

# ECOWAS, Insecurity in West Africa and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework

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## ABSTRACT

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has encountered security challenges that have threatened to scuttle its mandate to provide good quality life for its people through the process of regional cooperation and integration. The sub-regional organisation has made several attempts to manage the challenges by means of various interventions but the modest successes therefrom have been undermined by threats that are not amenable to military solutions yet with equally, if not more devastating consequences. This paper examined the frameworks that ECOWAS has adopted to tackle the security challenges and concluded that the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework which particularly addresses human security issues, offers the best panacea for ECOWAS to emerge from the imbroglia to pursue its original objectives. Measures to ensure its implementation from the ends of the ECOWAS Commission and civil society were therefore recommended.

## KEY WORDS:

ECOWAS, Liberalisation, violence, Insecurity

## INTRODUCTION

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was originally formed with the sole objective of achieving economic cooperation and integration among member states. However, with the increase in security challenges within various countries in the sub-region, it became clear that there must be either a shift or an expansion of the objective to include security. Hence, ECOWAS became preoccupied with conflict management as a means of tackling the security challenges. Thus, ECOWAS has, from the 1990s developed effective frameworks for conflict intervention and management to deal with threats to the security of member states through military intervention which has received commendations (Simão, 1997; Ali-Dinar, 1998). ECOWAS has succeeded in restoring some measure of order in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau Togo and Burkina Faso, yet issues of human security which are not easily amenable to military solutions have remained major challenges in the sub-region till today. It has, in fact been noted that the level of civilian casualties (deaths, injuries, dislocations, displacements and deprivations) parallels those of the 1990s, although the sources and types of threats have either changed or mutated into new forms (Ismail, 2011). The scourge of intra state conflicts including bad governance, leading to insurgency and militancy, as well as poverty, hunger, diseases and deplorable physical environments have claimed far more lives than wars (Commission on Human Security,

2003; Aussie, 2006). This is more so in West Africa where the frustration from these negative conditions have fuelled secondary drivers such as rubbery, banditry, arms trafficking, drug trafficking and trafficking in persons, leading to escalations in violence. Thus West Africa has remained one of the most volatile regions with the lowest standards of living in the world (Mazzitelli, 2007, Omotola, 2012). While the sub-region boasts of the availability of large natural deposits, including crude oil, tin, columbite, lead, zinc, tantalite as well as good soil, water and climate for agriculture, a significant number of the population live in starvation, penury and abject poverty, mostly due to insecurity.

### ECOWAS' FORMATION AND OBJECTIVES

ECOWAS was formed in 1975 due to efforts by newly independent West African countries in the 1960s and 70s to chart the course towards socio-economic and political development like their counterparts in other regions of the world (Ahmed-Hameed, 2009). As of February 2017, ECOWAS has 15 member states, eight French-speaking; Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Togo and Niger, five are English-speaking; Ghana, The Gambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia, with two Portuguese-speaking; Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. All current members joined the community as founding members in May 1975, except Cape Verde which joined in 1977. The only former member of ECOWAS is Arabic-speaking Mauritania, which was also one of the founding members in 1975 and decided to withdraw in December 2000. Morocco officially requested to join ECOWAS in February 2017. The primary purpose for establishing the organisation by the sixteen member countries (later reduced to fifteen with the withdrawal of Mauritania in 1999) was market liberalisation and economic integration (Adetula, 2009). Two basic rationales underpinning the logic of regional integration in West Africa have been identified by Ogwu (2009). One is that integration would result in the expansion of markets which can be of immense value to industries and businesses. The other is that the removal of trade barriers would facilitate cooperation between member states and enhance their productive capacity.

The ECOWAS Treaty (1975) expressed the conviction of the leaders for the promotion of harmonious economic development of their states which called for effective economic co-operation largely through a determined and concerted policy of self-reliance. Its founding fathers felt that the organization would spearhead the process of resolving some of West Africa's development challenges in four main areas: firstly, the expansion of intra-community trade; secondly, the strengthening of the weak production structures in the sub-region for the purpose of reducing its excessive external dependence and lack of productive capacity; thirdly, improving physical infrastructure; and fourthly, enhancing monetary and financial cooperation to create a single ECOWAS currency (Babatunde, 2016). Specifically the Treaty's aim was:

...to promote co-operation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of

living of its peoples, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975,p.2).

