

USAID/WANEP Project Bolsters Regional, District and Community Monitors in Sierra Leone



Above (left) Mr. Ifeanyi Okechukwu, Regional Coordinator Early Warning and Head of WANEP/USAID Project facilitating a training session. (Middle) one of the monitors, Ms Emilia Kamara Jengo of the Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy being interviewed by the press. (Right), National Network Coordinator, WANEP-Sierra Leone, Dr. Isata Mahoi presents a tablet to one of the monitors. The tablet is to aid the monitors for effective off/online reporting.

From July 3 to 6, 2017 the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) commenced the training of 55 team leaders as well as regional, district and community Monitors in Sierra Leone to position them for effective data gathering and reporting in preparation for the 2018 general elections in the country. The training is under the USAID/WANEP project on Mitigating Election Violence through National Early Warning Systems (NEWS).

The training, which was conducted in two phase was specifically to improve the monitors understanding of the USAID/WANEP NEWS Project, clarify their roles, enhance their skills of networking, leadership and coordination and strengthen their knowledge and skills to utilize the NEWS mobile offline application for election monitoring. The training further provides opportunity for clarifying and strengthening communication lines between the regional, district and community monitors, WANEP-Sierra Leone and WANEP regional office for effective NEWS reports before, during and after the 2018 elections in Sierra Leone. After the training, the monitors received smart phones and Tablets to aid them in monitoring and reporting security threats both on/offline.

The trained monitors working under the supervision of their team leaders are expected to submit regular reports on election related threats across the districts/regions in the country into the NEWS platform. Aside from their supervisory roles, the team leaders also have the responsibility of verifying the reports and providing levels of quality control. Similarly, the regional monitors are charged with providing weekly highlights to support the weekly reports that will be generated by the NEWS Manager. The report will be shared with the National Election Response Group (NERG), a group of credible individuals drawn from various echelons of the society. The group will be inaugurated in August, 2017. At the district level, the trained district monitors will provide early

warning reports on the threats before, during and after the elections and debriefed the District Security Committee (DISEC) in their various districts.

Prior to this training, WANEP brought together critical stakeholders and key partners in May, 2017 to validate early warning indicators in preparation for the 2018 general elections in Sierra Leone. The trained monitors will utilize the validated indicators to generate regular incident and situation reports on security threats that may affect the peaceful conduct of the elections. WANEP through a consultant had earlier conducted a mapping exercise in an effort to identify critical stakeholders and potential hotspots for political/election violence in the run up to the elections. The assessment identified risks areas, the spoilers, intervenors and issues that could threaten the electoral process. An Election Situation Room (ESR) will be established during the lifespan of this project to support smooth conduct of the voting process on Election Day.

The WANEP/USAID NEWS project is designed to mitigate election related violence in five countries of West Africa including; Burkina Faso, Cote d'ivoire, Niger, Ghana and Sierra Leone with the goal to enhance early warning and response systems to reduce the risk of election violence in West Africa. It creates a platform to access information on risk factors that could threaten the conduct of elections and provide avenue for exchange of relevant information to key stakeholders to respond to election violence before, during and after the elections among others.