



WAYNFOCUS

West Africa Youth Network Newsletter

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Editorial

This is our maiden issue of the Youth Focus, the West Africa Youth Network and Focal Points newsletter to be launched soon. We have received many encouraging comments from those who have had the chance to read about developments at the West Africa Youth Network. We would have wished though that the reactions were written so that we could publish them. We do value your opinion and would urge you to write to the editors directly at the addresses below.

We also ask that those who receive the Newsletter will copy them for distribution at their members. That way we reach as many networks as possible more effectively. Our objective is to reach a really wide audience and therefore we appeal again to those leaders, as well as concerned youth, to e-mail their contacts to wayn_ghana@yahoo.com or samabbey@africamail.com

We would of course appreciate cash support to enable us to mail more hard copies to readers. Needless to say we would welcome written contributions and also look forward to receiving any interesting archival material for the Network that is being set up as part of the transformational process

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You can now send your comments, reactions and enquiries to the address below:

wayn_regional@yahoo.com or
wayn_ghana@yahoo.com

News from the Regional Directorate

The West African Youth Network (WAYN) is a regional youth empowerment organization established by four young people from West Africa in March 2001. WAYN seeks to serve as an advocacy mechanism and Public Policy Voice for the cause of young people in West Africa as well as to empower young people to get involve in practical projects geared toward peace building, human rights, conflict resolution, good governance and HIV/AIDS Prevention.

WAYN is also an active member of the African Youth Foundation and UNOY Peace-builders in The Netherlands, the African Network of Young Peace builders established in Franschoek, Cape Town, South Africa in 2001 by youth leaders across the continent of Africa.

WAYN is also an affiliate of the Child Protection Unit of the Economic Community of West African States and has been involved in a number of activities aimed at ensuring the involvement of young people in activities designed to ensure their participation in issues affecting their lives.

The West African Youth Network (WAYN) serve as an umbrella structure for youth organizations in West Africa

WAYN is presently engaged in a number of activities relating to Peace building, human rights, conflict resolution, youth and democratic empowerment and governance in the region. Since its establishment, WAYN has been involved in a number of programs for young people including the MRU Youth Seminar in 2003 and the West African Youth Seminar on Conflict Transformation in 2004, and partner to the UNOY face to face peace training workshop in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The organization recently organized and hosted the first West African Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD. This forum brought together young people and MPs from 13 West African Countries to formulate strategies aimed at changing the mindsets that have prevented young people from participating in regional and national decision making processes.

NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

The First West African Youth Parliamentary Forum was held in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 6-8 April at the Hill Valley Hotel. The Forum, which has is its theme: "**Forging a Strategic Partnership between youth and MPs**", was formally declared opened by the Vice President of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Solomon Berewa.

The Forum brought together 30 youth leaders and 9 MPs from Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gambia. A West African Youth Parliamentary Action Group comprising representatives from the youth and MPs was constituted at the end of the Forum.

Center for Peace and Conflict Studies

The Center was established to help promote peace and conflict resolution in Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union. It runs a Unique Peace Program in collaboration with the University of Sierra Leone. The center shall basically be in charge of the training component of WAYN.

Contact: mprattb@yahoo.com



WAYN Opinion

WHEN THE AFRICAN PAST MEETS THE GLOBAL FUTURE

By Sammy Jacobs Abbey, WAYN Liaison officer to ECOWAS

General picture of Africa in the mid 1990s is that of a region full of enormous potential to be an economic giant in the world. It's human and natural resources have barely been tapped. However, in the global arena, Africa still stands out as a continent engulfed in civil and political conflicts, poor economic performance and deepening poverty

We must increase global attention on the plight of African people! I wish I had the money and power to do so but we are obliged to what we can with what resources we have and I believe your passion combined with mine will do just that.

Too many people drag the past around with them as unnecessary excess baggage and too many others dream of a future they cannot find a way to make happen. The only time we really have to work with is the here and now. This is where we tear down the real or perceived barriers and replace them with bridges from the past to the future. We determine our own future by the choices and decisions we make in the present based on what we have learned from the past and our current situation.

It seems to me that in Africa, we must create a generation of Champions of Change from so many victims of circumstance. The young people are the hope and future of Africa. Our generation has it all wrong, waiting on the more developed countries to come to Africa's assistance. It hasn't worked. The cries of infants suffering and dying have fallen on deaf ears in the developed countries. I believe the media is the key. We must find ways to develop people from the inside out, determined to shape their own future while, at the same time, using the media to raise the awareness level of people in the more developed countries. Change will not come through governments or even international organizations. It will only come from people like us reaching out to each other as brothers and sisters

Reading the history of Asia, I have heard the "development" taking place there and there is a valuable lesson for the African people to be learned from the emerging Asian countries as they "modernize". That lesson is that we cannot afford to sacrifice the past for the future. We cannot afford to lose the traditional values and ways of any ethnic group in the interest of a few dollars. I see that happening Africa and it breaks my heart.

