

FOUNDATION FOR SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA –
(FOSDA)

WORKSHOP ON:
IMPLEMENTING REGIONAL PROTOCOLS FOR SECURITY AND
DEVELOPMENT IN THE ECOWAS

Topic: Gender Dimension of Mining and Trans-Border Crimes in West Africa

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Introduction

West Africa with varying ethnic conditions and cultural backgrounds is well endowed with natural resources. However, West African countries have some of the world's lowest standards of living. Eleven of the fifteen members of ECOWAS and seven of the eleven members of ECCAS are among the 30 countries at the bottom of the 2005 UNDP Human Development index. Wide inequality in the distribution of wealth, alarming demographic growth associated with rapid –uncontrolled–urbanisation, are all features common to West and Central African societies. These factors have contributed immensely to the increased crime and criminal activities as an option for individuals to break of the poverty cycle. West African economies are based on the exploitation of natural resources (mining or single-crop export-oriented agriculture), coupled with a patrimonial conception of the State, within which natural and financial resources 'belong' to the individual(s) in power. Such structural defects also contribute to create a conducive environment in which flouting the law and using institutional prerogatives for private goals is not only justified but even considered an indicator of power. All such factors attract unscrupulous economic operators, facilitate the establishment and development of local and transnational criminal networks and promote the rooting of a cultural model in which money can buy everything (including impunity, political power, social consideration and respectability).

Land issues are very critical to women's livelihoods because 65% to 80% of West African women generally depend on land for their livelihoods. Land is an important source of food, water, fuel and medicinal plants. Women's unequal land rights affect their access to other resources and their economic, social and political well-being.

Land problems including growing land scarcity, competition over land use and environmental degradation are some of the issues linked to mining and Trans-Border Crimes in West Africa. These unhealthy situation may be attributed to policies under the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which have resulted in massive expansion of large-scale surface mining, and an increase in small scale miners. In the urban areas, the expansion of private and state housing has created many problems in the acquisition of land resulting in many land disputes and litigations. There are different categories of people who face problems of access and control of land. Women are especially vulnerable group in this regard.

Mining activities resulting in cross-border crimes include crimes such as

Trafficking of small arms/light weapons

- ❑ Armed conflicts/chieftaincy disputes
- ❑ Human, political and financial costs very high
- ❑ Ghana's arms manufacturing industry becoming transnational

Drug Trafficking

Africa is a key export transiting zone for drugs (UNODC, 2005)

Human Trafficking/Smuggling

- ❑ Pervasive and growing
- ❑ Driving force – poverty
- ❑ Categories

Trafficking in children mainly for domestic work and farm labour

Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation

- ❑ Human smuggling
 - illegal migration
 - use of fraudulent documents, impersonation
- ❑ Security and justice problem, as well as labour, health, human rights and development issues.

Money Laundering

- Laundering takes place across jurisdictional borders
- Illegal transfer and transportation of large sums of foreign currencies
- Ghana has evolving banking sector and large informal cash economy facilitated by expansion and growth of finance houses

Advance Fee and Internet Fraud (419)

Armed Robbery

- Relationship between the existence of war/conflicts and incidence of armed robbery
- Chieftaincy disputes/conflicts in the Sub-region enable illicit arms circulation
- Robberies increased from 728 in 2004 to 1,261 in 2005 increase of 73.02%(Ghana Police)
- Porous borders provide unhindered access

Vehicle/Motor Theft

- Worrying phenomenon
- Vehicles stolen from Ghana and sent to neighboring countries for sale and vice versa
- In Northern parts of Ghana motor/bicycles
- Insurance fraud

Types of Conflicts

There are various types of conflicts which include domestic conflicts, environmental conflicts, social and political conflicts. The factors that cause these conflicts are interlinked. They are all about the inaccessibility to, or denial of access and control over resources, whether in the domestic sphere, environmentally, socially or politically motivated. The resources may be material, financial, abstract or tangible.

