

*Final Report*

# West Africa Businesswomen's Network (WABNET) and West African Women's Association Secretariat



SUBMITTED TO  
USAID/Africa Bureau

SUBMITTED BY  
Nathan-MSI Group

IN RESPONSE TO  
PCE-I-09-98-00016-00

August 2001

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(WABNET) and West African Women's  
Association Secretariat

**SUBMITTED TO**  
USAID/Africa Bureau

**SUBMITTED BY**  
Nathan-MSI Group  
Lucie Colvin Phillips, Ph.D. (IBI)  
Nadine Duplessy Kearns, M.A.  
(AIRD)

**IN RESPONSE TO**  
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# West African Businesswomen's Conference

## BACKGROUND

There have been a number of attempts to create an effective businesswomen's network in West Africa. USAID's West Africa Regional Program (USAID/WARP) wished to facilitate this process and agreed to fund a conference to which leading businesswomen would be invited. The purpose was to promote regional and global trade among women in West Africa, inform them of the rules of commerce in the region, and assist their efforts to confront obstacles, official and non-official, to free trade. Towards that end, USAID/WARP engaged two expatriate and one Malian Institutional Development Specialists to organize a workshop co-sponsored by the West African Women's Association (WAWA) in Bamako, Mali from the 29th of July to the 2nd of August at the Dafina Hotel. The main goal of this workshop, financed by USAID/WARP, was to create a solid and dynamic businesswomen's network to promote regional trade.

Invited participants included businesswomen engaged in cross border trade and women representatives from ministries and non-governmental organizations that support and facilitate trade. USAID/WARP believed that with a solid and active network, women could overcome the administrative and practical barriers to trade such as difficulties with payment, exchange of money, numerous police and customs stops, inadequate or expensive telecommunications and electronic mail in some locations, etc. At the workshop, the participants would work to prioritize these subjects in terms of their impact on commerce. One key result from this workshop would be a draft Plan of Action for participants to implement at the national and regional level upon return to their home countries.

Each participant was invited to bring with her items/products to showcase for the other participants. They were requested to bring the following as well:

- Photos of other items for sale
- Price lists (wholesale and individual)
- Instructions on sale and transport of items from their country to another

A public show and sale at the end of the workshop would allow the participants to sell some of their products and make contact for future sales.

## WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION—WASHINGTON, D.C.

Under the SEGIR/GBTI task order "Support to the Sahel and West African Regional Programs" Dr. Lucie Colvin Phillips and Mrs. Nadine Duplessy Kearns, of International Business Initiatives (IBI), were contracted by Associates for International Resources and Development (AIRD) in June 2001 as Institutional Development Specialists. With less than two months until the Bamako workshop was to take place, the specialists began preparing a list of potential participants based on professional

contacts in the region, the West Africa Enterprise Network contact list, West African women’s associations data, and USAID/WARP suggestions. USAID/WARP identified Mrs. Aby Ndoye Beye, the West African Women’s Association Permanent Secretary-In Charge of Programs, to work closely with Phillips and Kearns to mobilize participation of WAWA representatives from each country.

Believing that ownership of strategic planning conclusions to come out of the workshop would be much stronger with co-facilitation by someone from the region, Phillips proposed the engagement of a local co-facilitator for the workshop, preferably from Mali. Mrs. Nafissatou Guindo Konaré, Administrative and Financial Director, Mali Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Cooperatives, was contracted as a local Institutional Development Specialist. The team met with Mrs. Konaré in early June in Washington, D.C. to discuss the workshop and draft an agenda. Upon her return to Mali, Mrs. Konaré agreed to work on securing participation of businesswomen from Mali and conference speakers.

Beginning on July 7, 2001 official letters of invitation (French and English) were sent to potential participants. The ESF Travel Agency in Bamako issued participants’ airplane tickets, economy class as per USAID rules. Tickets were sent to qualified participants, based on official confirmation from participants and authorization by the Institutional Development Specialists. Invited participants who found it easier to arrange their own travel were reimbursed by Kearns and Phillips during the conference, provided that they were confirmed invitees who received a fax stating this from IBI.

From Washington, IBI reserved one large conference room and two small breakout rooms at the Dafina Hotel. IBI arranged hotel rooms including a light breakfast at the Dafina and the Tennessee Hotel for the participants who would receive a small sum for meals not included as part of the workshop agenda, consistent with USAID per diem regulations. IBI engaged the services of Dr. Ousmane Minta and his team to provide translation at the workshop.

