Peace and resilience in West Africa: What challenges for development actors?


The issue of violent extremism is acute in West Africa. The threat persists in Mali as well as in neighbouring countries. This has sparked a security response that will not be sufficient to counter this phenomenon. The side event considered how development interventions can further address the security challenges in the region.

In his opening speech, JICA’s Vice-President, Mr Kenichi Tomiyoshi, recalled JICA’s efforts to promote peace and security since TICAD V in 2013. He also emphasized the importance of the side event in contributing to the formulation of new projects and more effective interventions by development partners, including JICA, in support to partner countries.

The results of a JICA funded study conducted by the ISS show that it is not economics, religion or ideology alone that explain why young people join extremist groups. The study was based on interviews with more than 60 young people previously involved with armed jihadist groups in Mali.

The research found that the need to protect oneself and/or one’s family members, community or livelihood is an important factor, and that in most cases several factors together influence the decision to join an extremist group. Rather than searching for a single underlying cause, the local realities behind youth engagement must be analysed to inform responses. An effort must be made to resist the temptation of applying results drawn from other contexts.

Speakers and participants agreed that security responses are necessary but insufficient to counter violent extremism. They also agreed on the central role of coordinated development approaches led by States, development actors and other relevant stakeholders to tackle this multidimensional phenomenon.

This includes institutional reforms, support for the national reconciliation process, strengthening of local governance through decentralisation and local administration capacity building.

The session was moderated by Mr Tsutomu limura, Resident Representative of JICA Côte d'Ivoire Office. Eminent speakers included: Excellency Mr Mamadou Namory Traoré, former Minister in charge of Decentralisation and State Reform of the Republic of Mali; Her Excellency Ms Tomoko Akane, Ambassador for International Judicial Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and former Director of the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders; Mr Ousmane Moussa, Technical Advisor in charge of Education at the Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic of Niger; Mr Raphaël Gbala Gnato, Advisor at the Ministry of Interior and Security of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire; Mr Babacar Seck, Director of the Japan-Senegal Vocational and Technical Training Centre of the Republic of Senegal; Dr Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni, Director of ISS Office in Dakar; Mr William Assanvo, Senior Researcher at ISS Office in Dakar; and Ms.Michiko Miyamoto, JICA expert in Mali, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration.
Participants

Panelists

- Akane, Tomoko, Ambassador for International Judicial Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and former Director, United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders
- Gbala Gnato Raphaël, Advisor to the Ministry of the Interior and Security, Côte d'Ivoire
- Moussa, Ousmane, Technical Advisor, Education Unit in the Office of the Presidency, Niger
- Seck, Babacar, Director, Vocational and Technical Training Center Senegal-Japan, Senegal
- Traore, Mamadou Namory, former Minister for Decentralization and State Reform of Mali
- Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni, Director of ISS Office in Dakar
- William Assanvo, Senior Researcher at ISS Office in Dakar
- Miyamoto, Michiko, JICA expert in Mali, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration

Moderator

- Iimura, Tsutomu, Resident Representative of JICA Côte d'Ivoire Office

Opening Remarks

- Tomiyoshi, Kenichi, Vice-President, JICA
From the right, Mr. Moussa, Ousmane, Technical Advisor, Education Unit in the Office of the Presidency, Niger, Mr. Traore, Mamadou Namory, former Minister for Decentralization and State Reform of Mali, Mr Raphaël Gbala Gnato, Advisor at the Ministry of Interior and Security of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire, Mr. Seck, Babacar, Director, Vocational and Technical Training Center Senegal-Japan, Senegal