

# **The Role of Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) in Post-Conflict Rehabilitation: Lessons from Liberia**

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## **Abstract**

In the aftermath of the violent conflict in Liberia, the issue of post-conflict rehabilitation took center stage, with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deeply involved in an elaborate post-conflict rehabilitation program in the country. Through the use of content analysis, this paper explores the involvement of ECOWAS in post-conflict rehabilitation in Liberia in the context of the devastating consequences of violent conflicts that the country experienced. In specific terms, it highlights key lessons learnt from the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia, as part of its mandate for peace, security and stability in the region.

## **Keywords**

ECOWAS, Liberia, post-conflict, rehabilitation, conflict

## **Introduction**

The Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) was established as a regional initiative to facilitate economic growth and development in the West Africa (Adetula, 2009). As captured in the 1975 Treaty, the main aim of ECOWAS was:

To promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the fields of industry transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural

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matters for the purpose of raising the standard of its people, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent.

In this effect, though there has been an argument that the issues of peace and security might not have been directly taken up in the treaty that gave birth to ECOWAS, yet it did not mean that such issues were altogether ignored by the founders of ECOWAS (Sessay, 2002). As the adoption of an ECOWAS Protocol on non-aggression underlines this fact, according to the Article 1 of the Protocol, member states were to refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression or from employing any other means inconsistent with the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity against the territorial integrity or political independence of other Member States.

The early 1990s witnessed an upsurge in violent conflicts, instability and state failure in West Africa. Countries such as Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone were the adversely affected. The intensity and devastating consequences of the situation led to a major shift in the focus of ECOWAS from economic development to peace, security and stability. The intervention of ECOWAS in these countries opened a new vista for the organization as a critical vehicle for achieving regional security (Golwa, 2009).

From the standpoint of ECOWAS involvement in Liberia, the notion of post-conflict rehabilitation in this paper attributes to the economic, social and economic transformation of the Liberian society. Wherein, the emphasis is placed on laying the foundation for durable peace, security, stability and development as a basis for averting a relapse to conflict. In most cases, ECOWAS took the lead in facilitating the implementation of policies and programmes supported by its member states, development partners, donors, civil society among others. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that was signed in August 2003 laid the foundation for the involvement of ECOWAS in post-conflict Liberia. Prior to the CPA, ECOWAS played a significant and strategic role in containing the Liberian conflict through the establishment and deployment of an ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL).

### **Background of the Liberian Conflict**

Freed African American slaves founded Liberia, with a population of over three million people in 1847. The country experienced years of

violent conflicts from 1989 to 2003, resulting in the devastation and the destruction of the security sector in the country, as well as the killing of more than 200,000 people, with about 1.2 million people displaced (Bellamy & Williams, 2010). With the breakdown of law and order, and blatant abuse of human rights by armed combatants, social relationships were disrupted and destroyed (Jaye, 2008). A major source of Liberia's security deficits in the period preceding the violent conflict can be traced to the history of the Liberian security sector. And the fact the security sector functioned as instruments for the protection of the interest of the regime, as opposed to the interests of the people. This accounted for the wide gap between the interest of the regime and the interest of the people, particularly the indigenous ethnic groups. The structure of the Liberian security sector, which functioned as the Frontier Force was such that the security sector earned reputation as tools for state repression against the indigenous ethnic groups. The Frontier Force later changed its name to the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) in 1962. Despite the change of name and efforts made towards the professionalization of the security sector, the officer corps continued to be heavily dominated by the Americo-Liberians, while the rank and file was mainly the indigenous ethnic groups (International Crisis Group, 2009).

The root causes of the Liberian conflict could be traced to the political and economic mismanagement of the state by decades of corrupt patrimonial rule of the dominant Americo-Liberian ruling and governing elites. Despite constituting about 5 % of the population, they established an oligarchy that excluded and oppressed the indigenous inhabitants, creating a regime of marginalization that became one of the roots of criminality and violence in Liberia. This ethnic character is also linked to Liberia's political economy that was built on a weak foundation concomitant with the deficits in its governance framework.

