



Communiqué

1st Annual West Africa Civil Society Conference

“Strategising for the Post-2015 and ECOWAS Vision 2020 Development Agenda for West Africa” Accra, Ghana from 8-9 December 2014

Over 50 civil society delegates representing 13 ECOWAS countries and attending the 1st Annual West Africa Civil Society Conference in Accra, Ghana from 8-9 December 2014, deliberated on the above theme. The two-day conference provided the participants with the opportunity: 1) to prioritise a regional post-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda; and 2) to strengthen West African civil society’s engagement with ECOWAS towards achieving its people-driven vision (ECOWAS Vision 2020). Plenary and group discussions focused on the following specific areas:

- Ensure access to **quality education**
- Strengthen **democratic governance**
- Promote **peace and security**
- Improve **agricultural development and food security**
- Effectively **manage and govern natural resources**
- Promote **youth development**
- Promote **regional integration**

The conference also tasked delegates to identify key pillars that can significantly improve the development of the region, which can only be achieved if all stakeholders (government, private sector and civil society) work together to achieve results.

In order to input into forthcoming governments’ negotiation processes on the post-2015 MDG/SDG development agenda and influence its outcomes, delegates are to engage government negotiation teams at the national level with the aim of influencing government and ECOWAS decisions. West African civil society organisations will also strive to participate in the forthcoming global conference on Financing for Development, which will be hosted by the UNECA in Addis Ababa in the second half of 2015.

At the end of the 2-day conference, delegates came up with 7 key priority areas that civil society should continue to engage with the post-2015 MDG/SDG agenda for the West African people.

Post-2015 Millennium Development/Sustainable Development Goals (MDG/SDGs) Agenda Civil Society should:

- Lead the popularisation and sensitisation of community citizens (grassroots populations’ inclusion and participation) on the implementation of the ECOWAS vision;
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment on the impact of the 2000-2015 MDGs and use the findings to engage in the post-2015 MDG/SDG (2016-2030) process;
- Actively engage their governments at the national level to influence the post-2015 MDG/SDGs agenda before the inter-governmental negotiation stage at the United Nations level;
- Identify specific areas of engagement within the new MDG/SDGs that will significantly improve the livelihoods of community citizens;

- Strategise effectively to harness indigenous resources to support the implementation of the MDG/SDGs at both national and regional levels;
- Identify which of the new 17 MDG/SDGs can be realistically achieved within the next 15 years, identify CSO groups working on each of the themes and strengthen their capacity to effectively engage the prioritised goals; and
- Represent, promote, and advocate the views and interests of community citizens in post-2015 discussions and negotiations.

National Governments should:

- Pursue negotiations that primarily shape regional development agenda and contribute to global development agenda;
- Negotiate with each other in order to mobilise adequate financial resources to facilitate the implementation of the post-2015 MDG/SDGs;
- Allocate resources to civil society to support their roles in the implementation of the post-2015 MDG/SDGs agenda at the national level;
- Create spaces for civil society to be represented on national delegations that participate in all dialogues and convenings on the post-2015 MDG/SDGs development agenda.

ECOWAS Vision 2020: CSOs should engage in the following identified areas:

- ***Human Development:*** including access to quality education, vocational skills training and promoting education and health;
- ***Democratic governance:*** including transparency and accountability, women's political participation and representation, credible and transparent elections and promoting the rule of law;
- ***Peace and security:*** including countering violence-extremism, drug trafficking, reform of the security sector and conflict prevention;
- ***Natural resource management:*** including transparent and accountable management and equitable distribution of resources;
- ***Youth development:*** including employment, political participation and inclusiveness;
- ***Free movement of persons and goods:*** addressing the challenges on borders and roads between member states;
- ***Agriculture:*** including food security and nutrition.

National Governments should:

- Represent the interest and aspirations of their citizens in the implementation of its people-driven vision;
- Create enabling conditions for civil society organisation to play effective roles in the implementation of the vision 2020 agenda at then national levels.
- Expedite the implementation of the vision at various national level

ECOWAS should:

- Educate and sensitise community citizens on the various aspects of the Vision 2020 agenda;
- Harmonise the ECOWAS vision 2020 with the post-2015 MDG/SDGs to optimise synergies in implementation;
- Redefine and strengthen its relationship with WACSOF as the recognised regional civil society platform for interface between citizens and ECOWAS commission;
- Accelerate the provision of holistic support i.e. medical, social, financial and economic to the badly hit Ebola areas in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, in order to enhance the rebuilding of the affected communities; and
- Enhance responses to other communicable diseases and improve public health delivery.

Joint Recommendations:

All stakeholders including development partners and the private sector should;

- Support WACSOF with the requisite capacity needed to function and effectively manage its institutional, operational and sustainability structures in the following areas: communication, resource mobilisation, technical competency, strategic partnerships, capacity in policy analysis and advocacy; and
- Strengthen ECOWAS' resource capacity (human, technical and financial) to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of Vision 2020 and its impact across the region.

On behalf of 2014 conference delegates



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WACSI and WACSOF acknowledge and appreciate the support provided by the [Commonwealth Foundation](#) towards the 1st Annual West Africa Civil Society Conference.

Movimento da Sociedade Civil, Guinea Bissau; Nigeria Network of NGOs, Nigeria; West Africa Civil Society Institute, Ghana; West African Civil Society Forum; Concern Universal, Ghana; This Day Newspaper, Nigeria; Forum de la Société Civile de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, Niger; Forum de la Société Civile de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, Mali; Ghana Integrity Initiative, Ghana; Centre for Democracy and Development, Nigeria; Club AU, Cote d'Ivoire; Centre for Democracy and Development, Ghana; Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour Développement (RESOCIDE), Burkina Faso; SEND-Ghana, Ghana; West Africa Network for Peacebuilding; Apple Project, Ghana; Institute for Democratic Governance, Ghana; IMANI, Ghana; Centre for Democratic Development, Ghana; ASM Africa Network, Ghana; Africa in Focus, Radio XYZ, Ghana; Abantu for Development/NETRIGHT, Ghana; The Association of NGOs, The Gambia; ONG FDS, Mali; CALYPSO, Togo; Réseau des ONG de Développement et Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et de la Démocratie (RODADDH), Niger; Artisanal and Small Scale Mining Africa-Network, Ghana; Campaign for Good Governance, Sierra Leone