



Economic
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Perspectives on Governance in West Africa: *Recommendations and Plan of Action*



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Part I: Background and Introduction

1.1 Background

West Africa has largely become a zone of economic decline, political instability and human insecurity in the beginning of the 21st Century. It is noteworthy that four of the five countries listed on the bottom of the UNDP Human Development Index (2003) are located in West Africa: Sierra Leone, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali and that all the countries of the subregion are located in the bottom 25% of the Human Development Index.¹ The region is extremely poor with extremely low GDP per capita incomes. Typically, education and health services reach less than half the population. The growing HIV/AIDS pandemic is gravely compounding the problems of the subregion, with close to 10% of the population affected in Côte d'Ivoire and 7% in Sierra Leone. At the same time, there are glaring differences in the economic conditions of West African States. Ghana's GDP per capita of \$1, 982, is more than four times the per capita GDP of Sierra Leone at \$490.

Many of the countries of West Africa have attempted to respond to the economic crisis of the 1980s by embarking on some sort of economic reforms along neo-liberal lines. Some countries in the subregion, such as Ghana and Mali, have secured improvements in their macro-economy. But most have failed to sustain growth and poverty reduction. The majority of the people of West Africa continue to lack access to potable water, health care, and education, and easily preventable communicable diseases ravage society.

Similarly, the last decade of the 20th century also saw a historic shift in patterns of politics and governance in West Africa from largely autocratic and neo-patrimonial towards liberalization and democracy. However, the results have been mixed. While some West African States have made significant progress towards democratic governance and human security, many others have suffered reversals. Democratic progress has been made in Benin, Mali, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria and Cape Verde, but there has been stagnation or reversals in the political, social, and economic conditions in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire.

Thus, a striking feature of West Africa since the end of the cold war and the beginning of the new millennium has been the unprecedented scale and scope of internal crises. More than two million people are believed to have died in violent armed conflicts in the subregion since the 1990s. The main features of these violence-afflicted States are collapsed economies, lawlessness, and impunity on the part of gun-toting rebels and warlords. The result is the complex political and humanitarian emergencies and large refugee movements, which national governments, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations and African Union (AU) are struggling to contain.

Fighting between States and within States has displaced populations and caused massive flows of refugees. Thus, since the early 1990s, Ghana has been hosting successive waves of refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo and recently, Côte d'Ivoire. Côte d'Ivoire, which is now producing its own refugees, has been hosting Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees for a long time.

Indeed, the geo-political situation in West Africa as a whole has been getting worse by the day. Given the ethnic and other organic interconnection among the countries and the extremely porous

national borders, worsening conditions in one country easily spill over into others, triggering further conflicts. For example, cross-border conflicts have arisen in the Mano River Union as governments in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone have been perceived by their neighbours to be backing rebels; Liberia has often accused Guinea of backing dissidents in the north of its territory. Thus, the civil conflict in Guinea completes the cycle of violence in the Mano River Basin States which first began in Liberia over a decade ago when large-scale invasion was used to oust a legitimate government.

1.2 Major Developments in the Subregion

In the subregional effort to adopt regional approaches to conflict prevention, two emerging norms provide some ground for optimism in institutionalizing democratic governance and enhancing human security in West Africa. The first relates to the self-help spirit that has led to projects such as the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the revitalization of regional integration schemes such as ECOWAS. The second relates to the adoption of democracy and conflict prevention clauses by the OAU /Africa Union and subregional institutions such as ECOWAS.

The democracy criterion as an essential foundation for development propounded in the NEPAD represents a formal acceptance of the tenets of democratic governance as the normative framework for West African development. It endorses good governance as the cornerstone for achieving the objectives of sustained equitable development for the continent. It is encouraging that five out of the 12 countries that have committed themselves to peer review under NEPAD are in West Africa (Benin, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal).

The OAU/AU democracy clause also reflects the emerging norm of intolerance for undemocratic regimes, a norm that can be a strong factor in the promotion of political reform on the continent. It compliments the protocols on good governance and conflict prevention of ECOWAS. ECOWAS member States for instance, have adopted a *Declaration of Political Principles* that pledges “unwavering commitment to the establishment and smooth functioning of democratic institutions in each Member State” and condemns, unequivocally, any seizure of power by force of arms.² These principles have also been incorporated into the revised ECOWAS Treaty.³ A Communiqué issued by ECOWAS Foreign Ministers in 1999 also declared coup d’etats unjustifiable.⁴

Although, African national stakeholders representing the private sector, civil society and even opposition parties are yet to be fully brought into the picture to provide popular support and broaden ownership, the AU, ECOWAS and NEPAD pro-governance and democracy initiatives are certainly encouraging.

1.3 The African Governance Project

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been in the forefront of the good governance debate, repeatedly pointing out the centrality of governance factors underlying the contemporary African predicament and stressing the interrelationship between good governance and sustained economic development. While it may be true that mismanagement and inefficiency may be tackled by reducing the size and role of government, ECA has maintained that reconstituted

proactive, democratized developmental States have the best prospects for the region's recovery and development and have an essential role to play. It continues to advocate that reversal of economic decline will require engaged and proactive governments with improved capacity to formulate policies, manage essential services and endure public accountability and transparency.

In its renewed efforts to serve Africa better, and in its capacity as the lead agency of the governance component of NEPAD, ECA has recommitted itself to help strengthen government capabilities and effectiveness and to help consolidate institutions and good governance practices on the continent.

It is against this background of recognizing the importance of good governance for economic and social development that ECA has embarked on an ambitious programme to study and measure the many complex aspects of governance in Africa. The African Governance Project seeks to monitor and keep track of the progress that various countries are making towards enhancing democratic values and governance. The project is complementary to government's efforts and it seeks to establish consensus among a wide range of stakeholders on how good governance can be enhanced on the continent.

With the introduction of the African Governance Project in 2001, out of the 15 Western African countries covered by the ECA Subregional Office for West Africa (ECA/SRO-WA), the project has been launched in eight countries, namely, Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

1.4 Conclusions from the Country Reports

Despite the enthusiasm for democratic transition, "in reality, the governance landscape is still mired in political conflicts, with Côte d'Ivoire experiencing the most recent insurgency problem. A number of States in the West Africa subregion are still fragile and are undergoing reconstruction from years of conflicts and civil wars. West Africa continues to be a subregion plagued by political conflicts and strong-willed political interest groups that wreak havoc on the economic and social development of the subregion.