Historically, from its establishment in 1846 as an independent state, the Liberian society was built on a deep distinction between Americo-Liberians, who had total control of the Liberian state and the economy on one hand, and the indigenous ethnic groups who were largely marginalized. The latter was not eligible for election and voting, laying the foundation for entrenched alienation between the different ethnic groups and the Americo-Liberians (Boas, 2009). Under such structural boundaries of alienation, the fault lines of conflicts along identity were drawn.

This marginalization led to the divisions along social, political and economic lines. In return it led to the impoverishment of the people, particularly, the indigenous ethnic groups, which also led to

revolts by junior officers of the armed forces led by Sgt. Samuel Doe, who ascended to power as Head of State through a coup d'état in 1980. The United Nations Common Country Assessment that was conducted in 2006 identified some key conflict dynamics in terms of factors that accounted for the violent conflict. They included the misuse of power, weak justice system, lack of a shared national vision, poverty and food insecurity, mismanagement of natural resources, as well as regional dynamics, which had to do with the dynamics of conflicts in the Mano River Union. The structural causes of the conflict were deeply rooted in the country's history that was characterized by gross inequities in the distribution of power and resources, as well as the reliance on violence to realize economic and political objectives (Busia, 2004). This led to the outbreak of a civil war on Christmas Eve in 1989 (Adebajo, 2002; Francis, 2006). During the conflict period, the legitimacy of the rebel forces in the eyes of their people was based on the extent to which they were able to mobilize support along political and ethnic lines (Adebajo, 2006).

The United Nations Peace Building Fund (UNPBF), Priority Plan for Peace Building Fund revealed that seven interrelated drivers reinforce Liberia's legacy of violent conflict. These included poor leadership and the misuse of power, weak justice system, lack of shared vision, poverty and food insecurity, mismanagement of natural resources, pressure of reintegration/lack of absorption capacity in areas of return, as well as regional dimensions that are exacerbated by instability in neighboring countries such as Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire (UNPBF, 2008). The violent conflict affected all aspects of life in Liberia, especially when the state became a major source of threat to the security of the people (Ayoob, 1995). This was also evident in the emergence, fictionalization and splintering of the political elites, rebel groups, weak internal security, destruction of the justice system, the polarization of economic and social relations and cohesion, social decay, poverty, political instability, destruction of infrastructure such as communication, transport and other basic social services.

The conflict in Liberia impacted the security sector to the extent that the security architecture of the country became weak. The security sector involves the Armed Forces of Liberia (ALF), the Liberia National Police (LNP), National Security Agency (NSA), Ministry of National Security (MNS), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Special Security Services (SSS), Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN), Bureau of Customs and Excise (BCE), National Fire Service (NFS), and Monrovia City

Police (Ebo, 2005; Jaye, 2006; Jallah-Scott, 2008). Prior to the violent conflict, Liberia's security sector was heavily politicized by the state. Its personnel survived on patronage along ethnic lines to the extent that the security sector became highly unpopular for its lack of professionalism, corruption and wanton abuse of citizens' rights. The ruthlessness of Liberia's security sector became more visible during the violent conflict. The collapse of security sector led to the emergence of rebel groups. In fact, it was the deliberate politicization of the armed forces by authoritarian regimes, which gave way to the de-professionalization of the security sector (Fayemi, 2005; Nyei, 2010).

### **Overview of ECOWAS and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation in Liberia**

The reluctance of the United Nations and other western countries to show a strong concern and commitment towards the situation in Liberia created a situation and condition ECOWAS had to resort to West Africa solution to a West African problem. This was experimented using ECOMOG as a launching pad. The fact that ECOWAS undertook such initiative represented a significant shift in the involvement of regional organizations in peace and security issues. This was underscored by an earlier call by Boutros Boutros Ghali, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, to the effect that regional organizations should reduce the pressure faced by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in peacekeeping. He argued that:

Regional action, however, could lighten the burden of the Council and contribute to a deeper sense of participation, consensus and democratization in international affairs. Consultations between the United Nations and regional arrangements or agencies could do much to build international consensus on the nature of a problem and the measures required to address it<sup>2</sup>.

