

# Transitional Justice Monitor

## Nigeria: still looking for reconciliation

With flawed elections, Nigeria needs national unity as badly as ever. The new government ought to begin by reviving recommendations made by Nigeria's original transitional justice commission.

### Inside this issue

#### Perspectives on Reconciliation

Nigeria	1
Coexistence and Transitional Justice	3
Gender in Transitional Justice	7

#### Case Studies

Ghana	5
Liberia	6

#### Country Updates

Cote d'Ivoire	9
Togo	9
Burkina Faso	10

#### Recent WANT-Justice Events

11

For optimists, Nigeria's April 2007 presidential election represented a historic democratic transition. The transfer of power from outgoing president Olusegun Obasanjo to winner Mohammed Yar'Adua appears to have been successful and it is notable as the first time in Nigeria that the office has been peacefully passed from civilian to civilian.

The election, however, was marred with immense fraud and sporadic violence—a distressing omen for the prospects of democracy, stability, and peace. Though the new government remains democratic, at least in name, there is widespread doubt in the country about the legitimacy of the government, let alone its ability to govern. Yar'Adua's administration needs to address the errors of the election to keep the country from fracturing further, but his government should also pursue deeper national reconciliation, beginning by implementing suggestions made in 2002 by the Oputa Commission which reviewed human rights violations in Nigeria's troubled past.

First, there is little denial, even within Obasanjo's administration, that the election was seriously flawed. Though the Nigerian election commissioner called the elections "free and fair" as a whole, Obasanjo himself admitted that there were problems and urged people to pursue their grievances in court, rather than through violence. This message is commendable, but the fact remains that underlying grievances are well founded.

Obasanjo's vice-president, Atiku Abubakar, was barred from running for the majority of the campaign season because of a questionable corruption charge—which he alleges stemmed from his falling out with Obasanjo. Worse, during the election itself, there were numerous reports of violence, intimidation, and

*The Transitional Justice Monitor is published by the West Africa Network for Transitional Justice (WANT-Justice) with critical support from Coexistence International (CI).*

#### *Editorial Team:*

*Matt Brown*

*Abigail Gyimah*

*Michael Wilkerson*

#### *Design & layout*

*Edem Selormey*

outright ballot stuffing. Yar'Adua, running as the candidate of Obasanjo's ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), eventually won with an overwhelming 70% of the votes, and there have been allegations of government complicity in rigging the elections. An editorial in *Vanguard*, a privately owned daily newspaper, declared "[e]ven a goat would have won the elections provided it had the backing of the PDP." Unsurprisingly, nearly all international observers were unwilling to endorse the contest and a

***"[e]ven a goat would have won the elections provided it had the backing of the PDP"***

number of foreign governments including the U.S. and E.U. expressed serious concerns.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the widely acknowledged problems in the election, Obasanjo and Yar'Adua have proposed focusing on establishing national unity rather than dwelling on the past, and this sentiment seems to be shared by members of the public. In the *Daily Champion*, a Lagos based newspaper, Godfrey Ugbaja, a Lagos accountant, castigates the government's electoral failures and cheating by candidates, but pleads with leaders to focus on the good of the country. Even if they gained office by questionable means, Ugbaja writes, elected leaders "should be humble enough to extend hands of fellowship to their opponents and entrench deliberate policies that will benefit the people."<sup>3</sup> On June 26, 2007, Yar'Adua announced his plans to meet with opposition parties to discuss how to form a unity government. In addition, the PDP national chairman, Ahmadu Ali, announced that the party was organizing a national reconciliation committee to be chaired by former vice-president Alex Ekwueme.<sup>4</sup>

Political cooperation is an important step, but to deal with reconciliation more than superficially, Yar'Adua should reconsider a transitional justice mechanism both created and abandoned by his predecessor. In 1999, Obasanjo established, by presidential decree, a Human Rights Violations Investigations Commission led by Justice Chukwu-difu Oputa to consider atrocities committed from 1966 to 1999. After three years of investigation, which included hearing testimony from victims and facilitating mediation between some hostile groups, the Oputa commission presented a report to Obasanjo with recommendations including compensation for

victims and the prohibition of former dictators from holding future public office. However, not only did President Obasanjo never officially release the report to the public (it was eventually published by an NGO), none of the recommendations were implemented.<sup>5</sup> Former military leaders like Ibrahim Babaginda even successfully challenged the Oputa Commission in court, denying its power to force them to testify or ban them from public office. With tensions lingering after the election, reconciliation is a necessary topic. Facing conflicts over religious law, oil and corruption, Yar'Adua will have no easy task uniting Nigeria, but using the Oputa report's recommendations to provide at least a symbolic measure of justice for past crimes is a worthwhile goal. With measures of transitional justice actively pursued and implemented alongside serious democratic reforms in the country, Nigeria could make a decent inroad toward national reconciliation and better democracy.