The organisation was to realise these by facilitating economic growth through creating institutions to stimulate the promotion of co-operation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters (ECOWAS Treaty, 1975). These key objectives give no indication that the founders of ECOWAS considered peace, security, or security interventions in member states as a major component of the organization's *raison d'être*. However, security threats soon frustrated these objectives leading the organisation to evolve strategies towards addressing these challenges (Francis, 2001).

### INSECURITY IN WEST AFRICA AND ECOWAS' RESPONSES

The West African sub-region has been described as one of the most insecure habitations in the world (Global Peace Operations Reviews, 2010). Since independence several West African states have experienced political instability as a result of coups and counter coups most of which were bloody. The sub-region has witnessed five large scale civil wars especially at the end of the Cold War beginning with the war in Liberia which and Sierra Leone which threatened the whole sub-region. Although such large scale wars have dropped, other forms of political violence and new threats have emerged such as election related violence, longstanding ethno-national conflict, drug trafficking, maritime piracy, and violent extremism such as the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria which has spiralled into Niger and neighbouring Cameroon. As at December 2016, the insurgency had led to the death of about 100,000 persons and 2,114,000 others displaced in Nigeria alone while inflicting damages to the tune of \$9 billion in the North Eastern region of the country (Tukur, 2017).

Conflict between farmers and herders have also become a serious cause of concern in the region particularly in Nigeria in the past one decade. In the first six months of 2018 alone, over 1,300 deaths have been recorded with more than 200 casualties in June alone (The Associated Press July 26, 2018). Whole settlements have been displaced leading to a major humanitarian emergency especially in Plateau state of Nigeria. Farmers who sale their products are also being robbed of the proceeds by armed high way robbers. Cattle rustling by armed bandits have also had a discouraging effect on the motivation of prospective farmers as herds of cattle are lost almost on a daily basis (sometimes with the loss of lives). These incidences are becoming rampant especially in Central Nigeria. This also poses a danger to food security.

These conflicts have been further worsened by the availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW) as their presence undermine alternatives to peaceful settlement and rather exacerbate and perpetuate violence. Apart from being used in particular conflict environments, they have been moved (and sometimes even by the same soldiers) from one conflict zone to another where demand is greater. This way, the Liberian conflict fed the conflict in Sierra Leone and consequently Côte d'Ivoire during the decade and a half period of conflict in the sub - region (Stohl & Tuttle, 2009). As at

2008, there was an estimated 10 Million SALW in West Africa (Nfamara Jawneh about 10,000,000 Firearms in West Africa – Interior Secy2008<http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/2008/7/1/about-10000000-firearms-in-west-africa-interior-secy>Tuesday, July 01, 2008).

Drug trafficking also poses serious security challenges to the sub-region. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime published a document in November 2008- *Drug Trafficking as a Security Threat in West Africa* (UNODC, 2008) - in which it was noted that the volume of cocaine that transits the sub - region (about 50 tons a year). Between 2005 and 2007, cocaine seizures doubled every year from 1,323 kilograms in 2005, to 3,161 in 2006, to 6,458 in 2007. The rate of growth of the trade has the capacity to turn the sub - region into a theatre of lawlessness and instability if not addressed. This is because the effects of drug trafficking are multidimensional. A report by the *ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme* (ECOSAP) from Cape Verde clearly established a direct link between Arms and Drug trafficking and showed the two as mutually reinforcing.

Trafficking in persons (TIP) have also emerged as a security challenge in West Africa because of the dehumanising effect it has on the victims and the communities involved as well as its linkage to other transnational crimes like drug and arms trafficking. Cumulatively, these criminal activities pose major hurdles in the path of promoting overall human development (Ahiave, 2010). Trafficking in persons has been described as “a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon involving multiple stakeholders at the institutional and commercial level. It is a demand-driven global business with a huge market for cheap labour and commercial sex confronting often insufficient or unexercised policy frameworks or trained personnel to prevent it” (UNESCO, 2006). TIP racks up some \$32 billion annual trade for the traffickers (US DEPT OF STATE, 2010). Many children especially boys are also recruited in armed conflict; women and girls are trafficked within and out of the region for sexual exploitation; and large-scale trafficking within national borders.