If Africa is to realize its incredible potential, it must not sell its culture and wonderful history in the process. That is to me, nothing less than moral prostitution and is totally unacceptable. We have a major, major crisis in Africa today. The total decimation of entire populations of adults has brought about a terrible situation. Where are the young people supposed to learn values and principles? You have so many young people left without parents, abused and used for selfish and greedy purposes. These are the real victims and Africa will take a long time to recover from the gap that has been create in recent years. To me, the moral wounds are more severe than the physical ones, though both are connected. Confucius once said that you cannot teach philosophy to a hungry man. This is something I agree with.

One of the problems here is that people in the West do not believe that peace is possible in Africa. Many Africans feel the same and no one could blame them for their lack of faith and hope based on what they have experienced and are seeing take place all round them today. As long as they believe that peace is not possible, it never will be. That's the first step. It is time for all African people to stop using weapons of war to destroy one another and begin using the mind and heart to form their own coalition to take control of their own destiny. You do not need Western governments and corporations coming in to lead the way down their path. That path is not what the

African people need. It is a suicide run. What is taking place in the world today, which many refer to as globalization, is nothing more than economic colonialization. It is the subjugation of the poorer nations and their people, a stripping of their natural resources, and enslavement to none other than the almighty dollar. And that's the point. People have replaced God and spirituality with money. That's the philosophical side of things. This war on terrorism in which we are engaged is partly our own doing. We have to address the issues that created this intense hatred of America and the West while defending ourselves against those who would kill innocent civilians, women and children. It is a paradox and an irony that has most world leaders today baffled, but it is also reality. And so simple. It is we humans who are complicating it and this is the reason for so much frustration. People in the West tend to look at Africa and see so much that is overwhelming rather than seeing it as a continent of individual souls and human spirits connected not only to each other throughout history, but also with themselves. Until we all make, it none of us do!

On the practical side, we need to work with the current victims. We need to teach them how to eradicate the wars and poverty and sickness that is wiping out millions of people at such a rate that it is astounding. We need to put an end to the conflicts which no one wins in the end. We need to direct the power of the human mind towards taking care of those who cannot take care of themselves while building nations based on mutual trust and respect. That is how we end war, not with more guns and ammunition. It is true that violence breeds violence and never leads to peaceful resolution. History can teach us that if we but look at the truth and not the way it is recorded by the victors.

The Native American Indians learned that lesson the hard way. The more they tried to "become white" the more they lost in the process. Those who have survived the genocide that took place in many countries only managed to do so by holding onto the old ways while adapting to the evolving situations. Those who did not, perished. That is not to say that the West doesn't have something to offer, however, something the Middle Eastern terrorist groups have lost sight of. You don't have to take all that the West has to offer, just what you need to assist you in attaining your goals. You don't have to remake Africa in the likeness and image of country like America, but our principles of individual freedom and basic human rights are something that you need to instill in African people everywhere. That's what's missing, a basic understanding of and appreciation for the true gift of life, the human spirit.

Some WAYN Activity photos



Sammy Jacobs Abbey (WAYN Ghana) & Andrea Afanou (WAYN Togo) at West Africa Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD in Sierra Leone



Sammy Jacobs Abbey (WAYN Liaison Officer to ECOWAS) Binto Diallo (UNESCO Senegal) Richelieu Allison (WAYN Regional Director)



Dr. Memunatu Pratt, (Centre for conflict studies University of SL) Dr. Dennis Bright (Minister for Youth & Sports, Sierra Leone) and Dr. Solomon Berewa (Vice President Republic of Sierra Leone) at the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD

Focal Point News

• The Gambia

The West Africa Youth Network Gambia (WAYN Gambia) country coordinator Mr. Abdul Jobe organized a press conference to inform the people and citizens of the Gambia the outcome of the West Africa Youth Network Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD.



WAYN Togo

The country coordinator Mr. Andrea Afanou is actively involved in the ongoing electoral process in the Republic of Togo

WAYN LIBERIA

Mr. Arthur Becker has now taking over the leadership of the West Africa Youth Network in Liberia, he replaces Mr. Finley Kanger

WAYN Liberia is currently facilitating the process for the forth coming 2nd Parliamentary sitting of the Mano River Union Youth Parliament in Liberia



WAYN GHANA

WAYN Ghana is currently developing a concept proposal as part of the action plan from the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD to organize the National Youth Parliament on NEPAD and APRM with collaboration with the Ministry of Regional Integration and NEPAD and the APRM Secretariat in Ghana. He was selected as Focal Point of the year 2004



WAYN Guinea

The country coordinator of the West Africa Youth Network in Guinea Ms. Mariama Camara is on study leave in Ghana reading English, Hon Mohammed Toure. Honorable speaker of the MRU Youth Parliament are among those acting on her behalf.