A number of constraints still persist mainly in the form of scarce institutional resources and of socio-cultural practices that need to be addressed, if the vision of a truly representative and participative system is to be fully translated into reality. The main findings from the studies are captured under political representation, institutional effectiveness and accountability and economic management.

Political representation

The democratic system of political representation is gradually taking root, evidenced by the recent elections trends. It is also noted that a stable multi-party electoral environment is slowly emerging. However, in spite of the general acceptance of the democratic system of government, there are a number of paradoxes – weak participation in the political process leading to marginalization and increased potential for conflict, low impact of the opposition in parliamentary decision-making, insufficient civil society involvement in governance (due to low consultation) and lack of civic education among citizens and civil society.

The existence of competitive political representation is largely the norm – issues such as the environment for parliamentary elections, the credibility of the electoral system; legitimacy of the electoral authority continues to affect the degree of political pluralism. Independent political parties are emerging in a number of countries in West Africa but they operate within an environment in which access to election resources are not equally accessible to all.

For a number of reasons, the legitimacy of the electoral authorities is also called to question. One, they are partial and not transparent in their activities especially with respect to the credibility and transparency of the voter registration process. Second, election authorities are considered powerless in dealing with conflicts arising from the election process because they usually lack the legal authority.

The process for public participation is not well developed, most media have not fully internalized their role and even in cases when they do, have not the resources to be an effective channel for public participation. Mass public participation in politics in most countries revolves mainly around elections and political parties and in the form of mass rallies.

Concerning the participation of women, while there is no legal discrimination against women's participation in politics, gender issues are not tackled willingly, in a way that will enhance the involvement of women in the political and decision-making process. Women participate from a disadvantaged position; for instance, the party structure from which candidates for public offices are identified is male dominated. In some cases, the violent nature of political activities creates an environment that is un conducive to women's participation.

There is a sharp ethnicity in party politics, and this is reflected in the excessive polarization of the electoral process. Political representation is far from satisfactory, despite the move towards decentralization and democratic participation.

The community consultation mechanisms for local and central authorities are not suitable or practicable. This explains the low level of influence of civil society on policy and poor civic participation in many of the survey countries. Thus, consolidation of governance must be effected through a consistent improvement of popular participation and the installation of grass root democracy.

Institutional effectiveness

In general institutional effectiveness and efficiency is rather low and the people are largely dissatisfied with the current situation. Most governance institutions continue to be ineffective and this can be explained by the capacity gaps identified in the political and legislative institutions and in the Executive including the Judiciary. These have led to major dissatisfaction among the public.

The country studies highlighted a number of cases of political and legislative inefficiency, especially with respect to political and legislative institutions. For instance, most legislative organs have not efficiently exercised their legislative and supervisory functions. Parliaments' inadequate understanding of the constitution and the basic laws governing the parliamentary process has limited the effectiveness of this very important institution. The influence of the people over decisions through participation in public management is still considered minimal.

Most parliaments do not have consultation mechanisms and the public debate process is hardly used. This has compromised their autonomy and influence. With respect to political effectiveness, though multiparty elections seem to be the popular option, the opposition in many parliaments is weak and incapable of influencing the decisions taken by parliament.

With regard to the effectiveness of the judiciary, the studies also highlighted the lack of independence and questioned the judiciary's efficiency and accountability. For many of the survey countries, this situation is brought about by the criteria for nominating, poor management, and concerns about the integrity of judges.

Low efficiency and low access of the people to basic social services are also highlighted. Various countries have undertaken public sector reforms. However, despite these reforms, most Executives continue to be ineffective. According to the findings, their performance leaves much to be desired in terms of organization, transparency, and the provision of public services. Service delivery remains very poor reflecting the low level of confidence in the Executive. Though some countries have addressed this problem through decentralization and the devolution of power to the local level, this has not yielded significant results. A feeling of discontent with local, regional and national institutions is evident in some countries.

Economic management

At the level of economic management and business regulations, macroeconomic, financial, fiscal, budgetary and structural reforms have been implemented since the 1990s. These reforms have improved the performance of economic and financial management. However, one can assert that the business environment is not sufficiently favourable and development of the private sector is slow.

In the area of economic management and corporate governance, many countries have witnessed significant improvement in the mobilization and management of resources. In addition to macro-economic and financial reforms executed in collaboration with international financial institutions, many countries have undertaken stringent financial management measures, which have improved the economic and financial situations of many countries. Nevertheless, some difficulties persist in the areas of revenue collection, taxation malpractices, and communities. There is also the negative impact of corruption on the economic management system, as well as the lack of transparency within this system.

With greater emphasis on the private sector, there is an evolving strong public/private partnership and a greater private sector role in economic management. However, there is need for legal and regulatory reforms as a prerequisite for private sector participation. The private sector in most countries of West Africa is dominated by informal sector and small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). Policies including access to financial resources and support to enhance the growth and development of these sectors are under consideration in some countries. For example, the Gambia formulated a comprehensive National Policy to address the development and transformation of these sectors.

1.5 Some Important Observations

Though the studies generally confirm that there is progress in the representation and participation of all major sectors of the populations in governance, the net result is a subregion where governance has not generated significant impact on the problems of human insecurity, accountability and transparency, corruption, popular participation, adherence to the rule of law, electoral credibility, and economic mismanagement, among others.

Armed rebels and human insecurity in West Africa

Armed rebellion and human insecurity is essentially a phenomenon of the failed State. It arises principally from the failure of the West African State to sustain economic growth and to distribute the social product equitably. The typical West African State contains a large army of unemployed and not immediately employable. They provide a ready base of recruitment for armed rebellion.

Armed rebellion is also a manifestation of many pathologies afflicting most West African States, notably social, economic and political marginalization of sub-national and religious groups and exclusion from all sources of power - economic, political, social, and symbolic. It is above all a reflection of the convergence of ethnicity on one hand, and social, political and exclusion on the other. The unequal distribution of power and resources between groups that are also divided by race, religion, or language, as is usually the case in West African States, serves as a breeding ground for conflict. The armed rebels are often recruited from ethnic and religious out-groups and minorities, fostered by years of social, economic and political marginalization, neglect and exclusion.

The rising incidence of armed rebellion is often a reaction to the use of political repression as the first and primary response to dissidence and protest, reliance on force as the chief means of securing popular compliance, and militarization of power by rulers who tend to rely on an ethnically based military.