ECOWAS responses to these challenges began in 1978 and 1981 when it adopted the Protocols on Non-Aggression and on Mutual Assistance in Defence, respectively. It acknowledges in its preamble that it “cannot attain its objectives save in an atmosphere of peace and harmonious understanding among the Member States of the Community” (ECOWAS, 1978, p.2). The protocol aimed at committing members to refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression in any dispute either by themselves or using foreigners or allowing foreigners to use their territories for any acts of subversion.

The Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence (MAD) declared and accepted that any armed threat or aggression directed against any Member state would constitute a threat or aggression against the entire Community and would demand a response of mutual aid and assistance from the community. Both protocols on Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance on Defence were concerned with relationship between states, with very little mention of the security of the human persons which is the concern of human security.

The substantive inclusion of peace and security dimensions into the organisations considerations was confirmed in the revision of the May 1975 treaty of

July 1993. This was particularly as a result of the fallout of the end of the Cold War that resulted in the rise of intra-state wars which engulfed the sub-region beginning with Liberia and spilling over to Sierra Leone and Guinea. The Revised Treaty in Article 4 included among its fundamental principles the following:

- “(e) Maintenance of regional peace, stability and security through the promotion and strengthening of good neighbourliness;
- (f) Peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States, active cooperation between neighbouring countries and promotion of a peaceful environment as a prerequisite for economic development;
- (g) Recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1993,p.7).”

Article 4 (g) above is the first instance where an item related to human security was mentioned in the security consideration of ECOWAS which was drawn from global and continental provisions to which it belonged.

In 1999, ECOWAS adopted the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, which is based on the principle of supra-nationality, known also as the ECOWAS Mechanism. As a product of ECOWAS' experiences throughout the 1990s, the Mechanism established key peace and security organs, such as the Authority of Heads of State, the Mediation and Security Council, the Council of the Wise, and the Early Warning System, among others. It sought to institutionalize norms and processes with structures that ensure consultation and collective management of sub-regional security concerns (Aning & Jaye, 2010). This showed the dynamism in the transformation of the community from its concern with trade issues alone towards a security community. This protocol became a replacement for the 1978 Protocol on Non-Aggression and the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence. The protocol was the highest expression of ECOWAS commitment to addressing issues of security in the sub-region at that time especially by the robust nature of its structure. It alluded to human security with its reference to “the security of peoples” in the statement of its principles (ECOWAS, 1999, p.4).

Barely two years after the adoption of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, ECOWAS observed that for it to become really effective, the Protocol needed to be complemented through the incorporation of provisions concerning issues such as prevention of internal crises, democracy and good governance, the rule of law, and human rights. It therefore decided to enhance the Mechanism with a Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance which contained the important 'Constitutional Convergence Principle' (ECOWAS, 2001, p.8); it highlights zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained through unconstitutional means. Equally important was Article 1(E); it mandates that armed forces be apolitical, and under the command of a legally-constituted political authority. The convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), their munitions and other related materials (initially a moratorium), was adopted in 2006. Whereas the Mechanism placed emphasis on conflict and crisis management, the supplementary protocol was concerned with structural issues that engender conflict.

Thus it was concerned with the electoral processes in a democratic system as predicated on the belief that the absence of credible democracy through strong institutions is at the centre of many of the region's security challenges (Jaye, Garuba & Amadi, 2011). The protocol copiously made references to the observance of human rights which is closely related to human security.

The documents above seem to have lacked proper coordination such that where there have been attempts at implementing them, it has been hampered and West Africa has continued to experience insecurity, both of the state and the people. It was for this reason that ECOWAS evolved a document, ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) in 2008 to comprehensively address challenges of insecurity in the sub-region particularly with respect to human security. Before discussing the framework, we shall look at ECOWAS previous attempts at interventions to stem the tide of insecurity in the sub-region and its implications.

### **ECOWAS INTERVENTIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

In order to halt the large scale humanitarian crisis in the region, ECOWAS created the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to restore peace in Liberia (1990) and subsequently in Sierra Leone (1991), and Guinea Bissau (1999). As a result, ECOWAS became preoccupied with conflict management as a means of tackling the security challenges to the detriment of advancing efforts towards achieving its original objectives of economic cooperation and integration. The reason was that the chaotic security environment especially such as the sub-region went through in the 1990s would not permit for any meaningful development.

