

**West Africa R2P workshops
Post-workshop Report
September 2006**

In September 2006, WFM-IGP partnered with two organizations in West Africa to host two meetings - 14 September (Bamako) and 18 September (Abuja) - on the Responsibility to Protect. The workshops engaged civil society, government representatives, foreign ministries, and UN officials in discussions on how the Responsibility to Protect may be used to mobilize national, regional and international resources to prevent and respond to genocide and mass killings. We also hoped to raise awareness and promote the understanding of R2P locally, regionally and internationally. Abuja was chosen because it is the capital of a key country in the region, it houses the ECOWAS secretariat and it also has a very strong civil society. As for Mali, we were strongly urged by colleagues to hold meetings in a Francophone capital and one of our strongest R2P partners in Mali, the Chair of FEMNET, agreed to host the event.

Bamako, Mali:

On 14 September 2006, WFM-IGP in partnership with FEMNET-Mali, organized a one-day workshop on the Responsibility to Protect in Bamako, Mali. The workshop introduced the norm to participants and led to the creation of a regional network to advocate for the better understanding and use of R2P. There were over 60 participants, including representatives of NGOs and NGO networks, government officials, UN officials, and local journalists.

Official Opening and Welcome Address:

The workshop opened with an introduction from the organizer Mama Koite Doumbia of FEMNET-Mali. Mama provided a brief introduction to the norm, outlined the importance of the norm to West Africa, and explained that civil society itself had a responsibility to discuss how to promote and advance the principles of R2P. Following Mama, the Malian Minister of Justice provided a few words on the workshop and the concept, noting that R2P is not a new concept within international law. She expressed strong support for the workshop and reiterated the support of the Mali government toward the initiative.

Introduction to the Norm and Integration of R2P into the work of NGOs:

The next section included a presentation by Sapna Chhatpar of WFM-IGP on the history of the norm and its development into an international commitment. Following this, a representative from Amnesty-Mali and a representative from the People's Movement for Human Rights Education (PDHRE) commented on the integration of R2P into the work of Malian human rights NGOs. The speaker from PDHRE emphasized that most Malian NGOs were working on different aspects of security (economic security included) some

focusing on prevention of conflict and others on reaction. He believed that there needed to be a process to combine all these efforts. To do this there would need to be consultation with one another, participation in discussions, consensus about how to go forward and then solidarity in action.

The Amnesty speaker called for the establishment of network which would call for action in times of crisis. Amnesty has always fought for human rights—at a variety of different levels—not just genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing. Protection of populations is not a new concept for Amnesty and for this reason R2P would not be difficult to integrate into Amnesty-Mali's work. He argued that the example of Darfur was an embarrassment for the UN—but also for NGOs in the region who failed to organize collectively to put pressure on governments and other actors. He emphasized the need to educate the public about R2P and also work with the Mali government to explain the purpose and importance of R2P.

Application of R2P to ongoing conflicts:

In the third section, the question of how to apply R2P to ongoing conflicts was presented by the Association des Femmes pour les Initiatives de Paix (AFIP). The speaker commented on the complexity of conflicts affecting West Africa. She noted that impunity, mal-governance and non-transparency, economic problems, religious conflicts, genocide, ethnic cleansing, rape, poverty and national disasters are affects of conflict that are all affecting the region and that R2P should be incorporated into each of the NGOs' work in these areas.

Peaceful measures to resolve armed conflict:

The fourth presentation was given by the Peacekeeping Office of the Malian Defense Ministry and included a power point presentation that listed all the alternatives to the use of force. The presentation described a range of measures available to both the international community under Chapter VI and to national governments including, negotiation, good offices, conciliation, mediation, arbitration and judicial settlement. The speaker also emphasized the importance of traditional communicators (and other religious leaders) and their role in facilitating mediation and consensus in their communities. Finally, he emphasized how alliances in sports, arts and within community tribes could facilitate conflict resolution.