The phenomenon also reflects the inability of the State to provide more peaceful means of resolving conflict, especially as most of the States in West Africa have failed to establish appropriate legal systems and frameworks for peaceful resolution of conflicts. It also reflects the weakness or, in some cases, the absence of viable early warning systems and safety valves.

The spread of armed rebellion in West Africa reflects the porous nature of borders in the subregion, especially the inability of governments to police their national borders. This often leads to the eventual and inevitable spill over of violent conflicts from one national theater to the other, especially as dissidents flee to nearby States, provoking cross-border raids. Armed rebellions sometimes spread across borders as rogue leaders extend their pillaging and criminal activities such as diamond and arms smuggling into neighbouring States, or arm rebels and dissidents in other countries in order to avenge perceived support given to their own rebels by governments in the subregion, or pursue other geo-political interests.

The phenomenon of armed rebels is also related to and aggravated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the West African subregion. The uncontrolled accumulation and proliferation of small arms poses a major threat to subregional security. There are said to be about eight million small arms in the hands of non-state actors in the subregion. They are readily

available for use as the tools of death by armed groups, bandits and rebels. Small arms and poverty have also encouraged the emergence of child combatants, a phenomenon that is sweeping through the West African subregion and which poses a very difficult problem to handle.

The proliferation of small arms has increased the lethality of the wars in the Mano River Basin States (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), the communal conflicts in Nigeria, the citizen crises in Côte d'Ivoire, and the separatist rebellion in the Casamance area of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau.

The proliferation of small arms, particularly those in the hands of sub-state actors, does not only exacerbate and prolong conflicts, but also undermines economic activities carried out under difficult and dangerous conditions. During and after the conflicts, combatants and criminals, emboldened by their weapons, pay little respect to infrastructure, taking wantonly from their environment, often terrorizing and thereby destabilizing society with their weapons.⁵ Thus, the abundance of small weapons in the West African subregion reinforces a cycle of violence and underdevelopment.

Accountability and transparency concerns persist

Accountability and transparency are important conditions for sustaining development. Likewise, accountability and transparency are necessary for combating corruption and other malaise in the development environment. Credible and transparent mechanisms for ensuring that public officials account for allocation, use and control of public assets are absent. The oversight capacity of agencies such as the ombudsman, the national audit service, independent media, and the independent election authority charged with responsibility for exerting control is also weak or absent. Corruption and abuse of office continue with impunity in many West African States.

The prevalence of an official culture of secrecy and opacity combined with non-inclusive politics are some of the key manifestations of bad governance in West African States. Years of non-transparency have fostered widespread reliance on wild rumours and speculation and deep mistrust of government, thereby undermining legitimacy.

Entrenched culture of public corruption in West Africa

There has been a growing focus on the canker of corruption in the new democracies of West Africa. Corruption has become a major campaign theme in many recent West African elections such as Benin in 1996, Nigeria in 1998, and Ghana in 2001. The past decade has seen the emergence of independent anti-corruption commissions in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, often anchored in new liberal constitutions or statutes. The force of the media has also grown. Most importantly, a sub-field of investigative journalism has emerged. Moreover, national chapters of Transparency International and other citizen watchdog groups have been flourishing.

It is true that some of these official anti-corruption campaigns have been designed largely to score public relations points and/or expose the misdeeds of former officials. But enthusiasm for public relations stunts and post-incumbency has not been matched by enthusiasm for institutional and preventive measures that would prevent current office holders from looting assets. Typically, little attention has been paid to public sector and other institutional reforms that would promote official transparency, streamline regulations, reduce official indiscretion, and prevent corruption. Thus, a culture of public corruption persists in West Africa. Indeed, widespread corruption has

been assigned as a key factor responsible for the delays in paying salaries and the creation of dissatisfaction in the Ivorian army, leading to the initial insurrection and overthrow of Bedie's government.⁶ Corruption has also marred democratic transition in Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Participation and inclusion deficit

Years of over-centralization of political and administrative power, as well as taxation without representation, have left West African States with a huge participation deficit. The top-down model of governance in which citizens or large segments of the population were excluded from the making of critical national decisions and from implementation and monitoring has caused failure to develop habits of consultation and deliberation. Consequently, there is a legacy of popular mistrust, alienation, and apathy.

Weak participation and undemocratic exclusion have aggravated inter-ethnic and class conflicts. While this has often bred dissatisfaction on the part of those excluded, it has also increased the incentive for those groups that benefit from the status quo to hold onto political power indefinitely.

In a number of countries, weak participation and undemocratic exclusion are clearly manifested in the prevalence of ethnically based politics, that is, parties drawing support from specific ethnic or geographical groups, despite constitutional and electoral prohibitions. These conditions are leading causes of violent conflicts and human insecurity. Inter-ethnic violence in Togo in 1993, leading to the displacement of over 300,000 southern, mainly Ewe, Togolese highlights the strong ethnic Kabwe power base of the ruling clique and the entrenched policies of political exclusion in that country.⁷ Similarly in Liberia, President Taylor is widely perceived to have recruited his NPFL fighters from among his homeboys from Nimba County. The latter have been eventually absorbed into the national army and security agencies.⁸

The issue of citizenship and how it is used to exclude some groups from politics and to marginalize political opponents is a new phenomenon and could manifest itself in civil conflicts. Côte d'Ivoire is a case in point, in which the attempt to bar former Prime Minister Allasane Ouattara from contesting in the 1995 and 2000 presidential polls on the grounds that he was not a "full citizen" of Côte d'Ivoire has created a political crisis. Not surprisingly, the bitterness engendered among predominantly Muslim northern Ivorians, ensuing disputes over elections, violent and bloody clashes and eventually brutal political killings involving over 300 people between October and December 2000, were important precursors to the full blown civil war raging today in that previously stable country.

Concerns about the rule of law

Years of personal rule, neo-patrimony, rule by decree, and official arbitrariness have left behind a rule of law deficit in West African States. Laws remain unclear to the ordinary citizen and are inconsistently applied. The administration of justice is weak and the judiciary lacks independence, thereby undermining confidence in the law.

It is true that constitutionalism has assumed new prominence in West Africa in the past decade beginning with Benin's national constitutional conference in 1989. New constitutions guarantee basic freedoms, civil rights and provide protection of human and property rights. But compliance with the constitution and the law is often weak and minimalist. A culture of official impunity

and arbitrariness persists among security and law enforcement agencies, especially at the local, grassroots levels of society.