The target participation was 40 women. In practice, 54 invited participants and another dozen or so observers attended. Table 1 shows the breakdown of participants for the workshop.

**Table 1. Workshop Participants**

Country	Confirmed
Benin	2
Burkina Faso	2
Cape Verde	0
Cote d'Ivoire	1
Gambia	1
Ghana	3
Guinea	3
Guinea-Bissau	0
Liberia	2
Mali	14
Niger	4
Nigeria	8
Senegal	8
Sierra Leone	2
Togo	2
U.S. - USAID	1
Mali - USAID	0

## WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION—BAMAKO, MALI

Kearns arrived in Mali on Sunday July 22nd to finalize conference arrangements. She confirmed the conference facilities at the Dafina hotel, participants' rooms at the Dafina and the Tennessee Hotel, and translation services with Mr. Minta. Kearns also procured materials (folders, notebooks, pens) for conference participants. 3 banners were purchased with one placed in town, one in front of the hotel, and one in the conference room.

With assistance from Nafissatou Konaré, conference speakers were also confirmed. Official USAID letters were prepared and delivered by Mrs. Konaré inviting government officials to the opening and closing ceremony. Mrs. Konaré also arranged for the exhibition/sale to be held at Mali's *Palais des Congres* and for the final conference dinner to be held at the Salaam Hotel. Secretarial services for the conference were provided and finalized by Mrs. Konaré.

Phillips arrived on Friday July 27th to co-facilitate the conference. The three institutional development specialists met to make final preparations for the conference. Agenda and publicity for the conference, particularly the exhibition/sale were confirmed.

Kearns and Phillips prepared official welcome letters, registration forms, and pocket money for participants arriving from Friday July 27th to Sunday July 29th.

## WEST AFRICAN WOMEN'S REGIONAL TRADE WORKSHOP—BAMAKO, MALI, JULY 29TH TO AUGUST 2, 2001

The West African Women's Regional Trade Workshop officially began on Monday July 30th, 2001 at the Dafina Hotel Conference Room. The only significant modification to the agenda detailed below (in French) was that Boubacar BA was unable to make his presentation. Dr. Phillips made a presentation on Networking Strategy in that time slot. Speakers included

- A legal expert discussing the Organization for Harmonizing Business Law (known as OHADA, by its French acronym), who provided an overview of the current state and trends in business law;
- A representative of the Malian Transportation Ministry speaking on transportation issues; and
- One of the participants, Aba Quainoo of Ghana, addressing microfinance.

The conference was structured to provide small-group discussion and reporting-out on each issue. The working groups were quite lively and well appreciated.

### Dimanche, 29 juillet 2001

18 :00 Arrivée et enregistrement des participantes

### Lundi, 30 juillet 2001

9:00 Cérémonie d'ouverture—Pamela White, Directrice Adjointe/USAID Mali ;

Allocution de Mme La Ministre du Commerce, Mme TOURE Alimata

09:30 – 10:00 Pause Café

10:00 – 11:30 Présentation par Madame DIALLO Fatou Seck sur les textes de l'OHADA

	discussion
11:30 – 12:30	Présentation par Madame Aby Beye, Représentante de l'Association des Femmes de l'Afrique de l'Ouest—discussion
12:30 – 14:00	Déjeuner
14:00 – 16:00	Présentation sur les stratégies de réseaux et associations professionnelles
16:00 – 16:30	Pause Café
16:30 – 17:30	Travaux en groupe: règles de Commerce Régional (les textes OHADA et l'import/ export)

### **Mardi, 31 juillet 2001**

08:00 - 09:00	Travaux en plénière—restitution
09:00 – 10:00	Présentation par Ibrahim Boubacar BA sur les Problèmes de Financement—transferts et modes de paiement—discussion
10:00 – 10:30	Pause Café
10:30 – 11:00	Présentation par QUAINOO Aba sur la micro finance
11:00 – 12:30	Groupe de travail—Modes de financement et micro finance
12:30 – 14:00	Déjeuner
14 :00 –15 :00	Présentation par Djibril TALL, Ministère des Transports sur les problèmes de transport/transit—discussion
15 :00 – 16 :30	Groupe de travail
16 :30 – 17 :00	Pause Café
17 :00 – 17 :30	Plénière