***Michael Wilkerson, a student at Stanford University, is an intern at CDD-Ghana***

1 Reported in Agence France-Presse "Nigeria's president-elect pleads for peace" April 24, 2007

2 "Huge win for Nigeria's Yar'Adua" BBC News, April

23, 2007. For more details see "Nigeria: Failed Elections,

Failed State?" *International Crisis Group Africa Report No. 126*, May 30 2006. Available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4876>

33 Godfrey Ugbaja "Time for Reconciliation" *Daily*

*Champion* (Lagos) June 27, 2007

4 Simon Imobo Tswam, "Yar'Adua Meets Opposition

Parties" *Daily Champion* (Lagos) June 26, 2007

5 Priscilla B. Hayner, "Truth Commissions: A Schematic

Overview" *International Review of the Red Cross* Volume

88 Number 862 June 2006

# Coexistence and Transitional Justice

## Why a complementary approach is important to sustainable peace

The word “coexistence” is defined as peaceful and positive relationships between groups that are different from one another; relationships which are most evident when different ethnic, racial, religious, and social groups feel safe, equal, at home, and respected in the communities and countries where they reside. As we examine pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict situations around the globe it is clear that for relationships between different groups to be positive and sustainable we need to move beyond the notion of mere tolerance, to a definition of coexistence that incorporates equality, diversity, and interdependence.

Relations between groups in numerous contexts—those that are more and less challenging—can be understood and analyzed through the lens of coexistence:

- In Ghana, where there are over 51 ethnic groups and an equal number of languages, peaceful and positive relationships among groups have been sustainable over a number of years, with the exception of a localized conflict in the north.
- In Rwanda, genocide, perpetrated mainly by one ethnic group on the other, demonstrated an immeasurable breakdown in coexistence, with horrific consequences.
- In Sri Lanka, for over 25 years there has been violent conflict between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils. The country’s Tamil-speaking Muslims, perceived as a separate group, have also been impacted by the violence.
- In Israel, where Jewish and Arab/Palestinian Israeli citizens lived for years without overt violence, a recent clear demand by Arab Israelis for more equal rights as citizens within the country has forced on to the discussion table a fuller definition of coexistence with equality.
- In Northern Ireland, it took nearly 30 years of strong coexistence policies on equality and diversity issues, including integrated education and Equality and Good Relations legislation, to ensure a sustainable peace agreement among the political parties.

A complementary approach relates coexistence goals and methods to those of related fields, such as human rights, development, humanitarian assistance, and transitional justice. This is most effective in building peaceful, just, and sustainable societies. Resolving conflicts and achieving sustainable coexistence in divided societies requires integrated, complementary efforts across relevant fields and between levels, i.e. grassroots to structural and local to international. The causes of conflict are many, and the responses should be strategic and multi-pronged. Working across various disciplines such as governance, human rights, gender, and development—many of which have an explicit focus on *justice* and share a similar world vision—allows the many facets of a conflict to be addressed. It therefore makes sense to encourage learning and cooperation between these areas of work. Without such cooperation between disciplines, key players often work in isolation from one another, which can lead to missed opportunities or unsustainable outcomes.

