Helpdesk Research Report: Conflict dynamics in West Africa

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Query: Summarise current analyses of conflict dynamics in West Africa. Consider the drivers, actors and trends, as well as the data sources used/available to measure these conflict dynamics in the region.

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Contents

1. Overview
2. Conflict dynamics: drivers and actors
3. Trends and emerging challenges
4. Data for measuring key indicators
5. Sources

1. Overview

Of the 16 countries that make up the West African sub-region\(^1\), four have had large scale civil conflict and at least seven have experienced significant low-scale conflicts within the last 25 years. These conflicts were a consequence of multiple interrelated factors, including:

- political system failures
- social exclusion
- persistent poverty and low levels of economic development
- poor natural resource management
- regional dimensions and spill-over effects from neighbouring countries’ conflicts.

Although large-scale intra-state conflicts have declined, often through the efforts of external actors such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the region remains unstable. Factors listed above are interacting with new challenges, making conflict and security a continued, pressing issue for West African countries. Some of these new challenges include:

\(^1\) The West African sub-region is usually synonymous with its regional body, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). However, the body is made up of 15 members, as Mauritania withdrew in 2000.
the impact and legacy of previous conflicts
global trends and cross-border issues, including organised crime
climate change and forced migration
religious radicalisation.

It is thus important to examine data available to monitor these conflict dynamics. While the need for data and early warning systems has been much documented, not much West Africa-specific data is generated, much less used, in analysing prevailing and potential conflict dynamics in the region. Efforts (mostly global) that do exist include:

- State Fragility Index 2010, Centre for Systemic Peace
- The Polity IV Project, Centre for Systemic Peace
- Failed States Index, The Fund for Peace
- Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) Fragile States Reports
- The Armed Conflict and Intervention (ACI) Project, Centre for Systemic Peace and the Center for Global Policy, George Mason University
- Minorities at Risk (MAR), Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland
- UNLocK Project (Liberia, Nigeria and Uganda), Fund for Peace
- Political Instability in Africa Report, Center for Systemic Peace
- ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN)
- Afrobarometer.

2. Conflict dynamics: drivers and actors

Of the 16 countries in West Africa, four have had large scale civil conflict\(^2\) in the past 25 years. At least seven have had smaller-scale, more localised unrest, creating situations of ‘no peace no war’ (Richards 2005). Table 1 below details these conflicts. Other countries, such as Guinea and Burkina Faso, have faced severe governance and security crises, and have been the source of fighters who have supported insurgencies in neighbouring countries; while others (e.g. Ghana and Senegal) have provided troops for regional peacekeeping missions. While it is impossible to adequately summarise the multiple complex drivers of these conflicts, the section below provides a brief overview of each of the main conflicts and goes on to summarise the main conflict dynamics common to conflicts in West Africa.

\(^2\) Large scale conflict is generally understood as forms of collective violence in which one of the parties involved is a government and which result in more than 1,000 battle-related deaths per year
Table 1: Conflict in West Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large Scale Conflict (central state incapacitated)</th>
<th>Localised Conflict and Violence Short of Civil War (Central state intact)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Mali (Tuareg and pastoral-agricultural conflicts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Niger (Tuareg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>Senegal (Casamance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
<td>Ghana (Northern)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nigeria (North and Niger Delta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mauritania</td>
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<td>Togo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sources: Luckham et al 2001; Draman 2003

2.1 Conflict zones

Diallo (2009) proposes that there are four main zones of conflict in West Africa: the Mano River Basin; the Casamance in Senegal; the Sahel, particularly northern Mali and Niger; and the Niger Delta (Diallo 2009). Each zone has experienced sustained conflict in its recent history.

Large-Scale Conflicts: The Mano River Basin

The Mano River sub-region, which comprises Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea (and Côte d’Ivoire, now politically associated with the region) has experienced mass violent conflict. This started with the Liberian civil war (1989-1996, 1999-2003), followed by the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002) and sectarian violence in Côte d’Ivoire in 2002. Guinea has also suffered significant political instability. In Liberia and Sierra Leone particularly, the conflicts were sparked by declining economic performance in the 1980s overseen by repressive, authoritarian regimes. This resulted in reductions in social spending and household income, the obliteration of the middle class, decline in healthcare delivery, growing numbers of school dropouts and drops in school enrolment. Youth were particularly affected (Ikelegbe, A. and Garuba 2011).