Some of the categories include:

- **Domestic**-gender-based violence induced by traditional and cultural practices and beliefs.
- **Social** –induced by status and power-relations in a community or among groups of people (chieftaincy disputes over land and resources)
- **Political**: induced by power dynamics. (Conflict over elections, between political campaigns)
- **Environmental**: induced by disagreements over land and natural resources

In Ghana as in many West African countries, conflict has become endemic. Almost all African countries are confronted with various conflicts at different magnitudes. Currently there are about 26-armed conflicts in Africa. It is estimated that 474 million Africans have suffered from conflict. Of this number, 61 % represent people from West Africa who have suffered from conflict. In Ghana, it has been reported that there are 250 conflict situations, either latent or active (Source).

Factors that contribute to conflicts.

Environmental conflict due to the inaccessibility of natural resources or its control by a population or a group of people are the fundamental causes of conflicts thus creating insecurity among the populations, especially the vulnerable who are mostly women and children. In West Africa, Sierra-Leone and Liberia have at last emerged out of conflicts fuelled by the contests over natural resources. The persistent conflict between Nigerians in the Delta region over the mining of petroleum products is yet another case in point in the sub-region. In Ghana, in recent times, there have been some conflicts in mining communities which have resulted in some losses of lives and property. (Clashes between “Galamsay” and established mining companies. These conflicts are happening due to worsening standards of living and abject poverty. Conflicts in Ghana and in the sub-region generally stem from decades of colonialism with its policies that promoted inequality and exclusiveness. Many of the conflicts also have their roots in territorial expansionism, land boundary and land ownership.

- Scarcity of environmental and natural resources can also lead to conflict. At the community level for example, the scarcity of water, productive agricultural lands, and forestry and non-forestry products can lead to conflict.
- Group identity conflicts arise from the movements of large-scale migration of people due to drought, inter-tribal conflicts, adventure, etc.
- A Rights-based conflicts arise from the denial of people the fundamental human development needs such as clean environment, information, fair and adequate share of benefits of the resources and compensation due to them.
- Globalisation has contributed immensely to conflicts in Africa through its capitalist and neo-liberal policies in trade, which have left many Africans in abject poverty. African leaders, under Globalisation and neo-liberal policies were obliged to divest their State Owned Enterprises (SOE) enterprises which hitherto provide income for employees. Retrenchment took place leaving many people without a sustained means of livelihoods. Increase in mineral resource exploration and exploitation in the Sub-region has been a major contributory factor to conflicts in the region. While West African leaders have facilitated resource capture/mimic activities for the foreign investor, depriving populations of their land and livelihoods, they have not been able to cushion the communities with alternative means of sustenance.

Mining and Cross-Border Crimes.

Hard drugs

West African seashores and ports have become the hub of transatlantic cocaine trafficking. In addition to large cocaine shipments transported by sea, stocked in West Africa and rerouted to final destinations in western countries, **hard drugs** are smuggled by international criminal networks using ‘disposable’ human carriers with false passports and forged visas. Golden Crescent heroin enters the region mostly by air to be later re-exported to Europe and to a lesser extent the US. Several hundred West and Central Africans languish in the prisons of Thailand, Pakistan and Colombia (just to mention major drug markets) on long drug-related sentences, without mentioning the ‘mules’ killed on their way to destination markets by ruptured drug ovules. Hard drugs are not only trafficked out of the region but increasingly consumed in deadly homemade cocktails: in Liberia child soldiers reported the abuse of locally-made crack cocaine mixed with gunpowder. Cannabis cultivation is widespread for local, regional and to a lesser extent Northern European markets.

Figure 1.