Countries transitioning from conflict situations to peace have a particular challenge: healing wounds and divisions caused by civil war or ethnic conflict in a way that is sustainable over the long-term. After what are sometimes decades of inter-group violence, how can these countries overcome deep-seated resentment in order to rebuild socially, politically, economically, and psychologically? This challenging task requires a variety of inter-connected and simultaneously operating processes, all of which must take into account the differences and divisions among the

populations that they are trying to heal. Restoring unity in a country takes more than just truth-telling or prosecutions; sustainable reconciliation is only possible if there is institutional and grassroots reform to promote understanding, respect, and a sense of shared purpose among different groups. Applying a coexistence lens to transitional justice processes can be done in a variety of ways:

- Consulting stakeholders from all groups in the design and implementation of judicial and non-judicial initiatives, so that no voices are marginalized and structural violence is discontinued
- Promoting reconciliation and social reconstruction within local communities through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts that pay special attention to, and address, potential points of future inter-group tension
- Implementing strong coexistence policies addressing minority and equality issues as a long-term guard against the resumption of hostilities
- Paying special attention to female victims in order to stem gendered patterns of abuse
- Considering the rituals and sensibilities of local cultures when designing transitional justice processes

As several countries in West Africa have recently emerged from or begun transitional justice processes, it is the ideal region in which to explore how processes of reparation, trials, reconciliation, and other transitional justice mechanisms can strengthen inter-group relations. With this in mind, the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, with support from Coexistence International, has embarked on a project which examines recent transitional justice processes in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, as well as ones currently taking place or being initiated in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Togo, and Guinea. Through capacity-building workshops and exchange visits between experts in the different countries, CDD hopes to strengthen transitional justice processes in the region and apply lessons learned from recently completed processes. The project has the long-term goal of encouraging the adoption of a coexistence lens in transitional justice efforts, which is essential to long-term peace and stability among different groups.

*Jessica Berns is Program Manager and Kristin Williams is Program Coordinator, Coexistence International at Brandeis University.*

*This paper contains excerpts from CI's paper "Complementary Approaches to Coexistence Work: What is Coexistence and Why a Complementary Approach?" available online at*

*[www.coexistence.net/pubs/publications.html](http://www.coexistence.net/pubs/publications.html)*

*Other papers available on the website include:*

- *Focus on Coexistence and the Arts*
- *Focus on Coexistence and Democracy-building*
- *Focus on Coexistence and Natural Resources*
- *Focus on Coexistence and Security*
- *Country Studies examining coexistence and diversity policies in: Czech Republic, Ecuador, Latvia, Mauritius, and Poland*

# Case Studies

## A look into transitional justice experiences and challenges in West Africa

### Ghana

Shortly after his election into office in 2000, President John Agyekum Kufuor outlined his intention to establish a national reconciliation strategy to address past human rights abuses. Parliament passed the National Reconciliation Commission Act (Act 611) in December 2001, and received the Presidential Assent in 2002.

The Act established the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) that was given the mandate to investigate allegations of human rights abuses between 6 March 1957 and 6 January 1993. The 1992 Constitution indemnifies all military personnel from judicial scrutiny, and since the country had been under military rule at certain points during the period of investigation, it would be impossible to prosecute all alleged human rights abusers. Instead, the NRC adopted a restorative approach to address the human rights. A restorative approach brings together everyone affected by the past abuses (both victims and perpetrators) to establish the truth and to find ways to achieve a peaceful resolution to assure future coexistence. The restorative system focuses on strengthening institutions and community relationships to prevent past events reoccurring instead of solely focusing on select individuals. Indeed, the Government was keen to adopt a ‘victim-centered’ approach, which would give a voice to the victims, and also provide redress as well as making recommendations for institutional reform. The ultimate aim of the initiative was not to secure the prosecution of individuals, but instead to support the broader national reconciliation process.

*the absence of a legal institution...does not necessarily mean that redress for the victims cannot be achieved by other methods*

The success or failure of the NRC is still a contentious matter, debate will continue to ask whether the removal of the “justice” element of the transitional justice process in order to focus on “reconciliation” was appropriate. This is particularly pertinent in light of Ghana’s obligations under international law; however the absence of a legal institution, namely a court or a tribunal, does not necessarily mean that redress for the victims cannot be achieved by other methods. For example, an admission of past wrongs alongside remorse may be viewed by some victims as sufficient compensation. To determine whether the process was effective, it is most important to consider the views of the victims to ascertain whether the chosen mechanism was successfully selected and applied.

It was with this in mind that the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) conducted a series of surveys beginning in April 2005 and finishing in April 2006 to obtain the opinions of the victims of human rights violations. The study was broad and examined a wide range of aspects of the NRC. The survey gathered the victims’ accounts of the NRC as well as evaluated the role of the media in the NRC process.