At a time, when the international community demonstrated little or no concern over the situation in Liberia, ECOWAS rose to the challenge. Hence, a peace enforcement force under the auspices of the

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<sup>2</sup> An Agenda for Peace was a report written by Boutros Boutros Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations and presented to the United Nations Security Council in 1992.

ECOMOG was established. It was the Liberian conflict that led to the establishment of ECOMOG as the first peacekeeping and peace enforcement mission set up a regional economic body in the world (Galadima, 2006; Golwa, 2009). Amidst the devastating effect of the violent conflict in Liberia, the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia was designed, which called for the establishment of ECOMOG in Liberia (Adibe, 1998). In August 1990, an ECOMOG force with membership drawn from Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone were put in place, thereby making it a primary source of security and stability in Liberia (Aning, 1994).

The emergence of ECOMOG as a regional mechanism for responding to the complex emergency in Liberia was premised on the notion that regional stability, unity, mutual trust and good neighborliness were necessary for achieving the ultimate goal of ECOWAS. This had to do with a harmonious and united West African region (Nwankwo, 2010). The establishment of ECOMOG laid the foundation for peace, stabilization, reconciliation and rehabilitation in Liberia, which in turn led to the design of other post-conflict initiatives by ECOWAS. The mandate of ECOMOG in Liberia included:

1. Creation of a 30 kilometre free zone around Monrovia, the capital of Liberia;
2. Enforcement of ceasefire among the factions and ensure compliance;
3. Reporting of violations to the ECOWAS Secretariat;
4. Separation of the warring factions by creating buffer zones between them; and
5. Disarming and encampment of the warring factions to facilitate peaceful resolution of the crisis.

At the initial stage, ECOMOG was confronted with challenges that bothered on funding, human resource and differences in strategies by member states on how to best to respond to the complex emergency in Liberia. Despite these challenges, the successes recorded in this light was underscored by the strong consensus among member states that their sovereign interests were best protected and promoted through a common security mechanism. The successes of ECOWAS in this light were attributed to several factors, which Hutchful (1999) identified as:

- a. The ability of the organization to shift the mandate of its force from peacekeeping to peace enforcement and peace-making as developments on the ground dictated, to and to turn to regional

(OAU) and international (UN) initiatives as its own sub-regional initiatives flagged;

- b. The growing consensus among states in the region that conflict was self-defeating and those sovereign interests were best served by a credible common security mechanism.

### **ECOWAS as a Catalyst for the ‘Comprehensive Peace Agreement’ (CPA)**

After series of consultations and failed agreements between the government of Liberia and rebel groups, a CPA was signed in August, 2003, which brought to end, over a decade of violent conflict in the country. Prior to the CPA of 2003, ECOWAS played a leading role in crafting about fourteen different agreements between 1990 and 2003, which were not adhered to by the parties (Hayner, 2007). The successes recorded as evident in the signing of a CPA in 2003, laid the foundation for ECOWAS involvement in post-conflict rehabilitation in Liberia. The situation in Liberia was one that ECOWAS played a more visible and prominent role in terms of facilitating dialogue, exploring ways that the United Nations and other external actors could assist in bringing peace, security and stability to Liberia. All these were done from a perspective that viewed ECOWAS as a mediator in the region.

The CPA represented an opportunity for the transition of Liberia from one that severed serious dislocation to one that is peaceful and stable. Here, issues such as the reform of the security sector, electoral reform, strengthening of governance and political institutions, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration among others. On the whole, the CPA provided clear-cut direction on the responsibilities of ECOWAS in defining the future of Liberia in the aftermath of years of violent conflicts.

Also, Resolution 1509 of the United Nations Security Council, which was passed in September 2003, provided the legal and political framework for the design and implementation of SSR as a core component of the CPA in Liberia. Within this context, the Resolution empowered the UNMIL to assist the transitional government of Liberian in terms of monitoring and restructuring the police and the armed forces of Liberia. A point of note here is the fact that the Resolution recognized the strategic role of ECOWAS towards the success of the SSR process in the country, in the light of the leading role ECOWAS played, which led to the cessation of hostility and the signing of the CPA.