Human trafficking

Poor security and economic conditions foster the **trafficking in –and smuggling of– human beings**, which prosper unabated. Children and women from all over West and Central Africa are trafficked for both labour and sexual exploitation within the region and exported to Europe, the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. According to newspaper reports, West African locations are emerging as attractive destinations for sexual tourism, including its most heinous degeneration, paedophilia. The UN has reported that at least 200,000 children are trafficked annually out of West and Central Africa. The US State Department estimates that 400,000 children are involved in child labour across West Africa according to baseline studies. Additionally, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Togo are among West and Central African countries with heavy trafficking of child labourers.

Figure 2.



As regards the **smuggling of illegal migrants**, the region is both a point of departure and of transit. Oil producing countries in the region, such as Gabon, Mauritania and Equatorial Guinea, or developed regional economies like South Africa and Nigeria, are themselves the destination of fellow Sub-Saharan migrants. In addition to African nationals, illegal Asian migrants are often smuggled to West and Central African locations on their way to final Western destinations. The easiest mode of travel is by air directly to Europe or, alternatively, to North Africa and the Middle East, from where the trip can be continued by boat. Obviously, traveling by air is cost-intensive and highly dependant on organized crime as it requires the provision of false passports, visas and supporting documents. The maritime route is used by large numbers of clandestine migrants. There have been cases in which vessels from as far as Cameroon and Nigeria traveled along the West African coast, the destination in most cases being the Spanish Canary Islands or the Portuguese Azores. Vessels often land in different inadequately controlled ports *en route* or anchor off shore to take clandestine immigrants on board from canoes. In other cases, ferries travel on established routes between two (neighboring) countries and are used by migrants on one leg of a longer journey. The smuggling of migrants on maritime routes is also highly dependant on organised crime, as it requires some initial capital investment for purchasing and reconditioning wrecked vessels and onshore logistics to refuel and pick up migrants from several countries on the route. Nigerian, Ghanaian, Liberian and Senegalese crime groups are believed to be involved in such activities. Illegal migrants' land routes run through the Sahara desert from south to north. When it comes to trafficking over land, there seem to be two scenarios. In the first scenario, the migrant buys a 'full packet solution' from his or her place of origin. The package can include false documents, transport, accommodation, the bribery of border officials and logistic advice. In the second scenario migrants try to get as far as they can by themselves using normal roads and transport. Along the routes through the Sahara, local people have specialised in servicing migrants by providing food and accommodation, forging documents and offering transport and guidance through the desert in order to avoid detection. Smuggling routes in West and Central Africa are also being used by migrants from other continents, particularly the Far East and East Asia. Migrants from China, India and Bangladesh have been found stranded in West or North Africa. Asian migrants normally travel by air to West Africa, from where they continue by either maritime or land routes towards Europe.

Counterfeit and Pirated Items

The same routes used for smuggling drugs and illegal migrants appear to be used also for the flourishing trade in **counterfeit and pirated items** originating mostly from Far East Asia but also, according to some reports, from Latin America. The problem of counterfeit items seriously affects local industries, particularly the entertainment, food and pharmaceutical sectors. In this context, it is worth noting that, according to the World Bank Institute music represents the third most important component of annual economic growth and revenue in GDP terms in Senegal, Mali, Ghana and Cameroon. Intelligence gained from Interpol investigations uncovered suspected connections between organised

crime gangs involved in music piracy in Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria and Middle Eastern terrorist organisations. Examples of CDs and CDRs carrying propaganda messages from extremist groups have been found in Mali, Mauritania and Nigeria.

Light Arms

According to several studies, there are four to eight million **light arms** in West Africa alone, representing a major obstacle to the ending of civil conflicts in the region. The easy availability of small arms coupled with the inability of the State to provide due security, control over its territory and fair justice foster violent behaviour, crimes against property and eventually anarchy. The trivialization and privatization of the use of violence coupled with impunity and corruption are, in this context, at the root of violent strife, often ending in open civil war.

Figure 3.