The outcome is low confidence in the judiciary and official adjudication bodies, leading to resort to violence to resolve disputes. There is continued abuse of human rights, insecurity of property and inadequate access to justice, producing deep hurt and anger and a generally unpredictable legal environment that inhibits private investment and economic development.

Traditional rulers and governance in contemporary West Africa

Contrary to the assumptions of classical modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s as well as structural dependency and underdevelopment theories of the 1970s, traditional rulers and political systems have continued to be relevant in many West African States. Traditional governance has proved remarkably resilient in spite of the onslaught of the forces of colonialism and the hegemonic authoritarian post-colonial governments.

Not only have traditional political institutions survived in the modern contexts of West African States, they have remained the basis of local governance in several countries. For example, two thirds of Ghanaian towns and villages are directly governed by chiefs, compared to only a third directly served by central government. Indeed, in Ghana and parts of Nigeria, traditional rulers have served as the focal points of local development activities, with new traditional titles such as office of development chief – *nkosuohene* – created among the Akans (a portfolio whose holder must spearhead local initiatives for provision of social amenities).

Apart from being catalysts in development on the local front, traditional rulers have been instrumental in mobilizing public opinion against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and spearheading campaigns against deforestation and other environmental malpractices. For example, in Ghana, it is not unusual to see chiefs and queen mothers on national television, educating their subjects on the dreaded disease. Social activism of this nature appears uniquely suited to traditional rulers (including queen mothers) due to the land and marital cases over which they adjudicate. In the case of deforestation, the chief's ritual links with "Mother Earth" makes him/her the most credible personage to caution against her defilement. Traditional respect for the environment was possible through taboos and fines imposed by chiefs on subjects who were seen as misusing the land.

The socio-political contexts in which the pro-governance values in West African chieftaincy traditions were nurtured have grown in complexity and heterogeneity with the modern nation State. Traditional rulers can help foster good governance in modern day West Africa in many ways. As semi-independent entities, centres of power and part of civil society, traditional authorities are part of the ensemble of institutions of horizontal accountability. They can thereby help to countervail state power, prevent power monopoly, safeguard freedoms, and reinforce system accountability and decentralization.

Economic management and economic governance

Weak economic management and governance deficits lie at the centre of the general crisis of governance and instability in West African States. Neo-patrimonial and entrenched rent-seeking interests continue to bedevil liberalization and rationalization of the national economies. Weak central bank independence and inadequate parliamentary control leave politicians largely in control of the national purse. Meanwhile, Parliament and civil society lack the capacity to review

and monitor public expenditures. Thus, scarce national resources continue to be misallocated, inefficiently utilized, abused and embezzled.

There is growing but still highly inadequate involvement of key segments of the population, such as women, rural farmers and the private sector in national economic decision making, implementation, monitoring and review. Yet, national (i.e., government, opposition, private sector and civil society) capacities for economic policy review and analysis remain extremely high.

Most West African countries have formally embraced poverty reduction strategies, but budgetary allocations do not indicate a clear shift in priority towards pro-poor sectors of health and education. National defense, sundry security items, and other socially unproductive sectors (presidential retinue) continue to take precedence over agriculture.

Failure to tackle critical micro-economic challenges boldly and decisively among West African States is compounded by failure to rationalize public service pay or to initiate meaningful national discussion on the subject; continuing weaknesses in domestic revenue mobilization; the disproportionate burden of taxation placed on persons deriving their incomes from paid employment in the public and corporate sectors and failure to include self-employed professionals and the entrepreneurial class in the tax net. Also, there is a tendency for the overpricing of vital government-controlled resources and commodities such as petroleum products, timber, land, while residential real estate holdings are grossly under-priced, out of step with market realities, and dispensed directly or indirectly as political patronage resources.

Part II: West Africa Perspectives on Governance

2.1 Subregional Consultation

The ADF-IV Subregional workshop for Central and West Africa was held in Accra, from December 1 through 3, in order to facilitate consultations among the various collaborating institutions of the African Governance Report from the two subregions (Central: Chad, Cameroon, Gabon, and West: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal), government officials, private sector, gender, parliamentarians, academia, NGOs, media, intergovernmental institutions, HIV-AIDS groups and other stakeholders.

The Director of ECA-SRO for Western Africa, in his remarks, stressed the importance of the ADF process, emphasizing that ADF IV would be enhanced by the empirical findings and outcomes of the studies in the thirty African countries and by the resulting "African Governance Report". The report should provide objective analysis of key governance issues and define areas for future action.

In his Keynote address, the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of Ghana affirmed government's commitment to the principles, values and practices of democracy and good governance that inform the approach to subregional and continental economic development and conflict management. The Minister expressed the view that the workshop will provide an occasion to sharing and exchanging of ideas, in order to draw appropriate lessons and develop best practices for good governance in the respective countries.

Finally, the Chairman of the Council of State of Ghana, Prof. Alex A. Kwapong, who chaired the function, indicated that the workshop provided an ideal opportunity for deepening consultation, exchanging ideas, and building consensus on highly complex issue of good governance. He emphasized that bringing a stakeholder group representing key segments of society together with governance experts from the various countries in the two subregions, would provide a good chance for building up strong momentum for the ADF IV and even NEPAD

2.2. The Challenges of Governance and the Way Forward

The crisis of human insecurity in West Africa has multiple origins, including pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial exploitation and manipulation by external powers, as well as persistently negative international terms of trade. But bad governance is a significant factor in the pathologies of violent conflicts and insecurity. Declining economic fortunes and stalled political reforms have fostered mass poverty, inequality has deepened, and social, economic and political tensions have intensified in the midst of continuing abuse of political and civil rights, leading to intense violent conflicts and instability in the subregion.

Governance is defined here as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the affairs of a nation. It encompasses effective States, mobilized civil societies, and productive private sectors. Effective States create an enabling political and legal environment for economic growth and equitable distribution. Vibrant civil societies mobilize groups and communities, facilitate political and social interaction, help to generate social capital, and foster societal cohesion and stability. Productive private sectors generate jobs and income. All three factors (in combination with sound economic management and an enabling social policy environment) are now universally recognized as essential for sustained development. Its key elements include accountability, transparency, combating corruption, participation and an enabling legal/judicial framework.

