential through knowledge sharing, learning, connecting and influencing. The thematic areas of focus in strengthening the technical and operational capacities of civil society in the region under the current 2018-2022 strategy include Technology for Development; Women & Youth Leadership; Enabling Environment for Civil Society and Civil Society Sustainability.

## **NEXT GENERATION INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE**

My six (6) months' internship with WACSI scheduled for the first quarter of the year took place from the months of January to June 2019. During my internship period, I worked at the Capacity Development Unit under the supervision of the Unit's Head and Programme Officer as well as supported the Policy and Advocacy, Knowledge Management, Finance, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning units in implementing several activities. Working in these departments helped me to acquire knowledge and gain experience in the key areas of the organisation's strategic focus.

The internship began with an orientation, introducing the institute, its various departments and the ongoing projects. I was exposed to several projects, activities, training workshops and meetings. During this period some of the major ones included: Change the Game Local Fundraising Course; Consultative forum on Domestic Resource Mobilisation for civil society organisations in Ghana; Cyber-security workshop for Social Justice Advocates; Annual New Year School; YALI training cohorts 13 and 14; Human Rights Litigation training and the development of the Alternative Funding Models Guidebook in all the units of the institution. My contribution consisted of communicating with participants, providing logistic support during training and all other necessary materials to the facilitator and participants. I also wrote post-evaluation reports and reviewed documents which also served as an opportunity to learn in these areas.

In addition to assisting in the organisation and coordination of projects, I was charged with providing monthly situation reports on the state of civil society organisations in Chad, Mali and Mauritania; taking minutes of the weekly staff meetings and developing success stories for organisations who took part in the Change the Game Academy Local fundraising and Mobilising Support Training.

### **Training**

Within the first three months of the internship, WACSI organises a series of internal skills training sessions for interns to build their capacity in various aspects of civil society work. These sessions included:

#### **Report Writing**

This session helped me to improve my skills in providing a written account of an event in a formal and official summary as a report within stated guidelines or given template. I learned that reports should be concise, well-structured and accurate since they are important in providing information to those who were not part of the program and to keep records of events and decisions. I also was made aware that, in a civil society sector like this where accountability is indispensable, such a skill cannot be undermined as it is quite relevant. Thanks to this training, I understood the basis of reporting accurately and within time. I also understood that reports should be prepared prior to the event.

#### **Proposal Writing**

I also went through a proposal writing session. I learned that proposal writing is the ability to raise funds for an organisation and that it is one of the major strategies to mobilise resources. The session built my skills to appreciate and understand the major components of a proposal which include problem statement, goals, objectives, activities, methodology, beneficiaries, sustainability plan and Monitoring & Evaluation plan. I also learned the skills I needed to successfully source

funds and most especially master the human relationship skills which is key as “friend-raising” comes before fundraising.

### **Leadership that Achieves Results**

The leadership training session I participated in focused on how to be an effective leader producing visible results. It elaborated on the 3Cs of leadership which include character, competence, context and culture. It also explained the values, principles, knowledge, skills and attitude to develop towards daily improvement. This training detailed the importance of being “conscious” and aware of our environment and living by example. It stressed the value of being self-aware, utilising the power of the technology, taking advantage of opportunity, creativity and leveraging on excellence as a minimum standard.

Some key points that can serve as a guide to be an excellent leader are the need to:

- have a personal board of directors who can challenge your thinking to be the best version of you.
- have a mastery of whatever you do to find yourself at the top 1%.
- think of something extra you can bring to the table as a differentiating factor.

### **Training and Facilitation Skills**

This session enabled me to grasp the major differences between a facilitator and a trainer. While a trainer is expected to have technical skills, knowledge and content, a facilitator needs to have moderation and processing skills to keep discussions going. I learned how to create a conducive environment for discussions, establish equality in a room, standing position to adopt when facilitating, writing on board during sessions and assign value to all inputs strategically. I also learned different approaches of facilitation like brainstorming, role-playing, flip charting, energisers and scenario building.

### **Front Desk Orientation**

This session built my basic skills in managing the front desk and taught me basic phone etiquette in making and receiving phone calls in an organisation.

### **CV writing Interview Skills and Job Search**

The first selling point every candidate has in the job market that determines whether you get called up for an interview or not is your curriculum vitae. The latter is, therefore, a very important component of the job application process. This training focused on how to develop a customised CV as opposed to the traditional CV to increase your chances of being called for an interview. It also focused on how to prepare for an interview and stand out amongst other candidates.

### **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS ACQUIRED**

This internship has been quite enriching and has greatly enhanced my professional skills, knowledge and given me a clearer and deeper understanding of the civil society sector. Through this internship opportunity, I gained skills to develop project proposals, concept notes, project budgets, write project reports, taking minutes, coordinate and manage project activities, manage the reception, conduct desktop research, train and facilitate among others.