Arms exports and imports are not the only concern in volatile areas of West and Central Africa. In countries where tensions run high, the availability of weapons risks re-igniting or spreading conflict and violence. In 2002, the Nigerian Customs Service reported that it had intercepted small arms and ammunition worth more than US\$30 million at border posts in a six-month period. The Nigerian government announced that in 2004 it had seized some 157,000 illegal firearms.

Militias

Just as weapons are recycled from conflict to conflict in West and Central Africa, so too are untrained civilian militias, ill-disciplined fighters who move from country to country along with their weapons. The allegiance of these individuals is all too easily bought by State and non-State actors alike with the promise of looted goods or a few dollars, as proved by the cases of Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Ivory Coast. Mercenary pilots from former Soviet countries have also been employed in these countries and in other conflicts in West and Central Africa, along with well-trained European and South-African former elite soldiers for attempted coups in Central and Eastern Africa.

Natural Resources

West and Central Africa are rich in **natural resources**. Oil, precious stones, gold, platinum and timber are often the most important source of revenues for a number of West and Central African States. Considering the overall political context within which these resources are exploited, it goes without saying that their control is often the cause of lasting internal conflicts, and that their exploitation is the source of financing of private armies. The links between organised crime, terrorist groups and both rebel groups and rogue States/kleptocracies in Africa have been shown in a number of official UN reports, including those on Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Whether or not al-Qaeda invested in Sierra Leonean diamonds, its operatives certainly traveled and sojourned in West Africa, and funds from West African diamonds supported Hezbollah's operations in the Lebanon. In Nigeria, around 60,000 to 100,000 oil barrels a day, worth an estimated US\$4 billion a year, are siphoned off from illegally tapped pipelines and shipped abroad by international smuggling gangs. The profits are then used to finance the arms race in which criminal gangs and tribal militias are engaged, sustaining ethnic bloodletting in the oil-rich but impoverished Delta region.

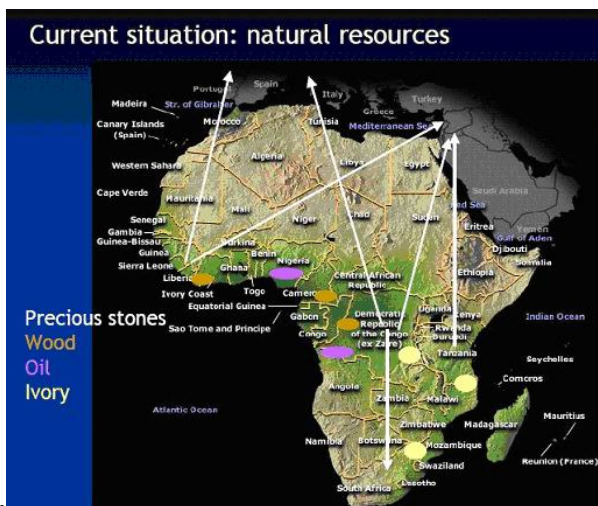


Figure 4.