In the second survey, 61% of respondents agreed or “strongly agreed” that the “NRC gave justice to victims even though it did not recommend prosecution of the abuser(s),” which agrees with the first survey in which 60% of respondents felt that justice had been served. This seems to support the view that restorative justice had the support of a significant proportion of victims. A retributive approach was preferred by about 20% of the victims, who recommended that the NRC be vested with the power to prosecute. Yet the results suggest that for the majority of the victims the wider goals of national reconciliation and truth telling were more important than retribution.

## Liberia

Decades of class antagonism between various Liberian groups and structural violence orchestrated by minority political elite were largely responsible for the fourteen years of civil war in Liberia. The resulting culture of impunity dissatisfied some Liberians, who staged the famous Rice Riot of April 14, 1979, to publicly protest the increase in the price of rice. This protest contributed to the violent coup d'état of April 12, 1980 which ousted President William R. Tolbert and replaced the century-long political hegemony of the True Whig Party.

Internally, the nation has suffered the decimation of its economy. As a result, a huge refugee population has been created and many youth have been transformed into guerilla fighters for rebel movements. Also, private and state infrastructures have been destroyed and over two hundred thousand people, largely civilians, have been killed.

As a post-conflict society attempting to escape an impunity culture and debilitating effects of war, Liberia is a prime candidate for transitional justice efforts. Because of links of the Liberian

*a huge refugee population has been...transformed into guerilla fighters for rebel movements*

conflict to others within the Mano River Basin and the West African sub-region, it is necessary to adopt an integrated approach to coexistence and reconciliation that considers cross-border factors and the implications those

factors have for sustainable peace in Liberia and West Africa.

In August 2003, the last Liberian peace accord provided for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This commission was designed to “provide a forum that will address issues of impunity, as well as an opportunity for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences in order to get a clear picture of the past to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation” (Article XIII). A constitutive act was passed that created the TRC and mandated it to “[i]nvestigate gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as abuses that occurred, including massacres, sexual violations, murder, extra-judicial killing and economic crimes, such as the exploitation of natural or public resources to perpetuate armed conflicts, during the period January 1979 to October 14, 2003.” The TRC begun its mammoth task in February of 2006 and it is vital to support the efforts of the commission in order to reconcile a deeply divided society.

There are also other issues of Liberia's transition that are equally critical and that need local and international support: unjust and discriminatory laws are now being repealed and the legal system is being strengthened to dispense justice equitably. The reform of state security apparatuses, including the police and the military, began in earnest with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2003, which is still ongoing. Serious Security Sector reforms within the police and the Armed Forces of Liberia are currently underway and are spearheaded by the Governance Reform Commission with the participation of civil society organizations. The progress has been laudable and should serve as an exemplar of successful transitional justice to similar ongoing projects in West Africa. It is however worthy of note that the issue of building intergroup relationship has received very little attention, even though it is crucial to any efforts of reconciling the nation. CDD is organizing a capacity building workshop in Liberia in February 2008 to bring to the fore the importance of looking at transitional justice with a coexistence lens.

*Abdul Wahab Musah is a program officer at CDD-Ghana*

# Gender in Transitional Justice

## In Ghana and elsewhere, more female input is needed in transitional justice processes

While truth and reconciliation commissions have been deployed extensively and with some success, particularly in African states, incorporating issues of gender remains a common deficiency. Examining Ghana's reconciliation process from 2003-2004 helps show this deficiency, and also shows why better consideration of the gender factor is crucial for making transitional justice and its accompanying democratization more effective.

The absence of engendered transitional justice mechanisms is deep-rooted. It should be noted first that most transitional justice mechanisms are utilized in countries that are undergoing or have undergone violent and protracted conflicts, and that part of the problem stems from the fact that many of these countries had low levels of respect for women's rights to begin with. Second, truth and reconciliation processes are often a result of negotiations and compromises between conflicting groups, and unless gender issues are a high priority for one side or another, they may not receive proper attention in creating the TRC mechanism.

Historically, both fighting and negotiation tend to be mostly if not overwhelmingly male dominated affairs. Thus in the end, matters relating to gender such as social and economic violations or discriminations and, in particular, sexual abuse are treated as a lesser consideration in an overall TRC agenda of promoting forgiveness, political peace and economic stability.