In Liberia, the force was deployed in August 1990 to restore peace, ensure security and law and order following the anarchy the country had degenerated to as a result of attempts by warlords to secure control of the country. ECOMOG also engaged in many humanitarian activities aimed at reducing the sufferings of the people and eventually helped in creating favourable conditions for the holding presidential and parliamentary elections in 1997. A contingent of 5,000 still remained deployed in Liberia after ECOMOG's formal peacekeeping role ended in February 1998 to help build the capacity and help train the new Liberian security forces and to maintain order. Eleven Member States of ECOWAS provided contingents for the operations in Liberia these are: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Two other African States also participated, Uganda and Tanzania (ECOMOG, undated).

For Sierra Leone, ECOMOG forces intervened following the overthrow of the lawful government of this country headed by President Ahmed Teejan Kabbah. In 1998, the force was able to restore constitutional legality and reinstated the government of the democratically elected President. All the parties in the conflict, namely, the lawful government led by Ahmad Teejan Kabbah, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels and the members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) military Junta, signed in Lome, in September 1999, an agreement protocol on the final settlement of the Sierra Leonean crisis. A United Nations peace-keeping force "UNAMSIL" eventually replaced ECOMOG forces in Sierra Leone from October 1999 to 2006. The ECOWAS countries which provided contingents for ECOMOG

operations in Sierra Leone are Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Nigeria (op cit).

ECOWAS played a key role in the conflict in Guinea Bissau between 1997 and 1998 when mediation efforts by ECOWAS under the chairmanship of the Togolese president, the Abuja Accord led to the cessation of hostilities and the deployment of the first ECOMOG contingents of 600 men from Benin, Gambia, Niger and Togo. It temporarily paved the way for the withdrawal of the forces of Guinea and Senegal that had exacerbated the conflict. Fighting eventually resumed in 1999 compelling ECOMOG which was operating under very difficult logistics and financial conditions to withdraw giving way to the United Nations to come through the establishment of the United Nation Peace Building Support Office in Guinea Bissau (UNOGBIS). ECOWAS became active again in Guinea Bissau starting from 2004 when it provided a grant of US\$ 500,000 to cover part of arrears in salary payments to soldiers. It also decided to establish a permanent presence in Guinea Bissau by nominating a Special Representative of the Executive Secretary to collaborate with national authorities and the international community in order to promote peace (Yabi, 2010). For most of the 1990s therefore, ECOMOG force occupied a prime place in conflict management in West Africa (Fayemi, 2001).

ECOWAS has also been active in recent years, by sending joint military peacekeeping forces to intervene during political instability and unrest in Ivory Coast in 2003, Liberia in 2003, Guinea-Bissau in 2012, Mali in 2013, and most recently, The Gambia in 2017 -

ECOWAS preoccupation with conflict management in an attempt to pave a way for peace though laudable in the circumstances also meant that the economic wellbeing of the people was invariably not being pursued. Scholars are generally agreed that ECOWAS has veered from its original mandate of pursuing economic gains for the sub-region for the betterment of its inhabitants to security concerns (Francis, 2001; Adetula, 2009; Alli, 2009; Hameed, 2009; Frempong, 2009). ECOWAS has thus become better known for its interventions in conflicts in the sub-region than the integration of the economies of its Member States. These changes and developments have deflated the focus on economic integration as security dynamics took the centre stage (Yoroms, 2004). The effort to free the sub-region from fear of physical attacks has confined it to want. This is a flaw that has its roots in the United Nations itself of which ECOWAS is a sub-region.

From the conception of the United Nations, the two components of human security, freedom from fear and freedom from want, were recognised but eventually greater attention was given to the former than the later. In this regard and with reference to the UN Charter, the US secretary of state in 1945 had pointed out that:

The battle of peace has to be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace...No provisions that can be written into the Charter will enable the Security Council to make the world secure from war if men and women have no security in their homes and their jobs (cited in UNDP, 1994, p.3).

The consequence of the lack of this balance is perhaps evidenced in the fact that

although the UN has sponsored several peacekeeping missions, it has not stemmed the rising tide of conflicts around the world especially in the Southern hemisphere and Africa in particular.

Initially, ECOWAS rightly understood the place of the economic wellbeing of its populace as the *raison d'être* for its formation. The pursuit of this objective would have gone a long way in tackling the root causes of discontent among the inhabitants which are often lead to the vices that manifest in various ways. For instance, the pull and push factors for trafficking in persons are linked to poverty (Common Platform for Action, 2002). "The Nigerian Connection" Parts I and II, (August 9, 2011) a documentary by Juliana Rufus on Al-Jazeera (English) featuring human trafficking of West Africans and especially Nigerian ladies in Italy traced their ordeals to the appalling poor socio economic conditions of their environment and the seemingly alluring provisions in the cities of Europe. Their relations are even willing to release their children to go in hope of better prospects for them.