As noted *inter-alia*, West African countries are typically deficient in these vital components of governance. They are typically in a state of collapse, various degrees of recovery and/or are weak. The private sector is weak, and civil society is anomic. Still, many have embarked on reforms aimed at liberalizing their economies and political systems. Nearly all of them have initiated some form of democratic reforms in the last decade or so. However, deficits in democratic governance have largely persisted and, in some cases, governance problems have worsened.

Accountability and transparency are necessary for combating corruption. All three (accountability, transparency and reduced corruption) are essential conditions for ensuring the effective management of public resources, promoting public welfare, enhancing governmental responsiveness and, in the end, enhancing the overall legitimacy of the political, economic and administrative systems.

Weak accountability gives the impression that West African governments do not govern in the public interest but principally for themselves, their cronies and allies. This combined with pervasive opacity has fostered a sense of general alienation among citizens or key constituencies within countries.

Official abuse of power, including in the new democracies, seems inevitable in the absence of credible mechanisms for ensuring that officials account for the allocation, use, and control of public assets and properties in accordance with legally accepted standards. Rules of corporate governance must exist and be enforced. Given the persistence of a culture of official secrecy and the weak oversight capacity of official agencies such as the legislature, opposition parties, the ombudsman, the national audit service, corruption and little media independence, the situation will not change quickly.

Typically, the vast patronage resources at the disposal of Presidents and the entrenched culture of political patronage undermine inter-branch accountability in West African States, even in the States where separation of powers are enshrined in the national constitution. Vertical accountability is also undermined by the tendency for elections to be rigged in favour of incumbent parties and rulers. Official impunity and corruption has been fostered by the weakness or absence of a variety of cross-cutting institutions and processes, such as:

- Free, fair and regular scheduled elections in which incumbents face a real possibility of losing;
- An independent election authority;
- Effective parliamentary oversight;
- An effective public accounts committee of parliament;

- An independent audit body;
- An independent ombudsman; and
- Other independent constitutional commissions.

Restoring and entrenching accountability structures and processes in West African States requires:

- Revival of constitutionalism;
- Competitive multi-party elections, with independent election authorities;
- Strengthening the oversight capacity of legislatures (with strong parliamentary oversight committees such as committees on public accounts, government assurances, and appointments);
- Strong opposition parties;
- Supreme audit bodies with independence and capacity to produce national audit reports on a timely basis;
- Independence of the central bank;
- Independence of the judiciary;
- A dynamic civil society; and
- Relaxation of media censorship, liberalization of airwaves, and fostering of a vibrant media, with capacity for investigative journalism.

The concerns of electoral politics, accountability, transparency, corruption, participation, effectiveness, etc, were addressed around three broad challenges, namely:

- Political representation;
- Institutional effectiveness; and
- Economic and corporate management.

1. Political representation

Major Issue: Low participation in the democratic process

West African elections are fraught with intense conflict and violence, exacerbating human insecurity in the subregion. The perpetual incumbency syndrome is prevalent and viable non-political avenues to power and wealth in West Africa are lacking. The *winner-takes-all* political arrangements and culture are pervasive, as is weak election administration, lack of effective mechanisms for dealing with election disputes, and the penchant for election rigging, vote-buying, gerrymandering, usually by reluctant democrats and incumbents unwilling to cede power. Additionally, the lack of appropriate frameworks and enabling environments for a peaceful resolution of electoral disputes in some countries is a serious threat to stability in the subregion.

The absence of viable and sustainable political parties makes electoral reforms highly urgent. The logic of the single-member plurality constituency system or the *“first-past-the post”* mentality that is essential for promoting national integration has proved largely flawed in multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and essentially mal-integrated West African States. They must elaborate and adopt:

- Electoral systems that induce inclusive outcomes;
- Institutionalization of credible elections, including creation of a constitutionally independent electoral commission, as pertains in Ghana;
- Elaboration of arrangements to render national elections fully transparent, free and fair (such as transparent ballot boxes, joint election observation by contesting political parties as well as independent national and international election monitors);
- Facilities for credible adjudication of election disputes as done through the constitutional court in Benin; and
- Some form of constitutional limits on presidential terms of office to deter long-serving incumbents and reluctant democrats.

In the context of West Africa's divided societies and in the face of the severe gender, ethnic and class inequalities, inclusive civic participation is absolutely essential for generating social capital, and building trust and reciprocity between citizens and government, State and private sector, and different social and political groupings. Civil society must be empowered in order to promote popular vigilance and enhance the watchdog role of civic actors and citizen groups. Administrative and political decentralization and stakeholder consultation must be deepened. Above all, democratically elected governments must eschew crude majoritarianism and pursue policies of all-inclusiveness, power sharing, and consensus building.

Ghanaian and other West African traditional rulers and traditional political institutions may offer lessons in what elected leaders could do to enhance their popularity and legitimacy. The role of traditional rulers in steering Ghana's democracy out of crisis reflects their combination of traditional skills in conflict resolution with rich knowledge and experience in the governance of modern democratic institutions. Their example is one that many other West African countries could emulate.

To be sure, common experience in Ghana and elsewhere in the subregion suggests that we exercise great caution in building hopes for modern good governance and conflict management around traditional chiefs. In some places, the institution has been a source of recurrent and intractable conflict and wasteful litigation, especially over succession. Usually organized along blood and kin lines, traditional rulers have sometimes reflected and promoted xenophobia, chauvinism, obscurantism and atavism. Indeed, traditional rulers have not always been fair, equitable and transparent in the exploitation and distribution of community resources.

However, given the trust and genuine affection many traditional rulers appear to enjoy among their people, they should be fully involved in the making of key national decisions, power-sharing arrangements and in brokering national agreements and agreements among sub-ethnic groups. The potential of traditional rulers as *bona fide* representatives of their communities should be fully exploited in peace brokering. Indeed, traditional rulers may be temperamentally better suited to lead peace-brokering efforts in conflicts involving ethnic and sub-national groups and countries other than their own. The United Nations should lead a process of scanning the West African landscape to identify suitable traditional leaders and mobilize and prepare them to serve as conflict mediators at large.

Concerns in this area are summarized below:

- (a) **Concern:** Lack of civic education among citizens and civil society leading to low participation in the political process at both national and local levels.

