



PRESS RELEASE

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WANEP and CJID Train 20 Community Leaders to Counter Violence-Inciting Disinformation in Sokoto

Sokoto, Nigeria - The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, WANEP, in partnership with the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development, CJID, has trained 20 community leaders in Sokoto State on countering violence-inciting disinformation and strengthening community resilience against harmful narratives. The two-day training was implemented under the European Union-Funded project, **Countering Disinformation and Empowering Democracy in North-western Nigeria**. Participants included traditional rulers, religious leaders, women and youth leaders, community mediators, market representatives, civil society actors, and grassroots influencers.

The training strengthened participants' understanding of the link between conflict and information disorder. It covered narrative analysis, gender dimensions of information disorder, conflict-sensitive communication, fact-checking, counter-narrative development, and Do No Harm principles, equipping community leaders to address harmful information in ways that promote peace and protect vulnerable groups.

A key output of the training was the development of community action plans, which participants will roll out in their communities during the next phase of the project. The plans focus on promoting verified information, supporting community dialogue, reporting harmful narratives early, and strengthening local structures for peaceful response.

Speaking during the training, the Ciroma of Sokoto **Alhaji Aliyu Abubakar III** affirmed the importance of community leadership in countering harmful information, noting that: *“Traditional rulers are close to the people and are often the first to hear about tensions in the community. When we are properly informed, we can help verify information, calm fears, and guide our people toward peaceful action.”*

The National Network Coordinator of WANEP-Nigeria, **Dr. Bridget Osakwe**, noted that trusted community actors are central to preventing violence. *“By strengthening the capacity of community leaders to identify harmful narratives and respond in a conflict-sensitive manner, we are supporting local ownership of peace and information resilience.”*

WANEP-Nigeria reaffirmed its commitment to working with CJID, the European Union, community stakeholders, media actors, and relevant institutions to strengthen democratic resilience and peaceful coexistence across Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kebbi, and Niger States.

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