### **Security Sector Reform (SSR)**

Part four, Article VII of the CPA which dealt with SSR, called for the disbandment of irregular forces, reforming and restructuring of the armed forces by putting in place a new command structure. The CPA also called upon the parties to the conflict (the government of Liberia and rebel forces), to allow ECOWAS, the United Nations, and the African Union to provide advisory staff, equipment, logistics and experienced trainers for the SSR effort.

SSR in Liberia was a critical component of conflict transformation and effective provision of security for both the state and its citizens. This was in line with ECOWAS Vision 2020, which places more emphasis on the people rather than the states. It encouraged a departure from the repressive traditions of the Liberian state, which was characterized by gross violation of the rights of citizens by the security agents. Emphasis here was premised on the reform of the military, police and other para-military agencies, so as to make them more professional, transparent and accountable, as well as strengthening of civil oversight mechanisms on the security sector respectively.

### **The Organization and Monitoring of Democratic Elections**

The aftermath of the agreement between the former government of Liberia, and the two rebel groups, Liberia United for Reconstruction and Development (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) as enshrined in the CPA of 2003, laid the foundation for the conduct of the first election in post-conflict Liberia, in October 2005<sup>3</sup>. The commitment of ECOWAS towards the CPA of 2003 and the political stability in post-conflict Liberia was evident in its support for the building of credible institutions in the country, as one of the priority plans for post-conflict Liberia. It was hinged on the philosophy that prospect of peace building in Liberia, must start with the conduct of elections, which ECOWAS must spearhead, in concert with other development partners (Adebajo, 2004). This led to the conduct of elections that were celebrated as free, fair and transparent. The ECOWAS support for a peaceful resolution of the political crisis in Liberia was hinged on its earlier decision not to recognize any

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<sup>3</sup> See the Election Observation Mission Final Report of the International Republican Institute on the Republic of Liberia National Elections, October 11<sup>th</sup> and November 8<sup>th</sup> 2005.

government that came to power through the use of force or violence<sup>4</sup>. This was driven by the assumption that the conduct of credible elections can play a significant role in stabilizing a society such as Liberia, which has just come out of over a decade of violent conflict. From a political standpoint, for ECOWAS, its post-conflict rehabilitation programme for Liberia was underscored by the significant relationship that exists between the conduct of elections and the stabilization of post-conflict Liberia.

There is no doubt that ECOWAS was able to galvanize the support of civil society and the international community in ending dictatorship and opening up the democratic space in Liberia, with the conduct of elections. These actors were united in their goal of promoting democracy through the conduct of credible elections. The expertise of ECOWAS in conflict management became a useful tool in managing the tensions that arose in the aftermath of the presidential elections in October 2010. To underscore this fact, the prompt intervention of ECOWAS in managing the tension between the National Electoral Commission (NEC) of Liberia and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) over their roles in Liberia's electoral process contributed in a significant manner in providing clear cut direction on the role of each of this actor. For instance, while NEC was to conduct the elections, UNMIL was charged with the responsibility of mobilizing international assistance and technical support to NEC respectively.

### **Partnership with Civil Society for Peace, Security and Governance**

Partnership with civil society organizations has been a core component of the ECOWAS strategy for post-conflict rehabilitation. The critical role played by civil society during and in the aftermath of the violent conflict in Liberia, laid the foundation for a strategic partnership between ECOWAS and civil society on issues related to peace, security and stability in Liberia. Some of them included the West African Network for Peace building (WANEP), West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA), as well as the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF). The establishment of Elections Unit by ECOWAS created an opportunity for more robust partnership

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<sup>4</sup> See Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity meeting in its Sixty-Fourth Ordinary Session in Yaounde, Cameroon from 1 to 5 July, 1996.

between ECOWAS and civil societies in the region, through the WACSOF.

In concert with ECOWAS, WACSOF played a critical role in post-conflict Liberia with respect to election observation, conflict management and peace building, as well as democracy and good governance. The partnership between ECOWAS and civil society was anchored on the fact that civil society possesses the ability and capacity to make informed input into ECOWAS peace building initiatives in Liberia and the West African region (Opoku, 2007).

