



# NEWS MONTHLY BULLETIN- (WANEP-SIERRA LEONE)

(AUGUST, 2017)

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Sierra Leone is relatively peaceful, but still grappling to overcome challenges related to post-Ebola, mudslide and flooding recoveries, political intolerance and violence, transparency and accountability, weak independent media, weak and fragmented civil society organisations, violations and abuse of human rights as well as disregard for the Rule of Law. This situation poses lot of challenges to the growth of democracy, especially as the country prepares for general elections in 2018.

During the period underreview, the National Early Warning System (NEWS) tracked and recorded incidents ranging from intra and inter-party conflicts, floodings, landslides and the burning down of the Alliance Democratic Party's (ADP) Headquarters in Freetown. The preceding analysis on identified threats has been aligned to the WANEP thematic areas of violent extremism, democracy and good governance, women, peace and security and the environment.

## II. CRIME AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM:

Sierra Leone has not experienced any act of terrorism or violent extremism. However, due to the international nature of the threat of terrorism and extremist ideology, the national security operatives have assigned some amount of efforts in countering the threats. Recent terror attacks in West Africa by Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Mourabitoun, Ansar-al-din and Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAD) give indications that no country in the region is invulnerable to radicalization and terror attacks. In fact, in April 2013, a local media source in Somalia indicated that Al-Shabab forces had vowed to attack Sierra Leone because it was contributing troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)<sup>1</sup>. This has alerted the Office of National Security to proffer vigilant security measures including dialogue sessions and training of faith-based institutions including churches and mosques in awareness education to prevent organised crimes and violent extremism<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, the porous nature of the borders with neighbouring countries plays a significant role in the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Despite the existence of a national ban on

<sup>1</sup>WANEP Sierra Leone, working paper on "Countering Violent Extremism in Sierra Leone," January 2017.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

locally produced arms, their proliferation and usage, especially for criminal activities are common. Even though the Sierra Leone Parliament has enacted a law on the possession and use of arms and ammunition and light weapons by civilians<sup>3</sup>, people, at all levels, still possess and use unregistered arms. A case in point was the discovery of a handgun in the possession of a political actor, Mohamed Mansaray, leader of the Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) – the matter is still on trial in court in Kailahun, East of the country. This and many other recorded acts signify that Sierra Leone has to do more to control proliferation of arms and its illicit cross-border activities which pose a serious threat to human security.

### **III. DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE:**

As the country prepares for Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government Elections in March 2018, discussions on critical threats to the electoral processes have been quite topical especially within the media and the civil society. Issues and challenges on verification of the Provisional Voter Register (PVR), political intolerance, violence and other forms of human rights violations and abuses formed the thrust of public discourse. During the reporting period, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) undertook the Voter's Exhibition exercise in 3,300 Centres nationwide. The voter exhibition was marred by controversies around 39,276 missing data from the PVR that needed to be recaptured<sup>4</sup> as well as the reports of 1,539 individuals to face prosecution for double registration<sup>5</sup>. Issues of transparency and accountability involving some members of the 2017 Hajj committee was reported. It was alleged that the officials sold government scholarships that were meant for the poor and needy to the affluent and even foreigners<sup>6</sup>. An investigation into the matter is underway by the country's Criminal Investigations Department (CID) and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The police is also investigating a fire incident at the opposition Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) National Headquarters at Rawdon Street in Freetown. The building and sensitive party documents worth millions of Leones (local currency) were destroyed. The leadership of the party suspects the act to be an attack to silence opposition in the country. Meanwhile, the ruling APC party officials have dismissed the claims and encouraged the police to speed up investigations into the causes of the fire outbreak. Such incident at this time of politicking, whether orchestrated or not, has the potential to increase tensions around the elections.

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<sup>3</sup>The (Sierra Leone) Arms and Ammunition Act, 2012. Part IV – Possession and use within Sierra Leone

<sup>4</sup>APA News (Freetown), September 6, 2017.

<sup>5</sup>Source: Awoko Newspaper, August 29, 2017.

<sup>6</sup>WANEP Sierra Leone NEWS Platform/Weekly Highlights August 2017.