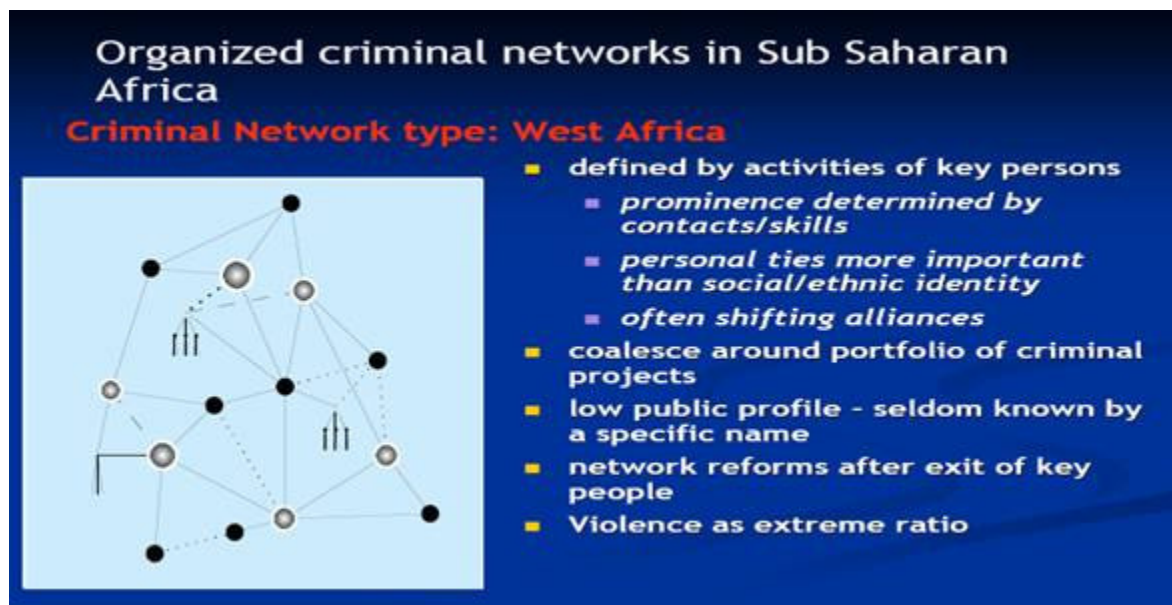
Unemployment, scanty capital investment, an unabated capital flow and poor infrastructures are also common features of many of the economies of the West and Central African region. External financial assistance, remittances from migrants and buoyant informal sectors often compensate for structural weaknesses, but also open the doors to all manner of illicit and criminal business practices. Beside the subsistence-oriented informal economies, parallel and shadow monopolies govern consistent parts of the national markets and economies, offering unexpected opportunities to **money launderers**. In December 2003, the Italian police arrested one of the most wanted men of the Sicilian mafia at Senegal's Dakar International airport on his arrival from the Ivory Coast. According to security sources, the man had important economic interests in both countries. In this context, **corrupt practices** are not only justified as 'licit' by the general public but even 'institutionalised' as the most palatable redistribution mechanism of national wealth. The low ranking of West African States in the

Transparency International (TI) *Corruption Perception Index* mirrors the growing acknowledgement by the very governments vis-à-vis the spread of corruption at all levels of both institutions and societies.

Criminal Networks

West Africa has become an attractive location for foreign criminal networks, with West Africans as partners, and a particular criminal network model is gradually being built up and exported. Besides the well-known Nigerian networks, new ones are developing in Ghana, the Ivory Coast and Senegal. Modelled on the Nigerian ‘network’ type, such **criminal organisations** have in common the very loose, fragmented and business-oriented features which make them extremely successful in the global village of modern ‘disorganised’ crime.

Figure 5.



Traditional highly-organised criminal models, such as those of well-known criminal organisations like the Sicilian Mafia, the American *Cosa Nostra* and Japan’s *Yakuza*, would indeed hardly fit the bill in the lawless and ‘hit-and-run’ conditions characterising the overall African context, where project-based, business-oriented structures are far better performers. In this respect, criminal ventures in West Africa adopt structures, *modi operandi* and features typical of the region’s legitimate traders and business people, with a successful entrepreneur inviting one or more junior relations or other dependents to join him in the business as the volume grows. The division of tasks within these structures occurs in such a way that new recruits, generally personal acquaintances or relations of the original associates, barely know the employers they are really working for, as well as how their tasks relate to assignments given to other members. The employment offered is generally limited to the project without any expectation of stable –ie, permanent– links to the structure which, on the contrary, fades away upon completion of a given project. Secrecy and an individual’s total loyalty to the group involved in the venture is further ensured by cultural pressures (eg, belonging to the same village, clan or ethnic group) and by the use of religious and black magic rituals threatening supernatural punishment in the event of betrayal.