### **Mercredi, 1 août 2001**

8 :00 – 10 :00	Mise à point des rapports de groupes de travail
10 :00 – 10 :30	Pause Café
10 :30 – 12 :00	Présentation par Groupes
12 :00 – 13 :30	Déjeuner
13 :30 – 15 :30	Présentation et débats sur le Plan d'Action
16 :00	Cérémonie de clôture
19 :00	Dîner à l'Hôtel Salaam

### **Jeudi, 2 août 2001 (Palais des Congrès)**

09 :00 - 17:00	Exposition/vente
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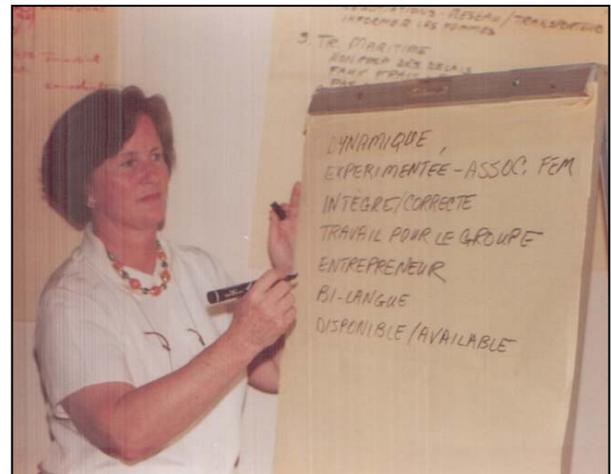
The exposition/sale featured the participants shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Vendors for Exhibition/Sale**

Country	Number of Vendors
Benin	1
Burkina Faso	1
Ghana	2
Guinea	2
Liberia	2
Mali	9
Niger	4
Nigeria	3
Senegal	4
Sierra Leone	1
Togo	1

### WEST AFRICA BUSINESSWOMEN'S NETWORK (WABNET)

Conference participants first discussed the issues, opportunities and obstacles confronting women in business in West Africa, and then began honing in on their priorities. The third day they chose to establish an autonomous West Africa Businesswomen's Network, modeled after the successful West African Entrepreneurs Network, of which some participants were members. They believed that a women's network would reinforce the lobbying done by the larger WAEN, and also focus on some issues that affect women disproportionately, such as credit, property rights and cross-border trade barriers. The names the group chose were West Africa Businesswomen's Network (WABNET) and, in French, *Reseaux de Femmes d'Affaires de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (REFAO)*. Based on previous experience with political involvement in business organizations, they preferred to have this one consist entirely of businesswomen. To be a member, one must be a West African woman who owns and operates a registered business.



*Recording Participants' Criteria for Leaders.*

### ACTION PLAN

The group developed a long term Action Plan, which is summarized in the PowerPoint presentation in Appendix A. The priority activities were as follows:

- Lobbying (on government support of the private sector, on tax policy, transport problems, police and customs harassment, corruption, and on property rights (real and intellectual));
- Seminars and training (timely access to business information, dissemination, website and listserve, studies);

- Financial institutions (a guarantee fund and more information on micro-finance).

The whole group signed the Action Plan. The participants elected the following provisional officers:

- President—Amina Hassane Wangari/Niger
- Vice President—Angela Andrews Njie/Gambia
- Francophone Secretary—Dede Trenou/Togo
- Anglophone Secretary—Aderonke Onadeko/Nigeria
- Francophone Treasurer—Fatou Gueye/Senegal
- Anglophone Treasurer—Margarette Cole/Sierra Leone

The officers met and developed a detailed Plan of Operations for the first year, which was adopted by the whole body. A copy of the plan is in Appendix B. The delegations are to return to their countries, publicize their experience (showing the video cassette of the opening and closing ceremonies that each delegation received in Mali), organize a national cell, meet with donors, recruit members, develop and monitor a budget. The officers are to obtain and adapt WAEN statutes, register as an NGO, and submit a proposal for donor funding. In the second half of the year they plan to conduct a study on a guarantee fund, conduct training on micro-finance in the countries where it is less developed, conduct a study of the impact of new tax laws on businesses and GDP, hold an executive committee meeting and organize a constitutive general assembly.

Dues were fixed initially at \$50 (FCFA 35,000) per member, payable to the regional network. National cells are to be established, and may receive some budgetary support from the regional network. One delegate from each country was named as the contact person. A total of FCFA 1,066,000 plus FF 400 plus USD 270 was collected, being the dues of 37 founding members. This amount, less FCFA 70,000, was conferred on Jean Harman of USAID/WARP for safekeeping until the group establishes its legal identity, opens a bank account, and establishes a working budget. The sum of FCFA 70,000 was given to the President for the purchase of an official stamp and printed receipt books for each national cell.



