

## **MANO RIVER WOMEN'S PEACE NETWORK (MARWOPNET)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**MARWOPNET** Sierra Leone Chapter continues programme activities in the reporting period June 2002 – April 2004. Activities are geared towards achieving the goals and objectives of the sub-regional Network.

The direction of activities falls within the framework of MARWOPNET vision, Its Abuja plan of action, (2000) and processes for the way forward as adopted and continued reviewed at Board meetings including institutional capacity building workshops that have been held since the Network's inception.

The last Board meeting of the Network was held at the Cape Guest House, Freetown, Sierra Leone in the period 4-6 June 2002. The Board meeting which was staggered between 4-9 June was preceded by two day training workshop on Team Building for the Board Members followed by a four day leadership Capacity Building on Conflict Transformation and Peace Building for all delegates from 7- 10 June 2004.

It is instructive, as providing some context for MARWOPNET Sierra Leone continuing activities followed the Freetown Board meeting to, highlight certain issues / strategies and recommendations for the way forward that emerged. These were:

- Continue to define and develop policy issues, particularly for advocacy, networking, partnership building and resource mobilization.
- Defining the rules for developing partnership.
- Review the partnership/memorandum of understanding with FAS
- Develop an action plan for operationalizing the institution's Secretariat.
- Continue to strengthen the institutional capacity of MARWOPNET.
- Establishing a mechanism to improve communication and networking.
- Finalizing the Network's proposal for economic empowerment of women within the peace building process.

In the reporting period June 2002 – April 2004, major activities carried out were as follows.

#### **2002**

- hosted and discussed with ECA consultants – Soukenya Bah Fatmatta Tambadjang. The consultants were on a preparatory mission to assist in the development of a 5 year project proposal for the Network. The main components of the project are advocacy and strengthening women's economic empowerment.
- Participated in a polio immunization campaign throughout the country organised by the Ministry of Health. The members stressed the need to ensure that border regions are accessed.
- Solidarity visit to SOS Home for the physically challenged children. Drugs were donated and children were treated to some refreshments.
- Participated in the training workshop on conflict management and mediation for women organized in Conakry, Guinea in the period 21 – 25 October, under the auspices of the Department for the Advancement of Women(DAW) United Nation, New York.
- Hosted and discussed with a female journalist and photographic team from the Ford Foundation. Discussion centred around MARWOPNET 'S work with the displaced and

refugees. ( Visitors were taken on a conducted tour of kono to meet returnees and document their stories) and a camp being run for commercial sex workers and HIV/AIDS orphans in the framework of rehabilitation, by a member organization of MARWOPNET.

2003

- AS AN ELEMENT OF EXPANDING MEMBERSHIP? THE Murray Town Community was sensitised to the purpose, goals, objectives and activities of MARWOPNET.
- Visited the Mercy Ship to inform and discuss with the Community on board, what MARWOPNET is and its issues of interest – advocacy, networking and partnership building.
- Chaired a meeting organized in Freetown by the ECOWAS Parliament and the Inter – Religious Council of Liberia in the process to engage the LURDS in peace dialogue.
- In collaboration with the World Council of Religion and Peace (WCRP), held discussion with Liberia refugee women in Sierra Leone to organise a mass rally advocating peace during the preparatory Liberia Peace Mediation talks convened in Freetown 25 – 26 May. The meeting included the mediators and LURD under the auspices of ECOWAS. Advocacy activities on peace for Liberia undertaken included, mass rally, radio panel consisting Liberian refugee women, WIPNET and MARWOPNET.
- Attend a meeting in Abidjan, Cote D’Ivoire on advocacy for peace in the Mano River Basin, particularly Liberia and Cote D’Ivoire organized by “The Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET).
- Undertook a mission to Kailahun and Zimmi – Liberia / Sierra Leone border regions. Mission was to assess the plights of Liberian refugees, particularly women, through dialogue with them at the Transit / Way station so as to be able to design meaningful relief / humanitarian and Advocacy activities. The mission was designed as a sub-regional activity encompassing all three chapters and it was funded by Urgent Action, Boulder, Colorado. The Guinea chapter participated actively in the 4 day programme.
- Water is recognized as inadequate at Zimmi. As part of the observance of World Environment Day, the Network organized a radio discussion on the theme “WATER”. The Network collaborated with Soroptmist International Club of Freetown in a radio discussion and provision of water sachets to refugees at Zimmi Way Station.
- The Network demonstrated and discussed its purpose and various activities undertaken during a 2day filming programme in Freetown organised by the United Nations Peace Academy. The MARWOPNET had been nominated a one of five organisations in Africa for the UN Peace Award. The film was to document the Network’s activities in support of its nomination by FAS .
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President together with the President and 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President attended the UN, General Assembly, New York to receive the UN Human Rights Award to the Network in recognising of its role in peace Building / Making , particularly in the Sub-Region.
- The chapter held regular meetings throughout the year. Discussions were geared towards ensuring that all members could participate in the Network’s activities; updated on the development of MARWOPNET as a sub-regional network; discussing resource generating activities and planning for the chapter’s attendance at the board / General Assembly when and where ever it would hold. These meetings are long overdue, for one reason or the other seemed impossible to convene.

2004.

- The Chapter was invited by the Parliamentary Committee on Human Right to inform Parliament of its recognition by the UN. It was regrettable that the chapter did not have the plaque to present to Parliament. The chapter had requested the Network’s President in an e-mail to forward the plaque to the headquarters. The plaque is still awaited in Freetown

- The chapters as a part on the Network's team participated in the programme organised by the UN Commission on the Status of Women in celebration of the International Women's Day from 29 February – 5 March.
- The Chapter participated in panels organised by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) during its General Assembly held in Geneva March / April, 2004. The Intervention on behalf of the Network were made on 30<sup>th</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> April respectively:
  - (i) presentation of MARWOPNET 'S role in Peace Process – Conflict Prevention and Management
  - (ii) Affirmative Action and Security Council Resolution – 1325 (2000) and CEDAW Gen. Recommendation 25 and Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention and Resolution.
- participated in activities to observe International Women's Day in Sierra Leone.
- Participated in the ECA meeting in Freetown to review 2 projects; one dealing with civil society organizations and the media and the other Economic empowerment for women.

The highlight of the celebration was a women's rally and conference held in Makeni, Northern Province. The celebration was officially opened by the Sierra Leone Head of State, His Excellency Alhaji Dr. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah

#### Way Forward

The chapter would focus on the following issues from the next 3 years:

1. Active participation in establishing the Network Secretariat. Also it should seek to set up its own office.
2. Refugee issues: Intensify advocacy activities- refugee camps still exist in Ivory Cost, Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone – a sub regional issue that needs great attention e.g. education activities for marginalized women, and young adults ( single mothers).
3. Promote trauma healing / counselling training workshops. People are in great need of emotional, mental and psychological recovery.
4. Returnee and Resettlement issues – MARWOPNET to mobilise resources and engage national level organizations to implement activities defined by these groups.
5. MARWOPNET should endeavour to address communication issues within the sub-region, including language and communication system.
6. Gender issues and HIV/AIDS / Human Rights.
7. Economic Empowerment.