Low Scale Conflicts

i) Casamance Conflict in Senegal

Ironically the Casamance conflict is taking place in a West African country that is often noted as one of the most stable (Fall 2010). The uprising for self-determination in the Casamance region formally began in the provincial capital of Ziguinchor in 1982, the fallout of the Diola people’s (a minority ethnic group) grievances over political under-representation and economic under-development (Ikelegbe, A. and Garuba 2011).

ii) Conflicts in the Sahel

Conflict between Malian and Nigerian governments and Touareg rebels in the northern part of both countries, stems from their lack of integration in the nation state, due to their traditional nomadic and pastoralist life style (the Touaregs can also be found in Burkina Faso, Libya and Algeria). A combination of drought and economic crisis led to their emigration, especially to Libya where some joined the Libyan army. Declining prosperity in Libya led them to return home, many with considerable military experience. The combination of this and original grievances provoked rebellions in both countries (Institute for Security Studies 2009).
iii) Insurgency in the Nigeria's Delta Region

The Niger Delta region, Nigeria’s oil belt, is at the epicentre of numerous violent conflicts, the culmination of long years of neglect, underdevelopment and marginalisation of a region that earns Nigeria the majority of its foreign exchange. In the last few years, the nature of the problem has intensified, especially with the emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Since its inception, the organisation has presented the Nigerian government with its most serious security challenge in the Niger Delta (Alao 2011). Strategies include attacking oil installations and platforms with bombs and explosives, targeting state security forces, hostage-taking and ‘illegal oil bunkering’ (theft). Since 2006, militia activity has affected over 40 per cent of Nigeria’s oil production (Ikelegbe, A. and Garuba 2011).

2.2. Conflict drivers and actors

This section considers the dynamics of conflict, focusing on the main drivers and actors. While presented separately, it is important to note that it is impossible to separate out the effects of the factors listed below from one another.

Failures of the political systems

Jaye and Amadi (2011) assert that at the root of West African conflicts is a breakdown in governance systems and the absence of effective governance structures. These include weak democratic structures and endemic corruption. Patronage politics, in which the ruling elite dominate political and economic space, was a feature of most West African states up to the 1990s, and diverted countries’ incomes to networks of supporters (Olanisakin 2008). Regimes were often authoritarian (including military rule), characterised by centralised power, repression, ineffective leadership, exclusionary policies and the absence of avenues for dissent (N'Diaye 2011).

However, regime control of patronage and use of force eroded in the 1990s aggravated by declining foreign aid flows and structural adjustment programmes. Dwindling military expenditures, unpaid troops, budget cuts and stagnant economies resulted in deep crises of state legitimacy and created conditions for social unrest (Luckham et al 2001). This ‘opened up political and economic spaces for “political entrepreneurs” in which new armed groups could enter and compete for power and wealth’ (Luckham et al 2001: 12).

Persistent poverty and low levels of economic development

Many West African states are rooted at the bottom of the Human Development Index. Endemic poverty continues to ravage the sub-region’s population. Conflicts in West Africa have occurred against a backdrop of widespread poverty, deteriorating economies, and growing inequalities. In the 1990s, many West African states had the lowest percentage of populations with access to sanitation, safe water or health services, with Mali, Sierra Leone, and Liberia and Niger the worst off. In 2004, five of the 12 poorest performing countries in the world - dd – Benin, Guinea, Mali, Liberia, Niger – were from West Africa alone (N'Diaye 2011). For the same period, according to the World Bank, West African countries also had the highest proportions of their people living with only a dollar a day, for example, Mali (73 per cent), Sierra Leone (57 per cent), Burkina Faso (61 per cent) and The Gambia (59 per cent) (N'Diaye 2011). Poor progress on life expectancy, child mortality and youth employment indicators resulted in extremely constraining
conditions (N'Diaye 2011; Olanisakin 2008).