*Working group on a break.*

## WORKSHOP EVALUATION

A participant evaluation form was distributed, and 36 responses were received. Table 3 summarizes the results.

**Table 3. Participants' Evaluation of the Workshop**

Question n=36	Average of Numeric responses	Average with x's Converted to 5s
3. Goals relevant?	4.7	4.7
4. Agenda appropriate?	4.4	4.4
5. Most Valuable Aspect? (1-5, 5=Very useful)		
a. Creation of WABNET?	4.3	4.5
b. Opportunity to travel, meet businesswomen?	4.0	4.1
c. Opportunity to sell goods?	3.8	4.0
d. Publicity for our group?	4.2	4.3
e. Publicity for my business?	4.0	4.1
f. Speaker on OHADA?	3.5	3.6
g. Speaker on WAWA?	3.3	3.3
h. Speaker on Networking Strategies?	4.4	4.4
i. Speaker on Microfinance?	4.3	4.4
j. Speaker on Transportation Issues?	3.4	3.6
k. Working groups?	4.5	4.6
l. Web café, email?	3.4	3.5
m. Exhibition/sale?	3.6	3.8
6. Rank adequacy of the following, 1-5		
a. Conference rooms	3.5	3.5
b. Audio system	4.3	4.3
c. Translation	4.1	4.2
d. Hotel accommodation	3.4	3.5
e. Meals	2.3	2.4
f. Conference Documents	3.5	3.7
g. Secretarial support	4.0	4.0
h. Air travel arrangements	4.2	4.3
i. Facilitators	4.5	4.5

Overall this was an extraordinarily strong positive evaluation of the workshop. The four most appreciated aspects, with scores of 4.5-4.7 were the following:

- Appropriateness/timeliness and relevance of creating a businesswomen's' network
- Working groups
- Creation of WABNET
- Facilitators.

Also ranking quite high (4.0-4.4) were the following aspects:

- Appropriateness of the agenda
- Opportunity to travel, meet businesswomen
- Opportunity to sell goods
- Publicity for our group
- Publicity for my business

- Speaker on Networking Strategies
- Speaker on Microfinance
- Audio system
- Translation
- Secretarial support
- Air travel arrangements.

Above average grades were given to the speakers on OHADA, WAWA, transportation issues, the web café/email, the exhibition/sale, conference rooms, hotel accommodations, and conference documents. Only the meals were ranked below average.

As organizers of the workshop, we were very impressed with the leadership qualities of the participants who came, and credit that with much of the success of the workshop. Our evaluation of the various aspects of the workshop closely parallels that of the participants. The lessons we noted to improve future such activities were the following:

1. Sometimes the number of participants can exceed expectations. Our previous experience has been that the number of actual participants is less than the total of invited, confirmed participants.
2. The conference rooms were too small and crowded.
3. The speakers could have been fewer and shorter, allowing more time for working groups.
4. The exhibition/sale received inadequate advanced publicity, with the result that the main buyers were fellow participants. Few people from Bamako attended.



*A gala dinner at the Hotel Salaam celebrated the workshop's success.*

## NEXT STEPS

WABNET has requested that IBI continue to support its efforts through the initial year of organizational development. Specifically, they requested help in establishing a viable communications network (with a listserv and website at the core), assisting with proposal preparation for donor funding, and facilitating the constitutive general assembly. IBI would very much like to continue this process, providing very light technical assistance—enough to ensure that the momentum is sustained, but not enough to create a donor dependency.

Maintaining momentum is very important. West African businesswomen have been called together previously to form a network, under UNDP and ECA auspices. Each time the initiative has become mired in politics and dropped. This time the women report that they believe the election process was fair, the agenda realistic, and the organization truly representative of their interests. Yet once the women disperse to their respective countries, it is very difficult to maintain communications and focus.

Organized follow-up is essential. Our experience has shown that follow-up communications need to be initiated within one month, and a face-to-face meeting of at least the executive committee should take place within six months. One IBI facilitator should participate in that meeting. Email is the inexpensive and increasingly accessible option for regular communications, but telephone calls will also be necessary. IBI would like to contribute to website design and hosting, providing guidance to WABNET members with InfoTech expertise, establishing the listserv with the email addresses provided at registration, posting the names of paid-up founding members, etc.