On assumption of office in 2000 the Kufuor administration identified national reconciliation as one of its primary political objectives, and accordingly, established a National Reconciliation Commission by an Act of Parliament. On January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003, the nine-

member National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) was inaugurated and, by dealing with past human rights abuses, sought to initiate a process of national healing that would help build a united, secure and peaceful Ghana. It was the first state effort to provide Ghanaians the opportunity to publicly share their experiences of abuse, uncover the truth about the past and seek redress. The Commission was mandated to investigate and compile a record of human rights violations and abuses which occurred between 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957 and 6<sup>th</sup>

*The abuses documented included among others killings, sexual abuse, torture, unlawful detentions [and] disappearances...*

January 1993. Notably, the Commission was not a court of law but essentially a fact-finding

body. In all, the Commission received over 4240 petitions across the country and from persons living in the Diaspora, out of which about 1866 witnesses were heard from January 14, 2003 to July 14, 2004. The abuses documented included, among others, killings, sexual abuse, torture, unlawful detentions, illegal seizure of property, disappearances and interference with right to work. The NRC reports showed that overall both men and women suffered many types of abuse during the period under review. Political abuses recorded included detentions, abductions, imprisonment and extra-judicial killings and these in general affected men far more than women. Economically men and women were abused through confiscation of assets and loss of jobs perpetrated through arbitrary government decisions, such as the destructions of stalls, kiosks and the fateful destruction of the 'Makola No. 1' market as well as selling of goods at 'controlled prices'. Social abuses were connected to the economic and political. When men and women were abducted, imprisoned, or had their assets confiscated the humiliation of sudden impoverishment or the stigma of being on the wrong side of the ruling regime could be socially devastating. Across the board, the picture painted by the report was that abuses and violations were of a general kind and less gender based. But in reality, certain violations were gender-based such as the flogging of

women in public and arresting and prosecuting traders (who were mainly women) for selling above the ‘controlled price’.

The Commission ended its work by proposing some reparatory awards – both monetary and non monetary – and institutional reforms. The awards targeted specific violations while the institutional proposals were intended to reform state structures implicated in some of the abuses. Interestingly, while monetary compensations were in both dollars and cedis, no woman victim received compensation in dollars. The nonmonetary reparations came among others in the forms of property restoration, medical care and provision of health aids for some victims, but there was little thought given to repairing the bodily harm or emotional distress of the loved ones of these victims—predominantly women. It should not be forgotten that despite the myriad of petitions that were received and cases that were heard, there still remain quite a large number of people who did not or could not have the chance to engage the Commission, and with the societal constraints already mentioned, there is reason to believe that a significant number of these unreported accounts of abuse belong to women.

For example, there was little consideration of women who were raped or sexually abused on the mere basis that their husbands or fathers were being charged with political or economic crimes. This can be attributable to many limitations. From the onset,

*it is important to question how effective any transitional justice mechanism can be if women... are not properly represented*

the issue of gender-based violence and how it could be dealt with was not factored into all the deliberations leading to the initiation of the NRC process. Since gender interests and gender motivated abuses were not clearly stipulated in the goals of the process, the Commission subsequently did not isolate but rather subsumed gender-based violence and abuses under the broader category of human rights violations they were to investigate. By appointing three women out of the nine members of the Commission, and women of high caliber in society for that matter, it was

hoped that the Commission would be gender conscious if not sensitive in dealing with the petitions it investigated. But as mentioned this was not particularly effective. Though the positive outcomes of the NRC process should be lauded, it is important to question how effective any transitional justice mechanism can be for justice or democracy if women or any other important group are not properly represented.

The Commission did its part in fulfilling its mandate of investigating past human rights violations and abuses and making actionable recommendations to this effect. But ensuring the well being and dignity of all the victims remains a major challenge. Women bear deep scars from their past experiences and given the obvious gender-neutral nature of the Commission’s work, focusing more on women in the implementation stage of the process would be crucial. There is a general need for recognition and acknowledgment of the abuses women suffered in the whole justice and reconciliation process. The recommendations of the Commission create a good opportunity for government and the country as a whole to address the gender aspect of the reconciliation process. Reconciliation did not end with the termination of the Commission’s mandate. The commencement of paying reparations to victims in the last quarter of 2006 by government is just the first step towards restitution. The government must thus go on to implement the whole recommendation package contained in the Commission’s report which included inter alia reparations and institutional reforms. As a number of scholars have pointed out, an effective and more gender-sensitive approach of implementation of TRC measures is important as a step toward complete reconciliation.