### **The UN and ECOWAS Inter-Agency Task Force on West Africa**

In May 2001, the UN established the UN Inter-Agency Task Force as a mechanism for strengthening ECOWAS/UN cooperation, with ECOWAS as its epicenter. The focus was to support the efforts of ECOWAS in the area of peacekeeping, peace building, conflict prevention, elections, as well as its work with civil societies across the West African region. The appointment of a Special Representative of the United Nations was meant to help coordinate strategies, monitor and report on the activities of ECOWAS so as to ensure its harmonized were harmonized with that of the UN (Abebajo, 2002). With the setting up of the secretariat of the UN office in Dakar, Senegal, in 2002, the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for West Africa came into existence. Collaboration between ECOWAS and the UN with respect to the situation in Liberia was enhanced through the office.

The core task of the inter agency task force was to take stock of sub-regional priority needs in peace and security; humanitarian affairs and economic and social development; to consult with governments and with ECOWAS on enhancing cooperation with the United Nations in addressing those needs; to recommend elements of a sub-regional strategy to help address the challenges identified; and to make recommendations on mobilizing international support and assistance for the proposed strategy. This was the cornerstone of the strategic partnership between ECOWAS and the UN in their efforts towards crafting an integrated approach to insecurity and instability in Liberia and other countries within the Manu River Area.

### **The ECOWAS Early Warning System**

In a bid to ensure a robust response to emergencies as a key lesson from the involvement of ECOWAS in Liberia's conflict, an early warning system was established in the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja.

It was established in line with Article 58 of the revised ECOWAS Treaty and the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. It comprises the Observation and Monitoring Centre at the ECOWAS Commission, which is located in Abuja, Nigeria, as well as four Zonal observatories located in Banjul (The Gambia), Cotonou (Benin), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), and Monrovia (Liberia). The whole idea was to ensure that the response capacity of ECOWAS to emerging or imminent threats at both the national and regional levels.

The early warning system known as ECOWARN was meant to provide an effective communication system for the region as a framework for conflict prevention and management (Adebajo, 2004). Despite the successes recorded so far, with respect to the establishment of the ECOWAS observatories for early and responses, concerns have been raised about the ability and capacity of the system to gather the needed early warning information, as a basis for bridging the gap that exist between early warning and the design and implementation of early response strategies in the region (Opoku, 2007).

### **The ECOWAS Moratorium on the Import, Export and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons**

The huge devastation that characterized the violent conflict that was witnessed in Liberia was fuelled largely by the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs). The challenge posed by the illicit production and sale of arms was given serious attention by ECOWAS, which provided the basis for discussion around how to checkmate it. With support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a Programme for the Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) was designed in order to provide ECOWAS with the needed assistance for the implementation of a moratorium on arms (Adebajo, 2007).

The imposition of United Nations sanctions on the warring factions in Liberia was spearheaded by ECOWAS in the light of the rising threats posed by the movement of arms into the country, which was linked to the violation of the provisions of the Yamoussoukro IV Agreement (Holtom, 2007). Resolution 788 (1992) of the United Nations Security Council called for the implementation of a general and complete embargo on the supply of arms and military equipment to Liberia, subject to a decision of the Security Council. Though, it exempted the peacekeepers of ECOWAS in Liberia.

The ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa,

which came into effect in 1998, also laid the foundation for an arms embargo against Liberia. United Nations Security Resolution on arms embargo against Liberia through Resolution 1343 of 2001. The ECOWAS Moratorium sought to control the spread of SALWs and mercenary activities in Liberia, as well as contain the activities of rebel groups and arms proliferation within the Manu River Area (MRA), which is made up of Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Badmus (2009) identified three interrelated objectives that informed the Moratorium, which had to do with the fact that: First, it aimed at preventing conflicts. Second is post-conflict reconstruction. The logic behind these goals is that in post-conflict reconstruction, a major task is to avoid the process sliding back into armed conflict. Another goal is to stem the increasing wave of crime and banditry in the region. This is based on the strong conviction that the availability and easy access to SALWs may invite violent solutions to problems and consequently, acquisition of SALWs for self-defense since there may be no effective police to rely upon.