**Social exclusion and special inequality**
While lines of fracture, whether religious, ethnic, or regional, are not a source of conflict *per se*, they can very rapidly become the locus of conflict, intentionally or not (N'Diaye 2011). Across West Africa, there are various examples of grave inequalities among groups or regions, which have at times been central to conflict and political instability. This has variously manifested as rebellion to overthrow the central government (as in Liberia), secessionist movements (as in the Casamance) and the rise of violent ethno-nationalism (in the Niger Delta).

**The youth dimension**
Youth are frequently at the forefront of many of rebellions and secessionist movements as they often see themselves at the vanguard of the struggle for the emancipation of their respective interests. In West Africa, as in much of Africa, weak economic and political structures have had a negative impact on the material conditions of the youth and on their social and political culture. With limited choices and opportunities, including lack of access to good education, employment and functioning health systems, West African youth have had to subsist at the margins of the state (Olanisakin 2008; Atta-Asamoah and Aning 2011).

According to global statistics, countries where young adults comprise more than 40 per cent of the adult population are more than twice as likely to experience the outbreak of civil conflict as those with lower young adult population (Atta-Asamoah and Aning 2011). The accompanying frustrations and consequent resentment against those perceived to be enjoying the few available opportunities can lead to the emergence of ‘desperadoes’ resolved to survive by any means possible and wherever available (Atta-Asamoah and Aning 2011). In the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire, young people comprised about 95 per cent of fighting forces. However, this argument needs to be tempered by the examples of other countries, such as Ghana, which had similar characteristics but did not experience war, highlighting the importance of other underlying factors (Atta-Asamoah and Aning 2011).

**Failures of natural resource management**
West Africa is abundant in natural resources. The relationship between these resources and conflict is varied. They include disputes over land and water, stemming from historical disputes; changes in the balance of power; elite manipulation; youth reactions to vulnerability and exclusion; and alterations in boundary structures (Alao 2011). There have been particular problems relating to the management of commercial resources (such as rubber and timber in Liberia), where the interests of the majority of the population are not taken into consideration (Alao 2011). In other cases, for instance in Northern Ghana and Burkina Faso, the conflict has been between competing users, particularly in the context of environmental and demographical changes. Among the Tuareg, areas at the centre of conflicts are rich in gold, uranium, land and water (Institute for security Studies 2009). In Côte d'Ivoire, access to land and natural resources has been a factor in explaining the conflict, especially as it fuelled ethnic violence and underlined tensions between those who considered themselves as proper Ivorians and those regarded as foreigners (Alao 2011).
Similar conflicts have arisen over oil revenues, most noticeably in the Niger Delta, which is the largest oil producing region in Nigeria but the poorest because it has not benefited from the oil wealth derived from oil production, in a country that is the world’s eleventh largest oil exporter (Onigbinde 2008). In fact, the oil industry has been directly responsible for loss of livelihoods, resulting from environmental degradation associated with the industry. While Nigeria remains the country most affected, it must be noted that twelve ECOWAS countries lie on the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea, or have coastlines marked as potential exploration areas. They similarly need to be aware of the pitfalls in order to protect themselves from the damaging consequences that have befallen Nigeria (Rosenstein 2005).

Solid minerals have also played a role in conflict. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the failure of successive governments to develop the country, especially its diamond-producing provinces, was considered a contributory factor to the conflict. However, the role of diamonds, was more significant for prolonging the conflict, as parties on all sides benefited from illicit mining (Alao 2011), and also traded natural resources for weapons and even external mercenary assistance.

The regional dimension of conflict

Invariably, conflict in any state in West Africa affects and is affected by neighbouring states. This is due to the complexity and depth of the demographic, political, economic, and socio-cultural ties that exist between countries whose boundaries were arbitrarily drawn during the colonial period. Many of these countries share the same realities, in particular the internal dimensions of conflict discussed above, and are therefore under the same pressures. They are also susceptible to the contagion effects of events occurring across their borders (Jaye and Amadi 2011; Diallo 2009). A conflict in any country entails a high probability of rapidly spilling over into its immediate neighbours, as Liberia’s conflict did in Sierra Leone in 1991. Further, large scale refugee movements across borders present a challenge to countries already constrained by domestic priorities. Fighters and weapons also freely move between countries, as do resources harnessed for the prosecution of the conflict.