Similarly, the demand for arms which has led to its proliferation is pushed by groups and individuals (mostly youths) who have no means of livelihood. Studies by the Nigerian Stability and Reconciliation Programme (Banfield, 2014) have shown that

Where youth feel that power structures exclude or marginalise them so that they are unable to gain the economic and other resources necessary to achieve financial security, features of adulthood and social recognition, violence can offer opportunities to gain control (Banfield, 2014, p.6).

They resort to arms as a means of empowering themselves to carry out their activities. Some form themselves into bandits and engage in cattle rustling which further worsen the problem of food security as farmers no longer have incentive to keep livestock. They are also used by politicians who arm them as thugs so that they can find sustenance. Their participation in violent conflicts also provides them with avenues for looting which supplies them with provisions for a while and when these are exhausted, they resort to other vices as means of livelihood. All of these threaten human security but to a large extent, the root can be traced to the unmet needs of these youths.

The demand for illicit drugs to make them daring to commit such crimes is also linked to this as most of the crimes like armed robbery, thuggery and hired assassination are committed under the influence of these substances. This means that the more the availability of drugs to youths, the more likelihood is the rate of crime with implications for human security. In the same way, malaria and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and more recently, the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) has claimed the lives of several thousand over the years due largely to poverty and deplorable physical environments and ignorance. This is to say that if the root causes of these maladies are not been tackled, these threats will continue to pillage the sub-region. The combination of these challenges have worsened the human security situation and ECOWAS responses do not seem to have sufficiently addressed the way that they can be eliminated or at the least, reduced considerably.

This development has impacted negatively on the sub-regional organisation's original developmental aim as West Africa has continue to rate very low on the index of human development by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In 2014 Human Development Report (HDR) Ghana which ranked 138 out of 187



countries in the world was the first in the sub-region while of the last 20, 9 are in West Africa. In its 2011 report, 13 of the countries in the Low Human Development category comprising the last 45 countries globally were in the sub-region with 5 being among the last 10 (UNDP, 2011). Likewise among 53 African countries in the 2014 ranking by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (an organization that supports good governance and leadership in Africa), 7 of the bottom 20 countries were in West Africa with Nigeria, the sub-region's most influential country, placing 37th (2014 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), 2014). In 2012, the country ranked 43th. The poor rating has been attributed to the security challenges in the sub-region especially Nigeria (Igwe, 2012).

ECOWAS foray into the security sector does not seem to have achieved its objective of bringing to an end the violence in the sub-region as Aning and Bah (2009) have observed. Worthy of note is the fact that even though these interventions assuage to some extent the humanitarian emergencies in these places, the aim was not primarily the welfare of the people. ECOWAS interventions in the 1990s were, first and foremost, geared towards ending civil wars involving one or several armed rebel groups and the government of legally recognized Member State. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government were going to the rescue of one of its members facing armed rebellion. According to Yabi (2010:6) "The aim was indeed to defend the legality embodied by a sitting president and government and not necessarily to defend the political standards adopted by the community like the respect of specific democratic principles or human rights". Human security was therefore a far cry in the fundamental pursuit of ECOWAS.

Aning and Bah (2009) maintain that West Africa's relative stability following a period of violent and protracted conflicts in the 1990s is under increasing attack from a range of existing and emerging threats. Their emergence or in some cases re-emergence of certain trends, could erode the stability that the region currently enjoys. These threats include armed sub-state groups, small arms flows and the narcotics trade. Ismail (2011, p.172) concurs that "Overall, the spate of inter-group clashes have produced levels of civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructures, displacement and atmosphere of insecurity and impunity similar to the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone". This suggests that there are security challenges that are not amenable to military solutions which ECOWAS is perhaps yet to address.