Recommendations:

- Civic education institutions should be strengthened to educate people on their civic and political rights and responsibilities. The content of civic education should reflect national aspirations, reinforce national integration, and imbue the values of good governance, to create a society with shared vision and values;
- Decentralization should be used as an effective means to enhance political participation and empowerment at the local levels. The process of decentralization (in the context of democracy and good governance) should be intensified in all subregional States;
- Civil society groups should be strengthened as a means of expanding political participation. Definitions of civil society should go beyond the conventional groups to include hitherto excluded or inactive groups such as chiefs, churches, lawyers, etc. Governments should desist from forming/creating NGOs as fronts and as means of diffusing the capacity of civil society organizations; and
- The issue of “citizenship” should be addressed comprehensively in all subregional States with due recognition to the historic migrations and immigrations across the subregion.

- (b) **Concern:** Gender representation - low participation of women, especially in the legislature.

Recommendations:

- The participation of women and other minorities in society should be encouraged;
- The idea of quotas in political and public positions should be given serious consideration; and
- Governments/States should be pressured to ratify and implement the Protocol on African and Peoples Rights.

- (c) **Concern:** Political parties-absence of viable and sustainable political parties

Recommendations:

- Political parties should be strengthened and given equal access to the State-owned news media during political campaigns;
- At the same time, efforts should be made to ensure “internal democracy” in the parties; and
- To ensure competitiveness, the idea of State funding for political parties, with the necessary qualification guidelines/criteria and checks against abuses, should be considered.

- (d) **Concern:** Electoral systems- lack of credibility of the electoral systems

Recommendations:

- The electoral systems should be made credible; and

- Electoral Commissions should be independent and beyond reproach.
- (e) **Concern:** Not fully exploiting the potential of traditional rulers in the governance process

Recommendations:

- Subregional States should explore ways to engage traditional authorities (chiefs) in the process of good governance and what aspects of culture should be adopted to enrich democratic governance;
- Traditional governance and modern systems of governance need serious empirical study to test prevailing assumptions;
- Levels of governance at which we seek to integrate traditional authority should be determined; and
- Consensus-seeking and consensus-building, which are the hallmark of traditional conflict resolution, should be adapted to modern mechanisms.

2. Institutional effectiveness

Major issue: Need for greater institutional efficiency and accountability

Institutional effectiveness is at the heart of good governance. Governments' performance in a number of areas is evaluated against institutional efficiency, accountability and transparency.

There are three levels of institutional performance—at the level of the legislature, at the level of the Executive including the public/civil service and at the level of the judiciary. In each of these levels, resources (financial and human), systems and practices influence the degree of effectiveness and their contribution to the governance and development process. More lately, civil society organizations (CSOs) have become a dominant player in institutional effectiveness as non-state actors. However, their role in promoting effectiveness within public institutions is greatly compromised from their lack of capacity and ineffective participation in major economic development programmes.

Legislative effectiveness is defined in terms of the understanding of the constitution and the basic laws by Parliament and how these provide safeguards from abuse of power and other excesses. Many attribute ineffectiveness of the legislature to lack of legislative capacity to hold the executive accountable and to exercise its supervisory functions. The lack of legislative capacity results from low level of understanding of Parliament's legislative role and the poor access to information that parliamentarians have.

Concerning executive effectiveness, there is much to be desired in terms of organization, transparency and provision of public services. Executive institutional effectiveness including the public/civil service in many countries of West Africa is very low and people are largely dissatisfied with public service delivery. Basic social services such as health and education are not easily accessible by a majority of citizens in terms of cost, proximity and quality. Transportation conditions, both in terms of infrastructure and means, are degraded and deplorable, and conditions for agricultural activities are defective. Citizens of the subregion attribute the ineffectiveness to inadequate capacity, corruption within the systems, over-concentration/centralization of authority and resources, and insufficient involvement and influence of CSOs in decision-making

With respect to the judiciary and its role in entrenching the rule of law, many factors have undermined its effectiveness in the administration of justice:

- The independence of most judiciaries is called into question;
- The relationship between the judiciary and the other branches are not well defined and result in interference by the legislative or executive branch;
- In many countries, the criteria for nominating and the integrity of judges result in low confidence in the judiciary and official adjudication bodies;
- Equitable access to justice is also a major constraint with many relying on the traditional/customary judicial system; and
- There is a general lack of adequate resources (financial, personnel and material), leading to lack of modern facilities, equipment and infrastructure.

Civil society organizations have emerged as an important force in the governance process. They are not only taking up the goals of economic and social development but also becoming an instrument for promoting public institutional effectiveness. Efforts of CSOs are visible in peace-building and in finding ways to promote peace in the subregion. The West Africa Network for Peace and the Mano River Union Women Peace network are direct outcomes of efforts in this area. While they have made some major inroads, on the whole, CSOs have limited influence.

CSO effectiveness is viewed against their independence and their role in promoting accountability. Their role in these areas is compromised because of limited capacity (financial, human, material and technical) as well as lack of political support.

The media is also gradually emerging as a change agent. Countries are slowly adopting a more tolerant attitude towards the media, with some taking actions to provide greater media freedom. Media houses and representatives are also looking at ways to self-regulate and promote efficiency among its rank and file.

- (a) **Concern:** Service delivery – poor service delivery and inaccessibility to service institutions. In Ghana, for example, District Chief Executives are appointed and fiscal decentralization is lacking. Consequently, empowerment is low at the local levels and institutions are not able to develop capacities.

Recommendations:

- Improve public confidence in governance institutions by making them accessible and service-oriented;
- Decentralization should be pursued and used as means of enhancing institutional development; and
- Modern information and communication technology should be used to enhance service delivery and education and also communication between local and national officials.

- (b) **Concern:** Security institutions – security institutions are undemocratic

Recommendations:

- The institutions of national security (military, police, intelligence) must be democratized and enhanced to keep peace and security; and

- CSOs need to improve their watchdog role over military budgets.
- (c) **Concern:** CSO capacity and accountability – CSOs lack resources and capacity. The institutions of civil society and their participation may have improved, but they lack technical capacity to access information, write and analyze. Such incapacities must be addressed. Also, CSOs should be transparent and accountable in their operations.

Recommendations:

- CSOs need to build their institutions, in partnership with the public and private sectors, so that civil society’s participation in decision-making and oversight can be strengthened;
 - CSOs should seek resources to build technical capacity to play their watchdog role effectively; and
 - CSOs, governments and funding agencies should work together to ensure transparent and accountable CSO operations and reporting mechanisms
- (d) **Concern:** No control over corruption – corruption undermines governance institutions. Corruption, fraud and waste in government ministries, departments and agencies continue to exact a toll on the public treasury, distort allocation, and undermine efficiency in the delivery of government services. Thus, many West African States remain improvident and State services are poorly managed.