The military intervention of ECOWAS when Liberia’s conflict erupted in 1989 was the first time a regional economic body had intervened in such a manner in a civil conflict. ECOWAS recognised that the conflicts would have profound effects for its members, if only that the rebellions would be ‘catching’. A lasting legacy of the conflict has been the recognition that security issues are central to the regionalisation agenda. Four ECOWAS peacekeeping missions (with various degrees of success) were mounted in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d’Ivoire. Currently the regional apparatus provides for a West African Standby Force and a regional conflict early warning system, among other initiatives in its efforts to secure peace in the region.

Related to this is the international dimension of the larger conflicts, in terms of a variety of actors involved supporting the different sides (both rebels and government, including countries such as Libya, international mercenary groups and Diaspora groups). This also relates to the role of the international community, in brokering successive peace agreements, and supporting the consolidation of peace and post-conflict development. Actors have included the UN, which at one time had three of its largest peacekeeping missions in West Africa. In Sierra Leone, the UK played a decisive role in bringing the war to an end, and France has been variously involved in the Ivorian conflict.
Other demographic dynamics
This section would be incomplete without a mention of both the gender and child dimensions of conflict. In the Sierra Leone and Liberia wars particularly, much has been written about the wide-scale abuses committed against girls and women during the conflict. The abduction and forced conscription of women and children was also common and post-conflict reintegration programmes, in Liberia particularly, have been unique for addressing these issues. However, women have not only been victims but have been active change and peacemakers and civil society actors in the region. An example of this is the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET), which has played a large role in peacebuilding in the sub-region (Olanisakin 2008).

3. Trends and new challenges

Many West African countries still struggle with the demands of consolidating constitutional government and democracy, and strengthening institutional capacities. Rising food prices, land issues, security for oilfields and other mineral deposits, the demands of people living in those areas, the sharing of cross-border resources, and the consequences of climate change, are all potential sources of tension and conflict.

The impact and legacy of previous conflict
Studies indicate that globally, about half of all peace agreements collapse within five years, and that there is a 44 per cent chance that where peace has been achieved, conflict will reignite within ten years (Jaye and Amadi 2011). ‘In many instances, violence recurs either because the expectation of social, political and economic justice has not been fulfilled, or because peace processes emphasise the creation of structures far above the more intricate process of relationship building aimed at healing societies and reconciling people and groups previously locked in a bitter struggle’ (Jaye and Amadi 2011:18). Efforts are hampered by the circulation of small and light arms throughout the sub-region – 10 million arms are estimated to be in circulation (Diallo 2009). For West African countries with a prior history of conflict, the challenge in peacetime is to successfully redress those factors that contributed to the outbreak of conflict in the first place. Similarly, countries that have so far avoided war need to ensure that they address their own countries’ governance, economic, societal and structural shortcomings. As such, the need to improve on human security as a conflict mitigating strategy has become an important aim for West African governments (ECOWAS 2008).

Global trends and cross-border issues
As mentioned above, in West Africa, people and goods move freely between the countries’ porous borders. This makes the region highly susceptible to transnational trafficking networks which have sprung up in the region. Guns have already been mentioned, but drugs and human trafficking are becoming particularly problematic across the region, sometimes supported by the

3 Defined by ECOWAS (2008: 7) as ‘the creation of conditions to eliminate pervasive threats to people’s and individual rights, livelihoods, safety and life; the protection of human and democratic rights and the promotion of human development to ensure freedom from fear and freedom from want’.
individuals in the highest echelons of power (for instance in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau) (Olanisakin 2008). ECOWAS currently considers the illicit trafficking of such goods as one of the most significant security concerns for the sub-region.