Terrorism

As far as **terrorism** is concerned, all analysts and available reports concur on the unlikely expansion of al-Qaeda-type branches within West and Central African societies. On the other hand, the use of West

African territory for training and logistic facilities and the establishment of operational business-oriented joint ventures between terrorist groups and local criminal networks is a far more likely scenario. Recent developments in Nigeria's Delta region bear out the fear of local terrorist groups increasingly using violence to push forward their political and economic claims.

The conflict situation resulting from resource capture/ mining in the West Africa region has security implications for people in the various countries. The proliferation of small arms is fuelling even more conflicts and violence. The use of child soldiers, for instance is a phenomenon whose impact on social development is yet to be measured. There is a rise in cross-border crimes and armed robbery. The instability created by conflict has diverted massive resources from long-term development objectives, setting countries involved in conflict, and indeed the whole region many years back.

Gender Dimension of Mining and Cross-Border Crime.

Women and men experience situations of conflict differently as combatants or civilians or as war victims due to the prevailing gender inequalities. Articles 12b and 13 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana provide measures for protecting citizens in times of conflict. In spite of this, women are the most vulnerable and the most threatened during conflict. Women experience social dislocation, abductions, sexual abuse, intimidation, health problems, and added responsibility as care givers.

Women, mining and land rights.

Gender issues refer to the SOCIAL relationships between men and women in the spheres of production and reproduction inside and outside the household.

It is a holistic process of interaction in the production circles at macro and micro level, that is, at the family level, national arena and beyond. Utilizing a gender paradigm, women's role in animal husbandry and agriculture, as well as fuelwood collection and other range of tasks, makes women the daily managers of natural resources. In these contexts, women's work is therefore, vital for ensuring the basic community welfare

and livelihoods. Women are also knowledgeable about management of resources, and that it is high time that this important potential is harnessed to the benefit of all populations. Unfortunately, however what is disturbing, is that women seem invisible in these roles, since they are ignored in statistical accounting and in policies of government and non-governmental institutions. The peripheralizing of women's actions and achievements in natural resource management have been contributory factors towards trans-border crimes in the sub-region.

Marriage is probably the most important source of farming land for women because it is within this context that women live and work. Marriage offers some security in women's accessibility to land. Access to a husband's land depends on marital residence, the continued existence of the marriage. In times of conflict, husbands may be killed or would have migrated. The absence therefore of a husband can affect the continued use of the land by the woman. This has implications for her survival and that of her children. As African woman are basically agriculturalists, the inability to access a good acreage of arable land spells doom for a woman in a conflict situation.

Gold mining exploration provides 66% of all mining ventures. Many mining activities take place on indigenous land thus preventing communities to practice their agriculture. Women contribute 65-80% of agriculture to the development of Ghana and the sub-region generally. As mining activities leave large hectares of farmlands inaccessible for agricultural purposes, women's meagre livelihoods are lost. With the loss of farmlands due to mining activities, famine, mal-nutrition, health problems and poverty are exacerbated. That there is a strong correlation between high levels of poverty and poor agricultural practices and outputs in Africa is undisputable. In Africa, poor agricultural practices, poor lands and

inaccessibility of women to land, has affected output in agriculture as compared to Europe where there is only 2.5% of farmers who are able to export food to Africa.

FOOD DUMPING

1) Economic implications for women

Poor agricultural practices and inaccessibility of women to engage meaningfully in agriculture, this has led to food shortage in Africa. Due to famine and food shortages in most African countries, especially in the sub-region West African governments have had no choice but to either accept food aid or borrow money to buy food. Local staple foods are produced at a much higher cost than imported Chinese, Thai or American rice. The desire of many West Africans for western imported food is higher now than ever. The proliferation of Fast Food Chains in Accra today is a testimony to this phenomenon. The newly acquired taste to patronize more of the western types of food such as rice and imported chicken and meats has a negative effect on the Ghanaian economy.

Women are also faced with a reduction in “chop money” where it exists at all. Where women have been the sole-bread winners, their purchasing power to feed their families adequately has been affected negatively as they have become widows or have itinerant husbands who are never around to help with child maintenance.