Outcomes:

The final portion of the workshop addressed next steps. Participants were asked how they thought they could promote R2P and who the actors were so as to target their efforts. Much discussion was focused on the wording of the questions. As only a short time remained to determine next steps, it was decided that a working group would be established to answer some of the more in depth questions.

The recommendations of the workshop were the following:

- Create a network in Mali (and potentially beyond) to work on R2P

- A network, called the Coalition Malienne des Organisations de la Société Civile pour la Responsabilité de Protéger (COMOREP) was created on 27 September.
- Determine how to incorporate the concept into NGO activities
- Determine how to popularize the concept
- Formulate an advocacy plan to promote the concept of R2P within the Mali government, sub regional organizations and regional organizations.

Next Steps for WFM-IGP:

- § A message was sent to all workshop participants asking them to sign on to the listserv and join the R2P-CS network of NGO supporters. Many have already joined the listserv and the network of NGO supporters and we will continue to follow up with all the participants on this.
- § Follow up on the future meetings of COMOREP.

Abuja, Nigeria: 18 September 2006

On 18 September 2006, WFM-IGP, in partnership with the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF) and FEMNET-Mali, organized a one-day workshop on the Responsibility to Protect in Abuja, Nigeria. Like the Bamako workshop, it introduced the norm to participants and led to the creation of a regional network to advocate for the better understanding and use of R2P. There were over 50 participants, including representatives of NGOs and NGO networks, ECOWAS officials, UN officials, and journalists.

Official Opening and Welcome Address

Welcome remarks were given by the three organizing organizations (WFM-IGP, WACSOFF, and FEMNET-Mali). The official opening was provided by ECOWAS Representative D.G. Faid, who spoke about the importance of R2P in the West Africa sub-region. He spoke about ECOWAS' commitment to abiding to international norms and standards.

Introduction to the norm and how to integrate gender into R2P

The next section included a presentation by Lene Schumacher of WFM-IGP on the history of the norm and its development into an international commitment. Mama Koite Doumbia from FEMNET then talked about the importance of creating a network of organizations to work on R2P in the region. African NGOs are key to the dialogue on how to deal with armed conflict and genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. She named several countries where this is currently happening (or did in the past) and talked about how civil society can work together in all of these countries to protect their populations. Finally, Stella Amada of the Centre for Democracy and Development discussed how to incorporate gender into R2P. She mentioned the need to mainstream gender in all UN processes and to understand the special needs of women and children in armed conflict.

The regional responsibility to protect:

This section was presented by representatives from the League for Democratic Rights (LDR) and the West African Network for Peacebuilding. The speaker from LDR talked about the conflicts in northern Nigeria and the role of security forces in failing to address the violence. He also mentioned that there are lots of laws to protect people on paper, for example in the AU Charter, however there is not anything done about it in practice. The second speaker emphasized the importance of not just looking inwards. The conflict in Liberia, for example, affects all those in the Niger Delta. As a conclusion of this section, Mr. Perdigao from ECOWAS spoke about the ECOWAS peace fund which has earmarked \$5 million for an early warning system. He also mentioned that if peaceful methods of conflict prevention fail, ECOWAS has the capability to handle conflicts militarily.

Outcomes:

Participants identified three main areas to work on in the future:

1. **Subregional Networking of NGOs working on R2P in West Africa**
 - a. Information sharing
 - b. Capacity building within the network/government/legislative bodies/media/citizens
 - c. Advocacy
 - d. Research
 - e. Simplification of R2P document (in all local languages)
 - f. Form national network on R2P (including working groups at the national level)

2. **Accountability at the National Level (including State and local level)**
 - a. Civil Society organizations should actively monitor the electoral process
 - b. Confront the culture of impunity

3. **Indices for Intervention**
 - a. Establishing mechanisms for EWER (?)
 - b. Identify when states can no longer protect their citizens or when they fail to do so
 - c. Work on timing for coalitions to blow whistle