### **The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF)**

ECOWAS first took a reactionary approach to conflict, putting out fires. Learning from years of experience, ECOWAS shifted to an approach emphasizing pre-empting and preventing conflicts from starting. The organization developed a robust strategy to employ structural and operational means of preventing conflicts across the sub region. The adoption of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework in 2008 by the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, was a milestone in the effort of ECOWAS to fundamentally address issues of security in the sub-region which is tied to human security. Section II (5) stated specifically that

The overall aim of the ECPF is to strengthen the human security architecture in West Africa. The intermediate purpose is to create space within the ECOWAS system and in Member States for cooperative interaction within the region and

with external partners to push conflict prevention and peace-building up the political agenda of Member States in a manner that will trigger timely and targeted multi-actor and multi-dimensional action to defuse or eliminate potential and real threats to human security in a predictable and institutional manner (ECOWAS, 2008, pp.6-7).

It has fifteen components for which activities and measurable outputs have been developed. The components include: Early Warning; Preventive Diplomacy; Democracy and Political Governance; Human Rights and the Rule of Law; Media; Natural Resource Governance; Cross-border Initiatives; Security Governance; Practical Disarmament; Women Peace and Security; Youth Empowerment; ECOWAS Standby Force; Humanitarian Assistance; Peace Education; and Enabling Mechanisms (Afolabi, 2016, p.15)

This is in line with steps being taken by ECOWAS under its new Strategic Vision to transform the region from an “ECOWAS of States” into an “ECOWAS of the Peoples”, where the tensions between sovereignty and supranationality, and between regime security and human security, shall be progressively resolved in favour of supranationality and human security respectively. For the purpose of the framework, human security was defined as;

The creation of conditions to eliminate pervasive threats to people's and individual rights, livelihoods, safety and life; the protection of human and democratic rights and the promotion of human development to ensure freedom from fear and freedom from want (ECOWAS, 2008, p.7).

This definition captures the core values of the concept of human security as enunciated in the 1994 Human Development Report. The ECPF therefore appeared to be ECOWAS' ultimate effort in addressing the fundamental causes of conflicts by paying attention to conflict prevention which are essentially human security related.

High expectations across the region accompanied the adoption of the ECPF, especially among civil society organizations (CSOs) working on peace and security issues, development partners, the ECOWAS' multilateral partners, and the ECOWAS Commission itself. Its relevance and timeliness led to a consensus among political stakeholders that, if well implemented, there would be a drastic reduction in the outbreak of conflicts in the sub region. Thus, with this enthusiasm and optimism, at the ECOWAS Commission level, midterm Plans of Action were developed for implementation in member states, in collaboration with civil society and government officials. Also established was an Internal Steering Committee (ECPFISC) with the mandate of coordinating the operationalization of the framework within ECOWAS (Afolabi, 2016)

First, the ECPF steered the thinking among peace and security actors in the sub region towards a conflict prevention approach to peace and security. This resonated most among regional CSOs, which quickly developed or adopted already stipulated programmes from the ECPF for implementation. Similarly, ECOWAS Commission Departments/Directorates that were not statutorily peace and security oriented (such as the Mines and Energy, Free Movement, Education, and Environment) found it easy to establish the linkages between their mandates and conflict prevention. It therefore

became easy for these directorates/departments to develop conflict prevention programmes and activities in collaboration with the ECOWAS Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. Another striking achievement is the establishment of the ECOWAS Mediation Facilitation Division (MFD). The MFD was created earlier in 2015, and it was anticipated that its establishment will promote preventive diplomacy interventions through the enhancement of competence and skills enhancement of mediators, information-sharing, and the provision of logistics support, with its core objectives being operational support, the establishment of a mediation resource centre, and ensuring capacity-building in mediation (Afolabi, 2016).

The position of this paper is that the ECPF seem to offer West Africa a mechanism for the realisation of the cherished goal of ensuring security to individuals and communities in the sub-region. However, ten years after the adoption of the protocol, West Africa is still experiencing widespread human security challenges manifested in increased levels of forced migration on a daily basis from the sub-region to Europe; large scale availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons which have been used by militants, insurgents and criminal gangs to wreak havoc on people thereby undermining human security.

### CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECPF

The challenges that have faced ECOWAS over the years is the lack of commitment of member states on the implementation of documents they have signed. It has been noted that States in West Africa are usually quick to sign regional documents but they often do not back signatures with commitment to implementation (Atuobi, 2010). The ECPF should not be allowed to suffer the same fate seeing that unlike previous documents, it provides the opportunity for several stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector to get involved in its implementation (Okwere, Abdullah & Atuobi, 2010). The enthusiasm that followed the adoption of the ECPF in 2008 seems to have been dampened as a result of certain factors that tend to limit its full realization. These challenges according to Afolabi, (2016), include: Lack of a Coordinated Approach Between ECOWAS and Its Key Implementing Partners; Development Partners' Preference for 'Trendy' Components; Limited Resources for Civil Society Organizations in the Operationalization Process; and Low-Level of Awareness on the ECPF in Member States. A study conducted in four West African states (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Liberia) in June 2010 on the implementation of the ECPF by Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) revealed the following among other findings;

1. Level of awareness is low in all the countries surveyed
2. Those who are aware of the document are not conversant with its key objectives.
3. Level of interest in the document is high
4. Few respondents had copies of the document
5. There is a lack of national ownership as the document is still viewed as an ECOWAS document
6. Civil society and government organizations are undertaking similar initiatives related to the 14 components although these have not been coordinated or

seriously promoted

7. There are no specific activities directly aimed at implementing the ECPF within the countries surveyed.

These discoveries meant that unless appropriate steps were taken to address them, the project was doomed to fail. The findings revealed that there was only low level awareness of the ECPF in the states reviewed. Member states should ideally be the key implementers of the Framework, but the study suggests little national ownership and little knowledge of the objectives of the ECPF (Atuobi & Okyere, 2010, p.11). The ECOWAS Commission which has the particular responsibility to ensure the successful implementation of the ECPF (ECPF, 2008, p.7) should take all necessary steps to ensure that the sub-region reap the dividends of its provision. Interestingly, the Internal Steering Committee (ISC) has been set up with the sole responsibility of coordinating the operationalization of the framework within ECOWAS. In a swift response, in addition to some micro – level operationalizations that commenced in 2010, the ISC developed and adopted a three – year programme matrix (2015 – 2017) to be implemented across the board by ECOWAS departments, to serve as a guide for the operationalization of the framework. Similarly, participants at the consultative workshop which ended in Lagos, Nigeria on the 26th of April 2018, have adopted the draft 2018-2020 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) Plans of Action (PoA) (ECPF, 2018).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the challenges highlighted above, this paper makes the following recommendations:

1. The Commission should undertake a study of the level of implementation of the ECPF in all member states to ascertain the status of each state in order to identify specific issues that need to be tackled towards compliance. Specifically, the study should seek to:
  - i. Examine the level of progress made by the member states in the implementation of the ECPF.
  - ii. Identify the challenges that may have inhibited any state from effectively implementing the ECPF.
  - iii. Suggest policy options that the state (through its relevant agencies) with the appropriate stakeholders (civil society and the media) can take to fast-track the implementation of the ECPF.
2. The Commission should partner with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre which has demonstrated sufficient good will towards the success of the ECPF to carry out such a study.
3. Since civil societies played very prominent roles in crafting the ECPF (Ekiyor, 2008), they should not allow its implementation in the hand of the Commission alone but push towards its implementation as well, so that their efforts will not have been in vain. The West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF), which is an institutionalised platform for civil society to interact and contribute to policy processes, should take on this responsibility at the level of the ECOWAS Commission, the states and relevant agencies, to encourage the implementation of the framework.

4. There should be the establishment of a Special ECPF Operationalization Fund, where development partners and the ECOWAS Commission can commit resources for the operationalization of the framework. This will help generate funding for regional CSOs, and will be overseen by the Regional ECPF Steering Committee.

## CONCLUSION

ECOWAS desire to enhance the wellbeing of its people was aptly captured in its treaty. It is also acknowledged that these ideals could not be pursued and attained in an insecure environment. Military interventions have not succeeded in achieving the needed peace to follow up on these objectives because the root cause is in addressing human security issues which have been well articulated in the ECPF. The observation that the organisation from its formation in 1975 has endorsed several decisions and protocols, but their observance has either been predominantly in the breach or in their implementation has faltered (Ukeji, 2005) is a sad commentary. Since the ECPF more than any other document, addresses the fundamental issues that have kept the sub-region in a quack mire, every step needs to be taken to ensure its successful implementation so that the ideals of the founding fathers of the organisation will ultimately be realised: a people free from want and fear; to create an “ECOWAS of Peoples” and no longer an “ECOWAS of States”. A peaceful, fully integrated, conflict-resilient, prosperous, democratic and rights-based West African Community of equal opportunities (Musah, 2008). This would then transform West Africa from one of the most violent regions to that of a prosperous haven for its citizens.

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