2) Food Security

Due to environmental, especially deforestation as a result of mining activities, most lands are no more arable. This has necessitated more scientific approaches to improving yields. Crop genetic diversity is important for food security. If a disease sweeps through the rice population worldwide, locally bred traditional varieties that are currently abundant can be relied upon to provide varieties that are resistant to the disease. However, if GM rice is introduced, it is likely to cross-breed with local varieties causing the erosion and perhaps even extinction of local crops in the long-term. Other known contamination cases include the admittance by GM giant Syngenta in March this year that they mistakenly sold hundreds of tones of unapproved GM maize in the US and elsewhere over the past four years. Another GM contamination in the US in 2001 resulted in a US\$1 billion product recall amidst concerns of potential allergenic reactions after GM maize unapproved for human consumption entered the human food chains. This has a lot of implications for both food securities in Ghana and health concerns.

With the increase in petroleum prices including LP gas, more households have no choice than to resort to charcoal for cooking. Women are again faced with the challenges of cooking three meals a day for the family. The result is that with the cost of foodstuffs as well as LP gas women are more and more resorting to buying food from street vendors to feed their families. This also has health implications for the family, especially the children. In most part of the northern regions the scarcity of fuel wood due to deforestation has contributed to food security problems as the means to cook three times a day even if the foodstuff is available is an ordeal due to the cost of wood.

The use of tractors for industrialized farming is going to be more and more expensive for women whose incomes are limited. This will directly affect women's income as well as food security of the nation generally.

3) Unemployment

Food dumping consequently contributes to unemployment as women are pushed out of agricultural processing. In agriculture, women patronize poultry farming and the running of chop bars and restaurants as one of the industrialized agricultural activities. With the high increase in food dumping, most women have been pushed out of businesses. With food dumping, men have patronized the restaurant businesses in what is now known as **Fast Food**. The hitherto women dominated businesses such as cooking are thus hijacked by the men for economic gains.

Farmers are not able to increase their yields due to land degradation through mining. Unemployment in rural communities has also necessitated the exodus of the youth into cities in search of non-existent jobs. The high rate of crime by street youth has been a menace for the urban populations in the sub-region. Resources are therefore deployed to fight crime instead of improving on development initiatives such as providing educational facilities and health needs for the population. Government is constantly faced with the low morale of public servants as they take to the streets to press home their demands for better service conditions.

4) Health implications for women

Food dumping also has a lot of health implications as most of these imported grains have been chemically stored for years and thus could have health implications on the African consumer. The Greenpeace (an environmentally conscious organization) has revealed that although the Chinese government has not officially commercialized the production of GM rice, research by Greenpeace has revealed that there are stocks of GM rice sold among indigenous varieties of rice. It further warns that the GM rice tested positive for *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) a substance that causes allergies in humans. The effect of allergies on women could be more hazardous than that of men, especially during pregnancy, menstruation and menopause due to the biological complexities of women.

Professor Agyeman Badu Akossah, the Director General of Medical Services has emphasized over and over again the health hazards of imported turkey tail, which is sold in the Ghanaian market as meat. It is a fact that the Ghanaian local staple foods have more nutritional values than the decades old chemically stocked GM chicken and grains imported into the country. The safety of GM rice for human consumption is not also determined yet.

Given the high maternal mortality rate of women, one can easily link this to some health problems related to the kinds of food eaten by women during pregnancy. Due to the acquired western tastes by Ghanaians, children have also, automatically acquired these tastes which again do not have the required natural nutritional values that the local staple foods have. The implications are that we have either mal-nourished children or obsessed children due to the chemical composition of the imported grains consumed on daily basis in replace of the more expensive local foods.

5) Environmental degradation.