WAYN Sierra Leone

The Regional Secretariat recently selected Mr. Foday Jalloh, a former Head of the Sierra Leonean Student Union to head the Sierra Leonean Chapter. He also worked part time as a Programme Assistant at the Secretariat.



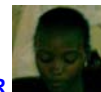
WAYN Nigeria

Mr. Prince Ojeniyi Adeola, who is the country coordinator as well as the program director of the West Africa Youth Network, is currently lobbying the ECOWAS Secretariat and the Nigerian Parliament in Abuja to facilitate our relationship with them



WAYN Senegal

The Coordinator Mohammed is currently in France. Mame Diarra and Binto Diallo represented the WAYN Senegal at the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD in Freetown



WAYN NIGER

Amina Mustapha has been selected as the new focal point coordinator at the WAYN Niger office; she was at the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD



WAYN Ivory Coast

The Coordinator Gissel due to her academic work in MSC English could not attend the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD and was represented by Danielle

• DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Plan of Action 2005

IT EM	Programme	OBJECTIVE	Activities
A	YEAR 2005		
1.	West African Youth Peace Initiative	To promote peace in the sub-region	Undertake a peace Caravan from Ivory Coast, through major cities in West Africa and training for young peace builders
2	West Africa Youth Leadership Programme	To provide training for West Africa Future Leaders	Undertake the establishment of an annual training Programme at the University of SL
3.	West African Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD	To help change the mindset that prevent the participation of young people in decision making	Conduct a forum in Sierra Leone for Youth Representatives and Members of Parliament in the sub region
4	Youth Democracy Initiative	To make youth visible in democratic and governance process	Conduct training for youth election observers; send observers to the Liberian election and organize governance and democracy clubs
5	2 nd Session Mano River Union Youth Parliament	Train young leaders in parliamentary procedures	Continue the sitting process of the MRU Youth parliament
6	Fund Raising educational initiative	Enhancement of academic, health and character growth (Plans ref. - Action Plan	Individual or group sponsorship required.
7	ECOWAS Youth Desk	Make youth visible in the activities of ECOWAS	
8	HIV/AIDS Initiative	To help fight stigma and discrimination	Workshops, awareness and HIV/AIDS counseling and Care Giving Training
9	Sub-regional mechanism on child soldiers	To formulate a regional mechanism for child protection	Sub regional workshop

Country Focal Point

Benin Mr. Spero Hector
 Gambia Mr. Abdul Jobe
 Ghana Mr. Sammy Jacobs Abbey
 Guinea Ms. Mariama Hadja Camara
 Ivory Coast Ms. Gisele Mida
 Liberia Mr. Arthur Becker
 Mali Making Konate
 Nigeria Mr. Ojenyi Adeola
 Senegal Mr. Mohammed Mbengue
 S/Leone Mr. Jalloh
 Togo Mr. Andre Kangni Afanou
 Niger Ms. Amina Mustapha
 Burkina Faso: Ms. Nicole Barry

We are currently working on getting focal points in

Guinea Bissau
 Cape Verde
 Mauritania

WEST AFRICA YOUTH NETWORK PARTNERS

Alert
 Plan Netherlands
 Xminy Foundation
 UN Mission in Sierra Leone
 Afroneth
 Open Society Initiative of West Africa
 Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of SL
 ECOWAS
 YPA
 NEPAD Secretariat
 African Development Forum
 Parliamentary Centre, Canada
 Westminster Foundation for democracy
 MRU Peace Forum
 Youth Action International USA
 Child Protection office, ECOWAS
 UNOY Peace-builders
 Oxfam
 West Africa Students Union
 Africa Peace-Benin
 Positive Africa-Ivory Coast

UPCOMING EVENTS

**2ND SESSION, MRU YOUTH PARLIAMENT-JULY (LIBERIA)
 WEST AFRICAN YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME
 Youth Peace Initiative (Ivory Coast)
 Consultative Meeting of the West African Youth Parliamentary
 Action Group**

SUPPORTIVE AND APPRECIATION

- Government of West African States
- Mrs. Memunatu Pratt, University of Sierra Leone
- Ministry of Youth and Sports, Sierra Leone
- United Nations of Youth Foundation The Netherlands
- Mr. Ibrahima Diouf, Child Protection Advisor-ECOWAS
- Radio UNAMSIL
- Mr. Chidiki Njudid-Open Society Justice Initiative, Nigeria
- Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
- THE OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE OF WEST AFRICA (OSIWA)
- Center for Peace and Conflict Studies-SL
- Inter Africa, Geneva Switzerland
- The Child Protection Office, ECOWAS
- The Parliamentary Centre in Canada
- Canadian International Development Agency
- Mr. Roger Yomba, NEPAD West & Central Africa Coordinator



West Africa Youth Parliamentary Forum delegates with Dr. David Crane of the United Nations Special Court in Sierra Leone