



WIPNET Journal

Her Stories

Women's work, experience, and perceptions of conflicts

Vol. 1 No. 2 December, 2003



The Sugar in Our Region



Mama Peace



Dentist turned advocate



Ugandan, West Africa

WANEP



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

A network thrives on the differences of the people who work in the net. WIPNET draws on the strength, experiences, character and vision of women from different backgrounds and countries. Here we capture the lives of 4 different women who enrich the network.



Women Praying for Peace

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Opinions or experiences expressed in this journal are the author's and may not necessarily reflect WANEP's views.

HerStories is an annual journal of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), a program of WANEP that seeks to build the capacity of women in active peacebuilding process in West Africa.

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EDITORIAL COLUMN



2003 saw peace once again being an elusive commodity in West Africa. As the sub region grappled with what to do with Cote d' Ivoire, Liberia exploded and our radio, newspapers,

and TVs were inundated with horrors that were déjà vu of previous experiences in Sierra Leone and yes Liberia. It seemed like we were in a re-run of a very bad African movie that had the same plot, actors, and location but all of a sudden this story had a twist as women burst into the scene; women of Liberia under WIPNET decided that the story would have a different conclusion this time. Women bombarded the Liberian government in Monrovia with demands of peace and took their cause to the peace talks in Accra. They expressed their view points and strategies for peace, which were really the cries of the Liberian people and all peace loving Africans. The result of which was that the talks and situation gained international attention and the unprecedented in West Africa occurred; Charles Taylor was forced to resign. Do the women have anything to do with the breath of fresh air blowing in Liberia? Depends on who you talk to, some people say yes, others say no. We have left that debate to commentators, for uswe never had a say in peace and conflict issues in the past, then the one time women mobilize in thousands and speak up, everyone notices and change came. As the year unfolded, the success of WIPNET in Liberia became infectious and WIPNET-Cote d'Ivoire began conciliatory visits to rebels in Bouake and now the women are close allies with the Ministry of Reconciliation working to restore peace to our beautiful Ivory Coast.

Women's peace activism through WIPNET is steadily growing strong and the vision gets clearer as our sub region see the power and impact women yield when they work in collectives. In this edition of our journal, we focus on women's experiences in peace processes in 2003. We take you through a journey of our highs and lows in and hope that women in Africa and beyond read this journal and become motivated to always let our voices ring and be heard.



Getting women to write is always a problem but getting them to talk is by far easier. In HerStories women write as they converse daily

by speaking out about problems, sharing experiences and information. This is a form of social action that can bring about empowerment. It is also a stimulus for women who have never written to take up the daunting task of putting their thoughts, dreams, fears and aspirations on paper. This was and remains the underlying intention for the Her Stories journal.

There is no doubt that HerStories is an empowering tool that provides women with the space to be themselves. The journal also recognizes the indubitably giant steps that women are making in their contribution to just peace in the sub region. These efforts must be recognized, documented and disseminated.

Since 2002 when it was first launched, HerStory has given a 'voice', safe space and opportunity to women in West Africa to articulate their views and concerns on issues that affect their well being, especially as it relates to their involvement in peace processes in the region. The success and spread of the journal in just 1 year, demonstrates the importance of sharing stories and the willingness of women to speak up on issues affecting them if given the space and opportunity.

2003 was an action-packed year for the women in peacebuilding program (WIPNET) as noted in this column. This edition thus takes a different dimension. It not only shares inspirational stories on the experiences of women, but also provides access to information about resources that can assist women, and shares success stories of the Women in Peacebuilding program in 2003.

WIPNET...

Women's Leadership in Peacebuilding in
the 21st Century