#### **IV. ENVIRONMENT:**

On Monday, August 14, 2017, heavy rain in Freetown including Motema, Kroo Bay and Dwazack communities resulted in mudslides and flash floods that killed over 600 people, 400 injured and more than 600 still missing. The victims were mostly women and children with more than 10,000 displaced and properties destroyed. A well coordinated government-led disaster and humanitarian response is in progress with temporary emergency response centres established across the city. The severity of the recent mudslide and flooding in Freetown suggests weakness on the part of the Lands and Environment Ministry and law enforcement agencies to ensure that the laws and appropriate government's actions are adhered to and sustained. This should reawaken authorities concerned to apply the necessary actions to prevent or mitigate a reoccurrence of similar disaster in the epicentre, spillover and at-risk communities. The scale and impact of the disaster could be attributed to limited knowledge of disaster risk reduction strategies and resilient capacities by affected population. Without adequate emergency response to the current crisis, there is an increased likelihood of opportunistic disasters from possible outbreak of water-borne diseases such as cholera, typhoid etc. Therefore, this requires collective effort from the Disaster Management Department of the Office of National Security (ONS), emergency management and aid agencies<sup>7</sup>.

#### **V. WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY:**

The ECOWAS Supplementary Act (A/SA.02/05/15) Relating to Equality of Rights of women, the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008) and other complimentary resolutions emphasize the importance of women participation in peace, security and decision making processes as well as issues of prevention against abuses and protection of rights at all levels. The effective implementation of these instruments will add substantial value to women's active participation in peace and security. Sierra Leone has domesticated some of these international women's rights instruments into national laws, policies and action plans. Even though the government and its partners including Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have made strides in the application of the gender laws, more needs to be done to ensure equality and parity in the country. With the elections at hand, those equality laws, policies and action plans would be put to test by the level of participation and protection of women in the electioneering process. Already, some women including the former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflicts, Dr. Zainab Bangura, has expressed interest in the presidential nomination of the All People's Congress party. In addition, more women have showed up as potential contenders for

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<sup>7</sup>WANEP Sierra Leone Quick Updates, August 14, 2017.

various elective positions in their parties and are receiving support in the preparation of manifestos similar to that of the citizen's manifestos spearheaded by the 50-50 movement, CGG and Women's Forum.

In response to the humanitarian situation caused by the mudslide and flooding disaster, women group including 50-50 Women's Movement staged musical concerts in Freetown to raise funds in support of women and children affected by the incidents. Similarly, women have been making individual visitations and donations in cash, food, clothings and temporary shelters to the disaster response committee.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- The Government through the Office of National Security should continue to engage faith-based institutions including religious leaders on prevention of radical and violent extremist activities in the country ;
- NEC should speedily investigate, clarify and communicate the cases of missing data and double registration on the PVR to forestall conflicts and threats to the elections;
- The Office of National Security (ONS) and partners to enhance coherent and coordinated disaster management and humanitarian response efforts;
- Government and its partners to launch an in-depth inquiry into the mudslide and flooding disaster and its impact to draw lessons for community engagements in disaster prevention, management and response;
- Government, through the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment, ONS/police and the Environmental protection agency to ensure strict adherence to the environmental protection laws.

## **VII. CONCLUSION :**

The show of disrespect for regulations and laws in Sierra Leone is worrisome. This translates into the behaviours and attitudes of some people and the overall weakness of the state to enforce the rule of law in protection of the people and the public good. From the incidents highlighted above, there is need to strengthen law enforcement as well as the early warning and response systems in the country, especially as the elections draw near.

**CENSUS OF INCIDENTS FOR AUGUST 2017**

THEMATIC AREA	NO.	VICTIMS	
		DEATHS	INJURIES
<b>VIOLENT EXTREMISM :</b> Terrorism/Suicide bomb explosions	0		
<b>Armed Attack</b> (Organised crime :Armed robbery, assassination and cult clash)	0		
Abduction	0		
Intrusion breaks/theft	0		
Physical Assault	1		1
Arms Trafficking	0		
Political Clash	1		1
Abduction	0		
Arms Trafficking	0		
<b>DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE</b>			
Demonstration (peaceful)	0		
Demonstration (violent)	0		
Inciting statement to hatred and violence/ Regionalist/Racist Speech	0		
Repression of Protest/Demonstration	0		
Intimidation and Threats	0		
<b>ENVIRONMENT :</b>			



Farmers-Herders conflict	0		
Epidemics	0		
Drug Trafficking	0		
Communal Conflict	0		
Flood	3	600	400
<b>WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY</b>			
Human Trafficking	11	0	0
SexualHarrassment and Rape	5	0	0
<b>OTHERS :</b>			
Fire Outbreak	1		
Homicide	0		
Accident	1	2	5
Intrusion breaks/theft	0	0	0
Arrest/Detention	10	4	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>405</b>

*Through its National Early Warning System (NEWS), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP-(Sierra Leone)) develops and disseminates a monthly bulletin on Human Security at the end of each month to inform the different actors and / or partners and formulates recommendations to different decision-makers for targeted responses to the given alerts.*

*This monthly monitoring is based on information gathered from the field by the WANEP-Sierra Leone field monitors, and also information gathered from the various national and international media.*

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