Recommendations:

- To stem and control corruption, governments should give Annual Reports on Corruption as evidence of accountability and
 - Governments and civil society should undertake case studies of corruption in West Africa and recommend ways to reduce or control the phenomenon.
- (e) **Concern:** Integrity of the media – media lacks capacity to influence, promote public participation. In addition, independent media, when poorly managed, can lead to “dictatorship of the media.”

Recommendations:

- To forestall such “dictatorship” journalists and media practitioners should be highly educated, informed, and responsible; and
- Subregional governments should refrain from encroaching upon the freedom of the media.

3. Economic Management

Major issue: West African States are failing to tackle critical microeconomic challenges boldly and decisively and to initiate meaningful national discussion on the subject. Corruption, fraud and waste in government Ministries, departments and agencies continue to exact a toll on the public treasury, distort allocation, and undermine efficiency in the delivery of government

services. Weak economic management and governance have often undermined the prospect for sustained economic stabilization, strong investor response, and real growth. Thus, many West African States remain improvident with inaccessible State services.

A partial solution lies in the governance realm, through:

- Better management of national resources, sustainable policies and programmes that balance growth and distribution;
- Government's encouragement of dialogue on national economic policy frameworks; and
- Development of private sector and civil society advocacy groups, independent research think tanks, and economic policy analysis and review capabilities.

(a) **Concern:** Fiscal policy and budget execution - lack of fiscal transparency and budgetary discipline

Recommendations:

- Financial regulatory systems to ensure budgetary discipline should be established;
- Effectively functioning mechanisms for transparency and accountability in economic management need to be created;
- The budget process of the State should be opened to the public for debate;
- Parliament, the people's representatives, should participate fully in the process from beginning to end;
- Effective auditing practices should be established to ensure accountability in financial management;
- Expertise in economic policy-making and management needs to be increased;
- Internal revenue mobilization must be improved;
- To curtail corruption, award of contracts should be by tender and must be transparent;
- The tax system must be transparent and free from political manipulation;
- Data on the economy should be accessible to the public; and
- Public officials should subscribe to a Code of Conduct.

(b) **Concern:** Foreign investment and international financial institutions (IFIs)- Inadequate local capital/institutions and ownership

Recommendations:

- The role of IFIs in African economies needs control and monitoring to ensure adequate participation of nationals and national ownership; and
- West African States should utilize their own resources including the African Development bank (ADB) to create alternatives to external dependencies.

(c) **Concern:** the HIV/AIDS pandemic not being seriously enough addressed, even though the increasing rate of HIV/AIDS has a profound impact on governance and the sub- region's development.

Recommendation:

- All subregional States must take priority measures to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

2.3 Conclusions

Finally, the special role of government and the political establishments for promoting good governance cannot be overstated. Part of the solution to the governance challenges confronting the subregion is increased commitment on the part of governments, political establishments and public officials to promote mechanisms for ensuring good governance practices. A starting point in this respect is to restore and entrench accountability structures and processes in West African States.

This requires a number of actions involving multiple stakeholders:

- Revival of constitutionalism; reinforced by competitive multi-party elections, with independent election authorities; and the resurrection of legislatures.
- Strengthening of the oversight capacity of legislatures (with strong oversight committees of Parliament such as committees on public accounts, government assurances, appointments);
- Strong opposition parties need to evolve;
- Supreme audit bodies with independence and capacity to produce national audit reports should be able to operate without interference, on a timely basis;
- Independence of the central bank must be ensured;
- Independence of the judiciary should be ensured;
- Relaxation of media censorship, liberalization of airwaves and fostering of a vibrant media with capacity for investigative journalism are important;
- More proactive roles for West African legislative bodies, especially in combating corruption are needed. Legislative bodies have to take their oversight responsibilities seriously and initiate credible and comprehensive anti-corruption legislative reforms;

Parliament has a special role to play in helping to empower, protect and resource public accountability agencies such as anti-corruption commissions and audit services. It can only perform its oversight functions effectively where it is not politically compromised, adopts and abides by a sound code of ethics, boasts of strong and proactive oversight committees (such as public accounts and government assurances) and asserts its independence from other branches of the State.

In the context of West Africa's divided societies and in the face of the severe gender, ethnic and class inequalities, inclusive civic participation is absolutely essential for generating social capital, and building trust and reciprocity between citizens and government, State and private sector and different social and political groupings. Civil society must be empowered in order to promote popular participation and to curb patrimonial and entrenched rent-seeking interests that continue to bedevil liberalization and rationalization of the national economies of the subregion.

Endnotes

- 1 UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 2003, p240.
- 2 ECOWAS (July 1991): Declaration of ECOWAS Political Principles.
- 3 Article 4 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993) emphasizes the ‘promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of governance in each Member State as envisaged by the Declaration of Political Principles adopted in Abuja on 6 July, 1991’.
- 4 The Lomé Communiqué issued by ECOWAS foreign ministers on 25 May 1999, pledged the commitment of member States to the consolidation of democracy urged members to consolidate their democratic base, observe the principles of good governance, and good economic management. It also condemned political assassinations and coup d’état as being unjustifiable in any situation.
- 5 *West Africa*, 15th January, 2003.
- 6 *West Africa*, 15th January, 2003.
- 7 *West Africa*, 15th January, 2003.
- 8 Robert G. Herman and Theodore J Piccone. 2002. *Defending Democracy: A Global Survey of Foreign Policy Trends, 1992-2003*. Democracy Coalition Project, Inc.