A different aspect of the impact of global trends relates to the global economy and commodity markets, including events like the recent international food crisis. West Africa has recently seen its share of unrest over food prices. For instance, in Burkina Faso, which was badly affected by floods in 2007, violent protests occurred in 2008 after sacks of corn sold for twice their price a year earlier (IRIN News 2008). Food riots also took place in Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal, countries that depend heavily on imported wheat and rice, which were affected by high global commodity prices (IRIN News 2008).

**The impacts of climate change**

Most West African countries' economies rely on rain-fed agriculture (Heinrigs 2011). Significant minorities are pastoralists. Unanticipated environmental changes are altering historical land tenure arrangements between communities, resulting in some cases in encroachment, which has been violently resisted (Alao 2011). Increasing desertification is also contributing to increased migration, including across borders, further increasing tensions, for example, between Ghanaian populations and pastoralist Fulani herdsmen who have migrated from the Sahel in search of grazing land (Alao 2011). In the late 1980s, conflict between Mauritanian Fulani herders and Senegalese Soninke farmers ended in massacres, followed by waves of retaliation between the two groups in different parts of both countries (Heinrigs 2011). Although Heinrigs (2011:17) asserts that there is no ‘robust empirical evidence for a general relationship between climate change and security’ he concludes that in the face of worsening climatic conditions, livelihoods and food security concerns are likely to be drivers of conflict in this region.

**Religious radicalisation**

The arrest and prosecution of Nigerian national Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried to blow up a US-bound plane on Christmas Day in 2009 alerted the world to the real possibility of religious radicalisation in West Africa. Closer to home, Nigeria has faced an increasing threat from a radical Muslim sect called Boko Haram, which wants to implement a strict version of Sharia law. The sect has carried out killings and bombings, including a June car bombing of the national headquarters of Nigeria’s federal police that killed at least two people (The Guardian 2011). The group also claimed to be behind the bombing of the UN building in the capital, Abuja in August 2011, and the US claims that Boko Haram has ties with Al Qaeda (BBC 2011).

There are also frequent conflicts in Northern Nigeria and Jos (the Middle Belt’), ostensibly between different religious groups. Although religion may be only one factor in these conflicts in combination with other political and economic issues, it is, nevertheless, a major motivating and legitimising aspect of violence (ICG 2010).

4. **Data**

This section highlights sources of data that are available to measure key indicators of the conflict dynamics discussed above. However, there is little evidence that they are being used, and most
applications in this field appear to rely on qualitative studies rather than quantitative datasets (Luckham, email communication). These are considered valuable resources, however; for instance, Wulf and Debiel (2009: 6) cite the International Crisis Group’s (ICG) Crisis Watch as ‘probably the most reputed and frequent alert system based on qualitative investigative research and “NGO intelligence”’. Further, most of this data is collected internationally for most countries, rather than being West Africa-specific.

**Global Data**

**State Fragility Index 2010, Centre for Systemic Peace**
This index combines scores measuring two essential qualities of state performance – effectiveness and legitimacy – in four areas: security; governance; economy, and social development. These are combined with indicators for armed conflict; regime type; net oil production or consumption; and regional effects, to arrive at a measure of state fragility (ranging from 0 to 23, where 0 is the lowest fragility, and 23 the highest fragility). Out of 20 most fragile countries in 2010, eight are West African.

**Failed States Index, The Fund for Peace**
http://www.fundforpeace.org/global/?q=fsi
This tool highlights not only the normal pressures that all states experience, but also identifies when those pressures are pushing a state towards the brink of failure. By highlighting pertinent issues in weak and failing states, The Failed States Index – and the social science framework and software application upon which it is built – makes political risk assessment and early warning of conflict accessible to policy-makers and the public at large. The most recent index is the Failed States Index 2011, which provides country profiles, in-depth national, regional and provincial-level analysis and conducts customised assessments: http://www.fundforpeace.org/global/library/cr-11-14-fs-failedstatesindex2011-1106q.pdf

**Minorities at Risk (MAR), Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland**
http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/about.asp
MAR tracks 283 politically-active ethnic groups throughout the world from 1945 to the present -- identifying where they are, what they do, and what happens to them. It focuses specifically on ethno-political groups: non-state communal groups that have ‘political significance’ (i.e. the group collectively suffers/benefits from discriminatory treatment; and the group is a basis for political mobilisation and collective action in defence or promotion of self-defined interests) in the contemporary world because of their status and political actions. Its database provides information on the Ijaw of the Niger Delta and the Diolas in Casamance in Senegal under its discrimination category and repression categories.