CDD-Ghana, in collaboration with Coexistence International, hosted a workshop on “Gender, Justice and Reconciliation” in June 2007. More information about this can be found on page 11.

*Abigail Gyimah is a program officer at CDD*

# Country Updates

## A brief examination of ongoing transitional justice processes

### **Côte d'Ivoire**

Côte d'Ivoire has been experiencing a political and military crisis since September of 2002, which was precipitated by an armed rebellion which currently occupies the northern half of the country. The civil war has caused a humanitarian catastrophe: there are now approximately 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Côte d'Ivoire and twenty thousand refugees in neighboring countries. Schools and medical facilities across the country have closed or have severely limited services. Child soldiers are increasingly common, as is violence against women. Confidence in the political system and the country's leaders has collapsed, which is hurting the possibility for political dialogue.

There are numerous challenges to peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire. Most urgent is the pressing need to disarm former combatants and reintegrate them into Ivorian society. Integration of refugees and IDPs is related to this effort and also crucial. In the long term a national identification system must be put in place to firmly establish citizenship, since disputes over the voting rights of the millions of immigrants and their descendants has caused much of the recent strife. A national identification system is needed once the criteria for citizenship are established.

Ultimately, to transition to peace, a peace and reconciliation commission must be established to uncover the truth about Côte d'Ivoire's bloody history and find a stable resolution.

### **Togo**

In 2004, the European Union began the process of reestablishing a development partnership with Togo and Prime Minister Koffi Sama negotiated twenty-two commitments that, if met, would result in normalized relations with the E.U. The death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema and subsequent contested elections created a period of uncertainty that threatened to derail the process of democratization and the resumption of constructive relations with the E.U.

To alleviate the growing crisis President Faure Gnassingbe initiated political dialogue with the opposition in April of 2006—one of the commitments outlined in the agreement reached with the E.U. in 2004. The meeting involved several stakeholders including nine political parties and two civil society organizations. All parties signed the resulting agreement, the Accord Politique Global, in August of 2006. The agreement calls for:

1. Formation of a union government to apply the decisions reached in the dialogue.
2. Establishment of a committee to oversee the application of the accord.
3. A permanent framework where dialogue about question of national interest can take place.
4. Organization of legislative elections to select a new parliament to continue the constitutional reforms.

Talks continue between opposition and the government as legislative elections approach in summer 2007.

## Burkina Faso

The events of December 2006, which saw the bloody confrontation of soldiers and police officers in Ouagadougou, undermined public confidence in the security forces especially in the historical context of countless regimes, heads of state, and constitutions.

There are countless social, political, economic, and ethical factors causing the current unrest in Burkina Faso. These include an absence of social justice, serial human-rights violations, absent or dysfunctional democratic institutions, poverty, and regional and ethnic conflict that have been left unresolved. In order to achieve any measure of peace or justice the following changes must take place:

1. The democratic process must be strengthened. A weak political opposition and dire lack of governmental transparency seriously undermines democracy in Burkina Faso. Coexistence cannot occur without stronger protection of human rights and political freedom.
2. The fundamental necessities of life must be satisfied. Endemic poverty is seriously undermining peace efforts. Though poverty is especially problematic, urban poverty doubled from 1994 to 2003. A dire lack of drinking water, healthcare, education, and food safety also persists.
3. Proactive crisis prevention must be instituted. Enduring peace in Burkina can only occur if crisis prevention frameworks are put in place to diffuse conflicts early. So far, efforts at building peace in Burkina Faso have been myopic and other states have not met their conflict-prevention obligations under the United Nations. New structures of crisis prevention and conflict resolution are vital for the protection of human rights.
4. The unfinished national reconciliation process should continue. The reconciliation process, which resulted from the assassination of journalist Robert Zongo, was superficial and many of its stated missions were not accomplished. Reconciliation must continue but without blanket amnesty for perpetrators and with a more defined mission.
5. Future plans for peace in Burkina Faso must recognize the need for instituted pluralism in contemporary societies. Previous attempts failed primarily because they presupposed the need for homogeneity. This paradigm is incompatible with sustainable coexistence. Burkinabés need to adopt a more flexible definition of citizenship to achieve peace.