In line with Article 24 of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons of 2006<sup>5</sup>, which called for the establishment of national frameworks in addressing the menace posed by the proliferation of SALWs, the Transitional Working Group (TWG) on Small Arms and Light Weapons was transformed into the Liberian National Commission on Small Arms (LiNCSA) in 2006. The core mandate of LiNCSA had to do with the formulation and implementation of policies that were aimed at addressing the problems associated with small arms proliferation and illicit trafficking, as well as coordinating and monitoring efforts by the private sector in preventing, combating and eradicating the proliferation and illicit trade in SALWs within and across the borders of Liberia. One of the objectives of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons was the consolidation of the gains of the Declaration of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of small arms and its Code of Conduct.

### **ECOWAS and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation in Liberia: The Key Lessons**

The involvement of ECOWAS in post-conflict rehabilitation in Liberia, laid the foundation for the restoration of peace, security and stability in

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<sup>5</sup> ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, 2006, available at <http://www.poaiss.org/RegionalOrganizations/ECOWAS/ECOWAS%20Convention%202006.pdf>

the country, with several lessons for ECOWAS, its member states and the international community. These lessons are meant to serve as reference points for future engagements by supra-national organizations and regional organizations in the maintenance of peace and security. Indeed, these lessons have contributed in no small way in redefining and repositioning ECOWAS for a more effective and efficient role as a regional mechanism for West Africa in its pursuit of a more secured and prosperous region.

### **ECOWAS as a Test Case for Regional Security Mechanism**

The ECOWAS intervention in Liberia represented the first attempt by a regional organization to establish a mechanism for responding to complex emergency on its own. ECOWAS relied solely on its own human and material resources in its intervention in Liberia. It was also the first time in the history of Peace Support Operations (PSOs) that the United Nations deployed a military observer mission to support a regional force that was already on the ground (Adebajo, 2002). This was in line with the call by the former Secretary General of the United Nations that the heavy burden posed by the involvement of the United Nations as a result of its involvement in peacekeeping can be reduced through regional security arrangement (Ghali, 1992).

### **ECOMOG as a Model for Stabilization**

The successes associated with the emergence of ECOMOG and the stabilization role it played in Liberia, made it to be considered a model for conflict management and stabilization in the West African region and beyond. It was used to contain conflicts in Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire among others. Hence, ECOWAS decided to make it a permanent feature of its conflict management and resolution framework, as contained in the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.

The ECOWAS experience with the establishment of ECOMOG as a tool for stabilization was quite significant against the backdrop of the fact that the decision to establish ECOMOG was a rational one in the light of the growing refusal or reluctance by the international community to get involve in peacekeeping activities in the African continent. On their part, Member states of ECOWAS viewed ECOMOG more as a vehicle for defining their security apparatus (Ero, 2000), which can also serve as a model for other regional organizations.

### **Shared Commitment of Supra and Regional Organisations**

The involvement of ECOWAS and the United Nations in Liberia represented the first joint partnership in peacekeeping and peace building undertaken by the United Nations in concert with another organization. Under the arrangement, ECOWAS through ECOMOG was charged with the task of ensuring ceasefire, disarmament, as well as ensuring the safety of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) observer and staff. The UNOMIL was to monitor the activities of ECOMOG. It has been argued that a common ECOWAS framework on SSR at the regional level is imperative, in view of the fact that it would contribute positively to on-going dialogue on a common understanding of SSR, as well as bridging the gaps associated with the practice of public security provision that are characterized by operational and governance deficits at the level of ECOWAS, AU and the UN (Ebo, 2007).

In the spirit of the strategic partnership between ECOWAS and the UN, prior to the establishment of ECOMOG, ECOWAS made a request to the UN for technical assistance towards the setting up of a peacekeeping force in Liberia (Jonah, 2004). Such cooperation between ECOWAS and the UN gave credibility and legitimacy to its efforts in Liberia. Above all, it inspired and renewed confidence from the majority of Liberians.