**Polity IV Project, Centre for Systemic Peace**
http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity06.htm#ssa
The Polity IV dataset covers all major independent states over the period 1800-2010. It constantly monitors regime changes, and provides annual assessments of regime authority characteristics and regime changes. According to its site, 'it is also the most closely scrutinized data series on
political issues as analysts and experts in academia, policy, and the intelligence community regularly examine and often challenge Polity codings’. The country reports summarise index scores and years of duration for the current regime and tracks the country’s annual Polity scores from 1946 to present, denoting vertical thresholds for Democracy and Autocracy. They also include a trend graph, which includes information on special Polity conditions, including periods of factionalism, interregnum, transition and special Polity change events (including autocratic backsliding, executive auto-coups, revolutionary change, state failure, and coup d’état). The reports also analyse the extent of fragmentation, summarise the nature of political institutions that comprise the branches of government, and provide a narrative referring to Executive Recruitment, Executive Constraints, and Political Competition.

Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) Fragile States Reports, Carleton University
http://www.carleton.ca/cifp/app/ffs_data_methodology.php
CIFP event monitoring observes and reports on events within a country to better understand the dynamic trends affecting the country. CIFP Fragile States reports are based on three analytical elements. First, structural indicators are grouped into six clusters capturing different facets of state fragility and robustness: Governance, Economics, Security and Crime, Human Development, Demography, and Environment. Documents include up to 75 separate structural indicators providing a detailed quantitative structural assessment of the country. The CIFP Fragility Index is based on the idea that a state needs to exhibit three fundamental properties: Authority, Legitimacy, and Capacity. Authority refers to the ability of the state to enact binding legislation over its population and to provide the latter with a stable and safe environment. Legitimacy refers to the ability of the state to command public loyalty to the governing regime and to generate domestic support for government legislation being passed and policies being implemented. Capacity refers to the power of a state to mobilise public resources for productive uses (Note: this does not appear to have been updated since 2008).

The Armed Conflict and Intervention (ACI) Project, Centre for Systemic Peace and the Center for Global Policy, George Mason University
http://www.systemicpeace.org/aci.htm
This joint project was designed to collect global information regarding seven inter-related aspects of contemporary, complex, international interventions and external influences. These are Conflict Regions; Direct Military Interventions; Political Interaction Events; Bilateral Trade Flows; Memberships in Conventional Inter-Governmental Organisations; Forcibly Dislocated Populations and the Arms Trade. Note: Although the intent is to release the data to the public, only some of the data on the seven aspects listed below has been authorised for release to date.

West Africa-Specific Data

ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN)
http://www.ecowarn.org/Login.aspx; http://www.wanep.org/wanep/ecowarn.html;
http://www.oecd.org/document/59/0,3746,en_38233741_38242551_42930299_1_1_1_1,00.html
ECOWARN is operated by the ECOWAS Early Warning Department. It is an observation and monitoring tool for conflict prevention and decision-making, implemented in 2003. ECOWARN is made up of two operational branches. One is the Observation and Monitoring Centre based in Abuja. The second operational branch is the four sub-regional zone offices. Zone I covers Cape
Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. Zone II covers Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger. Zone III covers Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Zone IV covers Benin, Nigeria and Togo. The zone offices are like observation and monitoring offices. In order to respect State sovereignty, the centres rely on open sources for information, which is transmitted by ECOWAS-trained civil liaison officers, members of civil society, in each zone capital. Each office works in liaison with a government representative and a representative of civil society (in most of the countries, civil society is represented by a network member of the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)). Each week, national focal points have to fill in an ECOWARN risk indicator form, and reports are compiled and sent to the ECOWAS Early Warning Department in Abuja.