These goals are beset by many challenges especially regional, religious, and ethnic strife; however, shared culture and a youthful population provides Burkinabés with many opportunities to overcome these challenges and ensure a future of peace and coexistence.

*Dispatches from Jean Djomar Kouassi (Côte d'Ivoire), Kokou Folly Hetchelli (Togo), and Antone Saron (Burkina Faso).*

# Recent WANT-Justice events

## Exchange Visits

Coordinated by CDD-Ghana and sponsored by Coexistence International under the WANT-Justice project, participants from West African governments, NGOs and academia gathered for exchange visits to discuss transitional justice issues and also sought to understand the particular elements of reconciliation and rebuilding relations in societies. Participants updated one another on recent events pertinent to transitional justice and coexistence issues and discussed common experiences in their respective countries.

- The first exchange visit for participants from Anglophone West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia) was held in Monrovia, Liberia from March 4-7, 2007. The exchange included a visit to ongoing transitional justice proceedings in Liberia.
- The exchange visit for Francophone West Africa (Burkina Faso, Togo and Cote d' Ivoire) took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from May 28-29, 2007. Participants visited a monument for victims of human rights abuses which is a symbol of Burkina Faso's "National Forgiveness Day."

## Gender Workshop

A capacity-building workshop for WANT-Justice members and other transitional justice activists was held in Accra, Ghana on June 7, 2007 with the theme of *Gender, Justice and Reconciliation*. It was chaired by Professor Ken Attafuah, former Executive Secretary of Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission. This was the first workshop of the CI-CDD joint project on "Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding in West Africa."

Approximately 60 individuals representing a range of Ghanaian NGOs, media outlets, universities, churches, and government attended the workshop. The gathering was one of the first times that members of Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) analyzed that process in public – with both the panel chairperson and one of the presenters being former commissioners of the NRC. Resource persons at the CDD-CI workshop reflected on the recent transitional justice process in Ghana and examined the process specifically through the lens of gender.

---

## The Transitional Justice Monitor

is the periodic newsletter for the West African Network for Transitional Justice, an alliance of organizations devoted to promoting transitional justice and democracy. This Newsletter seeks to deepen knowledge about transitional justice processes and provide updates and insights into related issues and specifically to examine transitional justice through a coexistence lens. It is published in English by WANT Justice Network with support from Coexistence International (CI) at Brandeis University.

## The WANT Justice Network

Currently housed at The Ghana Center for Democratic Development, WANT Justice Network was formed by fellows (from Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria) of the New York based International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), and the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation, Cape Town. WANT Justice is part of the ICTJ African NGOs Affinity Group (ANGO) and linked to the African Transitional Justice Research Network and the Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (South Africa). The Network seeks to extend and deepen civil society engagements with transitional justice processes, promote dialogue and share lessons as well as networking within the West-Africa sub-region. It aims to enhance the prospects and efficacy of transitional justice mechanisms for the consolidation of democracy in the West African sub-region through strengthening local actors – individuals and organizations.

## Coexistence International

at Brandeis University, CI aims to strengthen the efforts of policy makers, researchers, civil society leaders to promote coexistence. It envisions a world where diversity is embraced for its positive potential, respect for persons is a core value, interdependence between different groups is recognized, equality is actively pursued, and the use of weapons to address conflicts is increasingly obsolete. (Web: [www.coexistence.net](http://www.coexistence.net); email: [coexistenceintl@brandeis.edu](mailto:coexistenceintl@brandeis.edu))

## The Ghana Center for Democratic Development

The center is an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit organization based in Accra. It is dedicated to the promotion of society and government based on the rule of law, appropriate checks on the power of the state and integrity in public administration.

For more information, please contact  
Ghana Center for Democratic Development  
95 Nortei Ababio Loop  
North Airport Residential Area  
P.O. Box LG 404  
Legon, Ghana.

To submit articles or reflections for the next issue of the *Transitional Justice Monitor* please send submissions to CDD care of Abigail Gyimah.  
[abigail@cddghana.org](mailto:abigail@cddghana.org)

[www.cddghana.org](http://www.cddghana.org) email: [info@cddghana.org](mailto:info@cddghana.org)

---