### **Successful Reconciliation**

One of the challenges faced by ECOWAS over the establishment of ECOMOG and its deployment to Liberia was the divided position of the member states over intervening in Liberia. While for some of the countries from the franco-phone side, there was no basis for such an intervention. Moreover, such an intervention was seen as been at variance with the UN and OAU Charters that abhorred interference in the internal affairs of member states, as well as the 1978 ECOWAS Protocol on Non-Aggression. Nigeria led the other countries in setting up ECOMOG based on the philosophy that the situation in Liberia constituted a serious security threat to the West African region, which made intervention a practical necessity. Though, the leading role played by Nigeria became a source of rivalry and disagreement among Member States of ECOWAS. As a result of deep seated suspicion, member states sometimes refuses to participate actively in, or even oppose ECOMOG operations because a rival member state played a prominent role in the decision to send troops or seen to be taking credit for the initial start-up of the operation (Khobe, 2000). In other cases, statement giving prominence to the role of a particular country can

trigger resistance and refusal to send troops from others. There was also the fear by smaller countries of the dominant role of Nigeria in ECOMOG. Some feared that ECOMOG was a kind of imperial excuse by Nigeria to interfere in the internal politics of smaller states.

### **Regional Cooperation as a Foundation for Peace, Security and Stability**

The experience of ECOWAS in Liberia shows that in crafting a proactive response to complex emergencies, countries can achieve certain objectives more effectively through collective, as against their individual efforts. The intervention by ECOWAS also highlighted the linkage between regional security and regional economic development. Hence, in advancing its goal of integrating the West African region economically, the issue of peace and security had to be placed on the front burner of the ECOWAS agenda. This is underscored by the fact that in the absence of peace and security, the goal of economic growth and development cannot be easily actualized.

Beyond the issue of post-conflict rehabilitation, the main task of reconstruction constitutes a major challenge for ECOWAS in view of the paucity of funds, which has often hampered the activities of ECOWAS on matters related to peace and security. As an organization whose membership is made up of developing economies, reliance on external support constitutes a significant part of its funding. This reality has often made it difficult for ECOWAS to fully realize its objective of achieving socio-economic growth and development through its involvement in reconstruction as part of a wider post-conflict rehabilitation programme (Badmus, 2009).

The situation in Liberia highlighted the fact that the absence of peace and security will halt development. This point was underscored by the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), which laid the foundation for its recovery from long years of violent conflict. Liberia's President, Sirleaf Johnson argued that the governments' aim was to use the PRS as a road map for implementing mutually reinforcing policies that were aimed towards political stability, inclusive economic recovery and the restoration of basic services. It identified four interrelated pillars, namely-peace and security, the economy, rule of law, as well as infrastructure and delivery of basic services. Based on the foregoing, an ECOWAS initiative that captures the imperativeness of integrating reconstruction as a core component of its rehabilitation programme would have fast-tracked Liberia's recovery process.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the prospects for peace, security and stability in Liberia was facilitated by ECOWAS through its proactive response to complex emergency in the country. In the case of Liberia, the consolidation of peace through governance and regional cooperation represented the pillar upon which the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia was built. Without the intervention of ECOWAS in Liberia during and in the aftermath of the violent conflict experienced in the country, the Liberian state would have collapsed beyond imagination.

From the ECOWAS experience, responding to complex emergencies as evident in Liberia, posed a very serious challenge, in terms of its ability and capacity to implement its action plans as a platform for the attainment of economic development and security in the region. Hence, the strengthening of the response capacity of ECOWAS would be achieved more through collective rather than individual actions. Despite the success recorded by ECOWAS in terms of its involvement in Liberia, there were several challenges that hampered its successes, which had to do with inadequate capacity to protect civilians, poor human rights record, lack of neutrality and complicity in exploiting Liberia's natural resources, funding and logistical constraints, as well as rivalry and lack of cooperation between the Franco-phone and Anglo-phone speaking West Africa (Olonisakin, 2008; Kabia, 2011).

Now and in the future, the challenges, success and prospects of ECOWAS will be heavily dependent upon the attitude of Member states, in terms of the extent to which they observe or respect the principles of collective security, mutuality and burden sharing in their response to emergencies in the West African. ECOWAS as a regional platform remain the foundation for inter dependence that can engender the spirit of togetherness in achieving peace and security in the region. In the absence of all these, regional peace and security will be hampered, thereby, reviving and aggravating violent conflicts more than the ones experienced in the past.

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