UNLocK Project, Fund for Peace (Liberia, Nigeria and Uganda)
http://www.fundforpeace.org/global/?q=program-unlock
http://www.fundforpeace.org/cast/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=40&Itemid=38
The UNLocK project links global information technologies with local social networks for the benefit of all stakeholders. From 2007-2010 The Fund for Peace conducted workshops in Liberia, Uganda, and Nigeria, training local participants in its Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST). They, in turn, train others at the community level, including traditional leaders, local political leaders, youths, women, school teachers, religious leaders, and others. Data collected from the field by participants are passed up the communications chain to The Fund for Peace for analysis and shared on a dedicated website for the network as a whole. Aggregated data are made available in the form of reports and graphical representations of social, economic, and political pressures that can drive conflict. Findings presented at both the community and national levels warn of potential flashpoints and advocate for responsible action by all stakeholders.

Political Instability in Africa, Center for Systemic Peace
http://www.systemicpeace.org/africa.htm
This Web page provides a link to information on Political Instability in Africa, which includes supporting documentation for the 2005 CSP report on 'Conflict Trends in Africa, 1946-2004: A Macro-Comparative Perspective'. The page also provides links to political instability charts for individual countries in Africa (http://www.systemicpeace.org/africa/africa.htm) and a link to a country data for a Political Instability Model (http://www.systemicpeace.org/africa/ACPPAnnex6.pdf). The indicators for this model include: peacebuilding capacity; actual instability; predicated instability; aid dependency; political discrimination; elite ethnicity; political factionalism; state formation instability; population density; land area; forest cover; leadership succession; neighbourhood: democracy; neighbourhood: armed conflict; and Muslim countries.

Afrobarometer
http://www.afrobarometer.org/
The Afrobarometer is an independent, nonpartisan research project that measures the social, political, and economic atmosphere in Africa. Afrobarometer surveys are conducted in more that a dozen African countries and are repeated on a regular cycle. Because the instrument asks a standard set of questions, countries can be systematically compared. Trends in public attitudes are tracked over time. Data is collected about individual understanding, attitudes and behaviour around democracy, governance, livelihoods, macro-economics and markets, social capital,
conflict and crime, participation, and national identity. Results are shared with decision makers, policy advocates, civic educators, journalists, researchers, donors and investors, as well as average Africans who wish to become more informed and active citizens. Data is available for eight West African countries, including Cape Verde.

**Micro-level data**

Much of the data above prioritises a state-centric view of peace and stability. Others have proposed a view of conflict from a micro-perspective. For instance, Kuna (2011) suggests a social vulnerability perspective, and suggests the following elements for regional conflict vulnerability analysis (RCVA) in West Africa, as a means of determining the degree to which particular populations or its subsets are prone to the adverse impact of conflict, in addition to gauging the capacities of such populations to absorb impact:

- **Populations at Risk:** Ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities; migrant and nomadic populations; youth; women and children
- **Location:** Urban or rural areas; neighbourhoods, community, local council, state, region, city, or trans-border; estimation the number of people at risk
- **Loss Parameters:** Persons; livestock; buildings; water points; pasturelands; social relationships; market stalls and crops etc.
- **Risk Potential Neighbourhoods:** recurrence or persistence of low intensity conflict; segregation of residential areas along clear ‘ethnic’ or ‘religious’ lines; proliferation of small arms and light weapons
- **Characteristics of Risk:** Populations; Identification of sources, and levels of income; educational level; assets; exclusionary and marginalization patterns; dominant subordinate groups; sense of social injustice
- **Demographic:** Characteristics of Risk; Populations; Dependency ratio; gender characteristics; proportion of unemployed youth (educated and without formal education) in the general population; levels of education
- **Stakeholders in Conflict or Potential Conflict:** Identification of subordinate/superordinate groups; processes and patterns of social exclusion; beneficiaries of conflict and their capacity for incitement;
- **Potential Loss Mapping:** Lives, crops, livestock, savings, assets, infrastructure, social cohesion
- **Conflict Mapping:** Using information contained above to create an informed CVA.

5. Sources

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About Helpdesk research reports: Helpdesk reports are usually based on 2 days of desk-based research. They are designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues, and a summary of some of the best literature available. Experts are contacted during the course of the research, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged.