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MITIGATING ELECTION VIOLENCE THROUGH NATIONAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS (NEWS)

BACKGROUND

West African countries have experienced frequent incidents of violent conflict. Although the causes of state fragility and political instability in the region are deeply rooted and structural in nature, there have been occasions when large scale violence and instability have been sparked by elections or election-related processes. Despite best intentions embodied in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, and the Conflict Prevention Framework, violence is still commonplace during elections in the region. Conflict early warning and response are therefore seen as critical conflict mitigation priorities by West African governments. Strengthening early warning and response around key elections in the region will help to increase stability and reduce the potential for future conflicts.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Mitigating Election Violence through National Early Warning Systems is a five-year, \$2.5 million project implemented by the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). The aim of the project is to mitigate election violence in target countries in West Africa, including Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. WANEP/NEWS assists community organizations to identify potential election violence risks by developing and monitoring a set of customized indicators and analyzing the resulting data. If monitoring in a given area reveals a

heightened risk of violence at any point in the election cycle, WANEP works with national and local stakeholders to develop recommendations for preventative peace-building activities, and channels these recommendations to targeted national and regional stakeholders for early action to prevent the conflicts from escalating.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Increase early response advocacy of NEWS to targeted decision makers.
- Enable national early warning systems to recommend responses to key stakeholders to mitigate potential election violence triggers.
- Standardize and improve early warning data collection and reporting.

PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

- WANEP successfully completed electoral violence prevention programming in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Ghana, and Sierra Leone.
- NEWS worked with community organizations in target countries to develop a set of customized indicators that helped to monitor the electoral environment and identify potential triggers of electoral violence at any point during the electoral cycles.
- WANEP supported multiple National and Local Elections Response Groups in five target countries; effectively convened and worked with the national and district level government and non-government stakeholders through the electoral cycle around presidential elections; and helped built a greater and more cohesive response to violence triggers.
- NEWS trained 174 community monitors and 3000 election monitors to improve early warning data gathering and reporting to contribute to peaceful electoral outcomes in target countries.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

GOAL

Enhance early warning and response systems to reduce the risk of violence in West Africa.

LIFE OF PROGRAM

February 2015 – June 2019

TOTAL USAID FUNDING

U.S. \$2.5 million

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

West Africa (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Ghana, Sierra Leone)

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