While the Forestry Commission is constantly worried and encouraging Ghanaians to protect the environment, more fuel wood has become the alternative for cooking due to the high price in LP gas. Again as women are the cooks for families, this has a lot of implications for them. Women have to travel long distances to fetch wood for fuel. The use of firewood as an alternative fuel is a major contributory factor to the degradation of the forest.

Although there is no readily available gender desegregated data on the percentage of women affected by conflicts, media reports and reports from various stakeholders who work in conflict situations portray women as the most vulnerable group during conflict.

The Role of ECOWAS Parliament

There is need for ECOWAS Parliament to be transparent and accessible to the citizens within their individual countries.

- ❖ **Is there a mechanism for ECOWAS parliamentarians to interact with the public on issues that affect the sub-region?**
- ❖ Any office for ECOWAS parliamentarians?
- ❖ How are issues discussed at the ECOWAS parliament? How do they identify the issues for discussions?
- ❖ How is feedback given to the various country citizens?

That the ECOWAS Parliament ensures that achieving equity in access to and control of land becomes an integral component of land administration in the sub-region. Land registration and titling processes promote joint registration of conjugal family farm lands to enhance women's land tenure security. Women participate equally with men in land administration at all levels.

That women's customary interest in land be reorganized, revalued and strengthened by 2006 to ensure that holders of such interests can use them in official transaction and be compensated for their loss.

That all relevant constitutional bodies and civil societies should work to improve their culture of peace as a key condition for promoting human security and social justice

ECOWAS parliament must minimize conflict through the judicious and equitable allocation of resources to regions and districts (Affirmative action on pro-poor policies)

That ECOWAS Parliament must prevent conflict and where there is conflict to protect citizens especially women and children

That ECOWAS Parliament must take steps to resolve internal conflicts within the shortest possible time. In resolving conflicts ECOWAS parliament should show moral courage in addressing the injustices underlining many conflicts and not let considerations of political gains affect their decisions

That ECOWAS parliament reverse practices which have given control of national economic decision making to the international financial institutions and foreign governments and to ensure the full participation of citizens in economic policy making.

That ECOWAS parliament undertake a fundamental review of economic policies to promote the well-being of Security of women and men and ensure the reversal of past economic policy failures

That ECOWAS Parliament takes steps to reverse economic policies which discriminate against women and ensure their active involvement in decision-making at all levels.

That the ECOWAS parliament implement the provision in the Beijing Platform for action which relate to valuing and accounting for unpaid work in order to ensure that the disadvantages women suffer because they are disproportionately involved in an unpaid labor are removed. That ECOWAS parliament promotes the economic rights of women by providing them with opportunities to improve their livelihoods. Such opportunities which should specially target poverty should include access to the banking sector, land, technology and markets.

That the ECOWAS Parliament and relevant agencies work together to institute measures to protect women and children from trafficking and onerous child labor which interferes with their development. Girls in particular need protection from sexual abuse.

Conclusion: The response of West African governments to the serious challenges posed to the development of their economies and societies by transnational organized crime has been mostly limited to the updating of national legislations and legal frameworks in order to come into line with UN conventions and protocols. This approach has, however, yielded mixed results, with the overall enforcement of new laws being dependent on numerous and variable factors, some of which are well beyond the control of national administrations. Concrete and courageous cleaning-up efforts such as the anti-corruption campaign implemented by President Obasanjo's government in Nigeria should certainly produce dramatic results if sustained long enough to ignite a virtuous cycle. Similarly, the decision of giving due political and financial priority to security and transparency by countries such as Cape Verde is also an obvious positive and important signal to all countries of the region.

Most importantly, the international community as a whole has finally come to the conclusion that security, the rule of law, justice and transparency are indispensable elements (or preconditions in the case of post-conflict countries) for any sound and realistic development strategy. These factors are, indeed, the very roots of the 'social contract' between individuals and States, whereby the need to ensure security for all should be set within a context where an agreed law regulates the interaction between individuals. In many Western African scenarios, the very essence of this contract is currently under discussion.

Thank You.