## **EXTERNSHIP PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE**

As part of WACSI's one-month mandatory service with a sister organisation, I was privileged to work with **YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SYNERGY (YES) GHANA** for my externship placement to enhance my knowledge, skills and deepen understanding of youth empowerment.

### **ABOUT YES GHANA**

The Youth Empowerment Synergy (YES-Ghana) is the nation's foremost and most extensive youth organisation bringing together innovative and energetic young professionals in different capacities who work with relevant stakeholders to lay the foundation for and work towards the promotion of a sustainable and productive future for all young people in Ghana.

#### **Vision**

YES-Ghana envisions a world where every young person has a real chance to benefit from and participate in development processes at local, national and international levels.

#### **Mission**

The mission of YES- Ghana is to promote policies and embark on initiatives that help youth succeed in becoming life-long learners, productive members of society, materially sufficient, and self-respecting citizens.

#### **Key Programmes and Initiatives of YES-Ghana**

YES-Ghana seeks to increase the levels of participation of youth in public policy decision making processes in Ghana such that they contribute constructively to national development. Guided by the belief that youth issues are better addressed when they are integrated into broader national development policies and programmes, YES-Ghana works with all relevant stakeholders, including youth, to develop youth-inclusive policies and programmes at local and national levels. YES-Ghana is also committed to working with government, private sector and all relevant stakeholders to provide opportunities to all young people across Ghana to use their talents, experience and aspirations under conditions of freedom, security, equality and human dignity.

To achieve all these, YES-Ghana focuses on three major programme areas which include Youth Participation & Active Citizenship; Youth Employment & Livelihoods Generation and Youth Policy & Inclusive Governance. During my internship at the Youth Empowerment Synergy, I was exposed to two major current projects in the areas of youth participation and active citizenship. These projects include the Youth Leadership for Social Change (YL4SC) project in four higher education institutions and the SDG Youth Action Campaign in secondary schools and communities across the country.

#### **Exposure and Experience at YES-GHANA**

The internship experience at the YES Ghana was quite insightful and enriching. I learned how to undertake successful community entry through assessment of needs and resources in order to implement social change projects. I also had an insight into integrating sustainability strategies into projects so that communities are the centre of the lifecycle of projects and projects are sustained beyond their terminal period. I equally learned the processes involved in building inclusive, representative strong coalitions and relationships among youth to undertake results-based advocacy initiatives in communities. Additionally, I found the Youth Manifesto and the National Youth Policy as very interesting and practical tools for youth advocacy and policy influencing.

I was privileged to attend a session of the national committee board for the national youth SDG Essay competition to plan for the event which is a flagship component of the SDG Youth Action Campaign. I also assisted in the construction of the essay question for the national youth essay competition and assisted in authenticating and packaging notepads for dissemination to various focal pickup points.

In addition to my daily tasks at YES-Ghana, I was tasked to initiate the design of a local fundraising strategy to scale the size of award of the SDG YOUTH ESSAY Competition permitting top winners to receive small grants that will enable them to carry out outreach activities in their respective communities. I also designed a concept note and a budget, as well as profiled seven private sector organisations with regards to the SDGs they resonate with and designed a sample sponsorship letter and strategy to reach out to them. I also proposed measures with which to gain the attention of the private sector to foster collaboration with YES Ghana on its current work related to the SDG Youth Essay Competition.

### **CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS**

My internship at WACSI has been a very educative experience and a conducive transition from an academic environment to an industry field by granting a quality experience of a working environment and a better understanding of the civil society sector. However, I faced challenges and constraints outlined below:

- With little knowledge of the civil society sector, integrating into already existing projects was quite challenging at the initial stages of the internship.
- Limited ability due to time constraints to gain adequate knowledge and skills from other units since the assigned unit is a priority for the intern.
- The externship was quite theoretical and less practical given that I was placed at a time when the practical activities had not yet begun.
- The distance between the office and the intern's quarters is quite a disincentive and the unstable flow of water in the interns' residence was also a major challenge.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

I would like to recommend that in as much as interns have an assigned unit, official schedules be made within the six months period for interns to have a mandatory working experience with the operations unit and other programme units to increase learning and have a more complete and enriching professional experience.

I would also like to suggest that WACSI be more engaged with their partner organisations hosting its interns to ensure that the period of the placement aligns with a peak period in their project and organisational activities in order to maximise learning.

### **CONCLUSION**

My internship with WACSI and my externship with YES-Ghana have enhanced my professional skills, deepened my understanding of civil society and WACSI's contribution to the attainment of a peaceful and prosperous West Africa through capacity strengthening approaches. I am indeed grateful for this learning opportunity granted to me by the institute and I hope that WACSI continues to implement such programs to position and strengthen civil society to play a much more robust strategic role in the development of West Africa and the continent at large.