Annex

Plan of Action

MAJOR ISSUES/ CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS	STRATEGY	ACTORS	RESOURCES
1. Political Representation				
Major Issue: The low participation in the democratic and governance process				
<p>Concern: Lack of civic education among citizens and civil society leading to low participation in the political process at both national and local levels.</p>	<p>Strengthen civic education institutions</p> <p>Review and revise civic education programmes and content to reflect national governance aspirations and values.</p> <p>In the context of democracy intensify the process of decentralization</p> <p>Strengthen civil society groups as a means for expanding political participation.</p> <p>Agree and adopt a framework that addresses comprehensively, the issue of “citizenship” including the basis of citizenship, minimum rights and obligations that come with citizenship</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>Civic associations, CSOs, educational institutions, political parties.</p> <p>Subregional economic bodies</p>	
<p>Concern: Gender representation - low participation of women, especially in the legislature</p>	<p>The idea of quotas in political and public positions should be given serious consideration to improve women’s representation.</p> <p>Governments/states to ratify and implement the Protocol on African and Peoples Rights.</p> <p>Initiate, adopt and fund programmes to support women’s representation in the legislature.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>Women organizations, ministries of women affairs, CSOs, political parties women parliamentarians,</p>	

MAJOR ISSUES/ CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS	STRATEGY	ACTORS	RESOURCES
<p>Concern: Political parties - absence of viable and sustainable political parties</p>	<p>Political parties should be strengthened and given equal access to the state-owned news media during political campaigns.</p> <p>To ensure competitiveness, the idea of state funding of political parties, with the necessary qualification guidelines/ criteria and checks against abuses should be considered.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>Political parties, electoral commissions, executive branch.</p>	
<p>Concern: Electoral systems - lack of credibility of the electoral systems</p>	<p>Develop minimum standards for elections and ensure that they are impartially and uniformly applied.</p> <p>Impose sanctions on regimes and political parties that fail to comply with election standards.</p> <p>Initiate national programmes to monitor elections.</p> <p>Create a network of West African election administrators and civil society election monitors.</p> <p>Initiate/support capacity building of national election authorities.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>National Electoral Commissions, Association of electoral commissions, Election watchdog organizations, ECOWAS; CSOs</p>	
<p>Concern: Traditional governance - not exploiting the potential of traditional rulers in the governance process</p>	<p>Explore ways to engage Traditional Authorities (chiefs) in the process of good governance and what aspects of culture should be adopted to enrich democratic governance.</p> <p>In the context of decentralization, should under take review of traditional systems with a view to recommending measures to enhance their role in local governance.</p> <p>Develop and provide capacity-building programmes for traditional rulers.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>Association of traditional rulers; Traditional authorities; Central government authorities with local governance responsibilities.</p>	

MAJOR ISSUES/ CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS	STRATEGY	ACTORS	RESOURCES
<p>2. Institutional Effectiveness</p> <p>Major issue: Need for greater institutional efficiency and accountability</p>				
<p>Concern: Service delivery- poor service delivery and inaccessibility to service institutions</p>	<p>Decentralization should be pursued and used as means of enhancing institutional development and greater access.</p> <p>Make greater use of ICT to enhance service delivery and education; and also communication between local and national officials.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>Local governance institutions, Executive</p>	
<p>Concern: Security institutions are undemocratic</p>	<p>Initiate military civil relations through information and communication.</p> <p>CSOs need to improve their role as a watchdog over military budget.</p> <p>Encourage military community service programmes.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>Military, Police, Intelligence, Executive</p>	
<p>Concern: CSO capacity and accountability - CSOs lack resources and capacity</p>	<p>CSO to adopt internal governance mechanisms to promote greater accountability.</p> <p>Initiate and support programmes to enhance CSO technical and managerial capacities.</p> <p>Empower civil society by encouraging and supporting civic education to educate and provide information on national issues.</p> <p>Enhance the watchdog role of civic actors and citizen groups.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>CSOs</p>	

MAJOR ISSUES/ CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS	STRATEGY	ACTORS	RESOURCES
<p>Concern: Control over corruption - corruption continues to exact toll on the management of State resources</p>	<p>Initiate credible and comprehensive anti-corruption legislative reforms, ensuring parliament's special role to empower and protect public accountability agencies such as anti-corruption commissions and audit services.</p> <p>Encourage the elaboration of laws to control corruption including formulating code of conducts to which public officials should subscribe.</p> <p>Tax system must be transparent and free from political manipulation.</p> <p>Strengthen the law-enforcement mechanisms including strengthening the judicial systems and adoption of unambiguous administrative laws.</p> <p>Encourage and foster citizens' involvement in the fight against corruption.</p> <p>Produce and place in public domain Annual Reports on Corruption as evidence of accountability.</p> <p>Undertake case studies of corruption in West Africa and recommend ways to reduce or control the phenomenon.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>Watchdog institutions, executive leadership, citizens</p>	

MAJOR ISSUES/ CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS	STRATEGY	ACTORS	RESOURCES
<p>Concern: Integrity of the media - media lacks capacity to influence policy and promote public participation,</p>	<p>Encourage the establishment of constitutionally protected media freedoms,</p> <p>Encourage the establishment of independent press commissions and promulgate access to official information laws.</p> <p>Encourage and support capacity-building programmes for enhancing professionalism in the media.</p> <p>Encourage and establish a media-led forum for the discussion of national policy.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral</p>	<p>Private media and media associations, CSOs</p>	
<p>3. Economic Management</p> <p>Major issues: The failure to tackle critical microeconomic challenges boldly and decisively among West African States or to initiate meaningful national discussion on the subject.</p>				
<p>Concern: Fiscal policy and budget execution - lack of fiscal transparency and budgetary discipline</p>	<p>Encourage and support national dialogue on national economic policy frameworks including opening up the budget process to the public.</p> <p>Encourage and support the development of private sector advocacy groups on economic policy analysis and review as well as comments on the budget and its process.</p> <p>Encourage and support independent research think tanks on economic policy analysis and review.</p> <p>Establish financial regulatory systems that ensure budgetary discipline.</p> <p>Establish effective audit practices</p> <p>Initiate and fund capacity building on economic policy-making and management.</p>	<p>Multi stakeholder and multi sectoral</p>	<p>Government, Auditor General, research institutions, Executives of private sector institutions, IFIs</p>	

MAJOR ISSUES/ CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS	STRATEGY	ACTORS	RESOURCES
Concern: Foreign investment and IFIs- inadequate local capital/ institutions and ownership	Create incentives for mobilizing local resources/ capital. Encourage and create support mechanisms for facilitating the participation of nationals	Multi stakeholder and/multi sectoral	IFIs, African finance institutions National entrepreneurial groups	
Concern: HIV/ AIDS - the HIV/ AIDS pandemic not seriously addressed	Undertake research to establish the impact of HIV/AIDS on the subregions economic development with a view to formulating regional approaches to addressing the HIV/AIDS problem.	Multi stakeholder and multi sectoral	ECOWAS, other subregional bodies; International organizations, CSOs, Governments and the private sector	