**Table 4. Participants at West Africa Businesswomen's Conference**

Name	Title	Company	Products
<b>Benin</b>			
Gisèle ADISSODA	Directrice de Publication	L'Amazone du Golfe	Journaux
Moubaraka AGUEMON	Commerçante	Edjidé-Ola	Agricoles
<b>Burkina Faso</b>			
Simone ZOUNDI	Presidente Fédération Nationale des Industries et de Transformation du Burkina	SODEPAL	Produits agro-alimentaires
Danielle DELOCHE	Consultante	Afric Conseil	Conseil étude institutionnelle appui secteur privé
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>			
Patricia DIABY		Plot Entreprise	Bois Teak
<b>Gambia</b>			
Angela ANDREWS		West African Tours PNB 222 SERREKUNDA THE GAMBIA	Tours Special interest Group Conference and incentives
<b>Ghana</b>			
Vera KPETO	Fashion Accessories Manufacturer /Ticketing Tour Operator	In Proxy	
Esinam Akyea DJAMSON		Arc Integra	Architecture Interior Design Office furniture Design & manufacturing
Aba Amissah QUAINOO		Mel Consulting	Microfinance Specialist Enterprise Development
<b>Guinea</b>			
Hadja Fatoumata BINTA BALDE	Directrice de Societe	Societe Faba-Aiba	Ananas Banane Haricot Café Cacao Bois etc
Aissatou BALDE	Vice Presidente	Diamantaire et Or de Guinee	Diamant Or et autre
Zainab KABA	Couturiere/ Commerçante	NYKA Confection	Pagnes indio Guinéens Le soumbara Le poisson fumé Les fruits
<b>Liberia</b>			
Jacqueline CAPEHART	President	Jackie Continental Travel Agency	Airlines Tickets
Janice OCRAN		TRAP INC	Wall Paint Brunning paint General merchandise

Name	Title	Company	Products
<b>Mali</b>			
Anna DIALLO			
Tantou Sambake KEBE	Promotrice Centre de Formation Teinture Artisanale	Centre de Formation Tantou Teinture	Textiles Bazin teinté Ensence cosmétique
Aiche MALINKE DRAVE	Commercante		°Textile Condiment Divers Commerce général
Kadiatou TRAORE-SOUKO	Commercante	C.M.D.E	Textiles et produits exotiques
Aissata TRAORE			
Djelika Hadjiratou DAO DEMBELE	Commercante		Commerce général
Tariba DIABATE	Commercante		Commerce général
Mariam Soumare SANGARE	Commercante/ Entrepreneur	BabyTex Entreprise	Divers articles pour bébé et enfants Jouets Biberons (habits) Batiments et travaux publics (BTP)
Fadima Siby MARIKO		UCODAL	Produits agricoles transformés Céréales/mil-Sorgho- Fonio Beurre de Karité Poisson Produits du cru (pour les autres membres du GFCD)
Namissa DIALLO	Entrepreneur		B.T.P - L.P.
Aminata SACKO	Artiste Commercante		Artisanaux - Teinture
Mariam Nene SOW	Commercante		Tissus Chaussures Sacs Appareils
Safi DIARRA GUEYE	Vendeuse		Poisson
Binta KONTE BOCOUM	Coordination de Projet	Projet DEFSAM	Structure d'appui relevant du Ministère chargée de la promotion de la Femme
Anna Aissata CISSE	Membre Association S. Comités Entrepreneurs	Remacan Restaurant	Tapis et divers Restaurant Voyage organisé Voitures et camions d'occasion
Assita CISSE FOFANA	Commercante	NENE Divers	Divers Tissus teintés Essence Parfumerie sacs et chaussures Produits de beauté
<b>Niger</b>			
Adamou AMADOU RABI	Membre de la cooperative du VAW, vice Présidente de la Néaref	Village Artisanale de Wadata	Produits artisanaux Prêt à porter
Amina HASSANE WANGARI	Presidente - Réseau des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprise du Niger	ETS Ciminti/Complexe Technique Wangari	Formation technique Matériaux de construction Produits artisanaux Chales tricotés à la main et sur commandes

Name	Title	Company	Products
Hadiza GARBA	Entrepreneur	Cooperative de Wadata	Artisanat Confection Bijoux Tableaux décoratifs
Zeinabou DJIBRINE	P.D.G. Promotrice	Nigerlait SA	Produits lactés & dérivés (Yaourts, Yoghourt, lait caillé)
<b>Nigeria</b>			
Aderonke ONADEKO		Delt-R Nigeria LTD/Makers of Cool Juices	Cool Refresher drinks
Kaine DOSEKUM	Dr.	Nouveau Collections	Clothing Stationery Houshold acc. (all textile based)
Ngozi NZEGWU		Dugo Signature	Transfer print Subumation and photoucazing casatise names ,,,, books (for children)
Toyin OMOTAYO		The Fate Foundation	N90
Modupe Oyenike SAULAWA		Nikels Investments Nig LTD	Nikels fashions Nikels foods Nikels Interior
Oluwadara DESALU		SJ Tours & Allied Services	Tourism
Roseline Aseh ANJAH		West African Enterprise Network	
Fulashade Olufemi MORAKIMYO		SJ Tours & Allied Services	Tourism, Seminars, Workshop (organisers)
<b>Senegal</b>			
Aby Ndoye BEYE	Chargee de Programme Association des Femmes de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (WAWA)	West African Women's Association (WAWA/AFAO)	
Mariama SAO	Couturiere	Affaires Personnelles Operatrice Economique	Confection Textile
Fatou GUEYE	Presidente GIE	Centre Artisanal Elisabeth Diouf	Produits halieutiques Artisanat
Khady NDAO	Presidente National FNGPF	FNGPF	Teinture Poisson sèche Huile de palme Beurre de Karité Riz
Abibatou KAMARA FALL	Maitresse d'économie Familiale (encadrement)	Association APF	Tranformation des fruits et légumes Vente de tous produits locaux (Céréales, halieutique ceuillette etc) Couture
Aby Tall TRAORE	Directrice Commerciale	Operatrice Economique	Transformation fruits et légumes Confection Tissage
Awa DIALLO	Presidente Directoire des Femmes Eleveurs de Dakar		Viande (bœufs, moutons, volailles) Céréales locaux (riz) Pate d'arachide Jus de fruits Oeufs

Name	Title	Company	Products
Bineta COULIBALY	Directrice Generale	La Vivriere	Thiackry Thié Arw Sankhal Sougouf Brisures de mais Farine de mais et de niébé
<b>Sierra Leone</b>			
Mariama SESAY		Sayenne Group of Company	Bed sheet Plate- soup bowl Beach wese Shirt trouser Jacket swite
Margarette COLE		Picadilly Bar/Restaurant Imported export of General merchandise	Smoked Fish Picadilly's home made Vegetables Dried Okra Grounder not pepper Palm oil Barbecue chicken Peppered chicken home made African dishes
<b>Togo</b>			
Dede Evelyne TRENOU	Commercante	ETS DOE Bruce	Textiles
Ayele Marie Helene NOAGBODJI	Directeur Adjoint	Café Informatique	Ordinateurs Photocopieurs Calculatrice Web Internet Telecommunication
<b>United States</b>			
Yamilee BASTIEN	Fellow	USAID	

# IBI Funding Request for Follow-up

The funding provided for the conference was a unique task order with no provision for follow-up. There is thus far a savings of about \$25,000 (in the areas of hotel bills, meals, taxis and visas in Africa, and translation). We propose to use the translation budget as described below, in August through October, assuming that the funds were appropriated for FY 2001 and cannot be extended beyond that period. We hereby request that the remaining approximately \$22,000 savings be reallocated to IBI for follow-up during that same period according to the following proposed activities:

## Listserve and website development

1. Nadine Duplessy Kearns, 10 days for eliciting content from members, website development, testing, and posting 1 day per week x 13 weeks for monitoring listserve and updating website with business opportunities notices and documents over three months—LOE 23 days
2. Lucie C Phillips, 4 days for content development and correspondence with members—LOE 4 days

## Translation

1. OHADA article, English to French, 17 pp
2. Plan d'action opérationnel sur un an ; Table, 2 pp ., French to English
3. Website documents (abstracts in other language)

## Communications costs

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Telephone                                | \$500 |
| 2. Web domain name registration and hosting | \$150 |

# West African Women's Association Secretariat Technical Assistance Consultant Report

## BACKGROUND

Phillips and Kearns were contracted to undertake a two-week technical assistance mission for the WAWA Secretariat in Dakar, Senegal, immediately following the West African Women Regional Trade Workshop. The objective of this technical assistance mission was to prepare a strategic action plan for the WAWA Secretariat. This plan would assess WAWA training needs, offer suggestions regarding the extension of finance programs in the region, and advise the Secretariat on available programs and outreach to the member country groups and other regional or national women's organizations.

## CURRENT SITUATION AT WAWA SECRETARIAT

Phillips and Kearns arrived in Dakar to find that the WAWA Secretariat was not functioning. The headquarters personnel in Dakar, who have been unpaid since October 2000, were not coming to the office except for special meetings. The Secretary-General had reportedly not attended since May 2000. There is no electricity or telephone due to unpaid bills. There is a rift between the Secretary-General and the salaried staff, who comprise two Permanent Secretaries, a Comptroller, and support staff.<sup>1</sup> Only five of the sixteen ECOWAS member countries have funded national cells, The Gambia, Senegal, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria (through 2000). National cells are supposed to receive CFAF 500,000 annual operating budget, but appropriations, even for those countries who have budgeted allowances for WAWA, are often delayed.

The mandate of the current Secretary-General from The Gambia has expired, yet she has not been replaced. As part of the 7<sup>th</sup> WAWA General Assembly in Abuja, Nigeria in February 2001 a replacement for the Secretary-General post was due to be selected. The annual disbursement of WAWA headquarters' CFAF 10 million allocation should have followed immediately. The Assembly General could not come to terms about a replacement because

- Only 6 countries attended,
- There was no quorum.
- No official reports from the WAWA Secretariat, and

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<sup>1</sup> IBI scheduled meetings with both the Permanent Secretaries, Aby Beye and Dieng Raynatou Khadija Bangoura, and the Secretary-General, Ami Joof Cole. The Secretary-General indicated that an action plan had been prepared, or was nearly ready, but then she repeatedly postponed and finally failed to appear at the meetings at which she had indicated she would provide and discuss this.

- Most importantly the absence of the current WAWA Secretary-General and senior officers.<sup>2</sup>

To follow up on the failed General Assembly, ECOWAS sent a delegation to the WAWA Secretariat in Dakar to meet with the Secretary-General. The Secretariat staff was not present at this meeting.

To address the non-functioning Secretariat, the two Permanent Secretaries asked ECOWAS to conduct an official audit of the Secretariat budget before the next disbursement of funds. ECOWAS headquarters have agreed to do an audit, and expect to complete it before the end of 2001.

### RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE WAWA PERMANENT SECRETARIES

- ECOWAS needs to conduct the audit.
- Once existing debts/arrears are settled, ECOWAS needs to disburse funds to reopen headquarters. A budget should be established and followed.
- Currently, Ministers of Women's Affairs of ECOWAS member countries choose the country eligible to provide the Secretary-General. That country, in turn, names an appointee to fill the position. The professional staff propose that each country submit three candidates with their curriculum vitae and the post be elective.
- The Minister in Charge of Women's Affairs should not be the president of the national WAWA chapters.
- USAID/Senegal works with the Senegal National Chapter—USAID/WARP can work with WAWA headquarters in Senegal.
- Option 2 in the restructuring plan—WAWA to be a technical agency of ECOWAS.

### NEEDS OF WAWA SECRETARIAT

- Secretary at WAWA headquarters is the only one with a computer—the two Permanent Secretaries and perhaps the new Secretary-General will need to have computers and to use email for networking.
- Payment of electricity, phone, and email account
- Computer for each WAWA national chapter that actually functions (5 at present, but most of these do not have an office)
- Plan for a regional magazine listing WAWA activities—correspondent in each chapter can send her bulletin to headquarters—headquarters can put it together.

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<sup>2</sup> One of the Permanent Secretaries was overseas receiving treatment for a serious illness, the other was attending a funeral, whereas the Secretary-General indicated that she did not attend because the staff had not prepared the necessary reports.

- Organized study tours for women across region, for example, language study and skills sharing (e.g. exchanges on fish drying techniques and textiles/dying, which vary from country to country)

### MEETING WITH THE WAWA SECRETARY-GENERAL

Phillips and Kearns met on Tuesday, August 7, 2001, with the West African Women's Association Secretary-General. Following are some of the points that she highlighted:

- Member states contribute to ECOWAS and ECOWAS allocates funds to WAWA; neither process is timely.
- The last payment received was November 2000—the annual allocation should be CFAF 10 million, sent in quarterly installments. The money is used for salaries, utilities and missions run by ECOWAS.
- WAWA chapters are supposed to have a budget of CFAF 500,000 per year. The money comes from governments (Ministers of Women's Affairs. Countries up-to-date with payment are Senegal, Gambia, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, and Nigeria (last payment was in 2000)
- The Secretary-General believes that WAWA should be reorganized—should not be intergovernmental, but rather membership-based.
- Department in ECOWAS that supervises WAWA is weak (2 men—there was 1 woman)
- WAWA was set up in 1987 but has not done much. There is no continuity in government personnel, and the Ministries of Women's Affairs have primarily political agendas, e.g., keeping themselves and their Presidents in office. The dependence on government contributions is not viable, as the Ministries always have higher priorities for their funds.
- The governing body (Assembly General of Ministers of Women's Affairs) of WAWA has never met since the current Secretary-General has been on duty.

### SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PROPOSALS FOR REORGANIZATION OF WAWA

- Change statutes to provide that national chapters not be headed by ministers.
- Members should pay dues directly to chapters not sent to regional Secretariat.
- WAWA should be an umbrella for women organizations that exist in all the countries and a resource center, not an implementing organization.
- The WAWA secretariat should work closely with national chapters in capacity building.
- WAWA should bring the chapters together once a year.
- Networking should be the main focus of headquarters. It should issue a Newsletter, maintain a Website and conduct training by Internet (the African Women's Media Center just did 2 Internet-based training on HIV-AIDS reporting—[www.awmc.org](http://www.awmc.org))

- WAWA has a strategic plan (or needs to develop one. We were promised a copy of proposed statute changes and a strategic plan, but the Secretary-General did not appear for the meetings).

## IBI ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WAWA is not currently functioning as an organization. It has not had funding and staff salaries have not been paid since October or November 2000. The mandate of the current Secretary-General expired in February 2001, but the General Assembly at which a new Secretary-General should have been selected was not able to function for lack of a quorum and lack of attendance by all responsible personnel.

The next WAWA General Assembly scheduled for October 2001. An audit is supposed to be conducted by then, but it is not clear that this will happen, nor is it clear that the General Assembly will achieve a quorum. The attendance of the three professional staff and Secretary-General would have to be funded by their own governments unless ECOWAS comes through.

We concur with the staff recommendation that an audit be conducted and arrears expunged.

Both parties to the current impasse proposed that the organization be de-politicized and converted to a membership-based organization. The routes by which they proposed that this be accomplished do not seem realistic, however. They proposed that the next General Assembly vote to make WAWA a membership organization. The members eligible to vote at that General Assembly, however, are the very Ministers that WAWA regional headquarters personnel consider too political. ECOWAS is comprised of member states, not member citizens. The Ministers would have to vote themselves out of their roles in the organization.

It may be more feasible to start by introducing the principle that national organizations should have dues-paying members. For the five countries whose governments currently provide a budget, the dues collected could be in addition to the government subsidy. Members would have a voice in establishing the goals, programs and budgets of each country organization. The Ministries of Women's Affairs are likely, in our view, to remain at least titular heads of the organization because it would serve their political agendas to do so. One can, however, create a viable organization in that context by introducing democratic principles within the organization. Officers and committee members should be elected by the members rather than appointed by Ministries.

*Caveat: In several countries there already are membership-based national women's umbrella organizations. ECOWAS should avoid duplicating their efforts, but the history of organizational politics suggests that the WAWA national organization may end up competing with existing women's organizations rather than merging with or complementing them. This is not necessarily a negative outcome, as a little competition, even among NGOs, can provide stimulus to serve the membership better and organize better programs.*

WAWA members who wish to push the agenda toward a membership basis should hold restructuring meetings before General Assembly, should brief their representative Ministries on the past difficulties of the organization, and should lobby for elective officers on both national and regional levels.

If a successful General Assembly is held in the near future as scheduled and the proposed restructuring actually occurs, the new organization would benefit greatly from some donor assistance

with organizational development. USAID/WARP, UNICEF and some other bilateral donors may be interested in supporting the organization to develop as a regional resource base. If the proposed audit and reorganization take place, and only in this case, it would be appropriate for USAID to consider funding the following technical assistance and equipment modernization:

- Holding of national conferences for women leaders in the five active countries, to develop program agendas, elect officers, and create viable national organizations.
- Providing 3 computers with Internet connections for WAWA headquarters, and one each for viable country programs, to facilitate networking.
- Providing training appropriate for the program agendas established at national and regional levels.
- Funding exchanges and study tours on specific themes, to allow women leaders in each area to learn from one another.

*Appendix A*

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**ACTION PLAN**

*Appendix B*

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PLAN OF OPERATIONS