**MINUTES OF THE TASK FORCE OF WEST AFRICA REGIONAL CENTER(WARC) MEETING HELD AT THE UMC HOUSE , FREETOWN SIERRA LEONE**

**On Thursday, September 28, 2017, the Task Force of the West Africa Regional Center(WARC) held its regular meeting at the United Methodist Church House located in Leicester Peak, Freetown, Sierra Leone, with the following persons in attendance:**

Attendance at the meeting was:

1. Rev. Oyvind Aske
2. Dr. Roar G. Fotland
3. Ms. Emma Okai
4. Dr. George K. Weagba
5. Prof. Sam Togba Slewion
6. Mr. Smart K. Senesie
7. Dr. Victor Massaquoi
8. Mr. Samuel Grant
9. Mr. D. Siafa Morris(new Coordinator of WARC)

The members convened the meeting after attending a three-day workshop (Monday, September 25th-Wednesday, September 27, 2017) on Value-based Leadership held on the campus of the United Methodist University (UMU)-Sierra Leone. The Chairman of the Task Force, Dr. Weagba, presided over the meeting.

* 1. **Reading & Adoption of Agenda:** The motion to adopt the Agenda was made by Dr. Massaquoi and seconded by Dr. Roar and later adopted by consensus.
  2. **Opening Prayer:** The Coordinator of the WARC, Mr. Morris, offered prayers for a successful deliberation and outcome of the meeting.
  3. **Welcome Remarks:** There were two separate Welcome Remarks as follows:

1. Mr. Senesie, Director of CELAD, welcomed the members of the Task Force to the Sierra Leone and specifically to the UMC House in Freetown on behalf of the Bishop of the Sierra Leone Annual Conference and staff of the UMC House. He wishes the participants a successful deliberation.
2. Dr. Weagba, Chairman and Presiding Officer, welcome all members of the Task Force to the meeting and hope they have come prepared to actively participate and contribute to deliberation of the Task Force, considering the many critical issues at stake. He also used the time to express condolence to the brothers and sisters for the recent tragedy due to the mudslide, adding, “We pray that God continue to comfort and console the bereaved families. He also formally welcomes the newly hired Coordinator of the WARC, Mr. Morris, and ensure of the full cooperation and support of the Task Force as he assumes his new role at the Center.
   1. **Reading & Adoption of Minutes:**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Task force held on February 24, 2017 in Freetown, Sierra Leone, prepared by the Former Coordinator of the Center, Mr. Ephraim Seville, was read by the Secretary of the Task Force, Prof. Slewion. Following the reading of the Minutes, the following was done:

1. **Corrections-**Rev. Aske pointed out that his name was misspelled Askie instead of Aske. Dr. Roar also pointed out that his last name is spelled Fotland and not Fortland. Others pointed out that the email addresses need to be corrected.

Ms. Emma Okai, Director of CEDEVP, noted that the DCS Competence Seminar should be corrected to read that the PID Competence Seminar to be hosted by the DCS in November, 2017. The venue and other details will be provided later.

It was observed in the Minutes that names of participants making inputs in the meeting were bolded and underlined. But the participants noted that the bold and underline were not necessary.

It was agreed that the Thematic Areas noted in the minutes could be modified or combined for Research Thesis for students.

After the following corrections were made the motion to adopt was made by Mr. Senesie and seconded by Prof. Slewion. It was also agreed that the Minutes be sent to the Task Force Drop Box for members to access.

* 1. **Matters Arising from Minutes:**

The matters arising from the Minutes were as follows:

1. UMU to identify persons to undergo TOT for Value-based Leadership in Sierra Leone in September, 2017- the participants were identified by the Academic Coordinators and attended the workshop.
2. Exploring Funding sources in European Union (EU) as alternative funding sources –Dr. Roar, the responsible person for this task, reported that more efforts will be exerted to ensure that an application for funding is submitted during the new funding timeline in 2019 through his University. He also added that a MOU will be signed between his University and UMU-Sierra Leone to facilitate the process after the formal launching and opening of the UMU-Sierra Leone. Dr. Massaquoi also said that he and others are exploring local funding sources in Sierra Leone.
3. LOGO for WARC:

-Mr. Senesie presented a draft of the Logo for review and approval. After the review of the original draft, it was agreed that the UMC Emblem be replaced with the PID Emblem. This was done immediately and the Logo was later presented with the necessary changes. It was then approved by the Task Force. Chairman Weagba then asked Rev. Aske to present the Logo to the Steering Committee for review and endorsement. Also Rev. Aske presented a new organogram of the WARC recommended by the Norwegian Board of Global Ministries.

1. VBL Training in Liberia (March 11-17, 2018)- after discussion on the matter, the body agreed on the following:

* The body agreed that the VBL training should be more research-focused, involving students and professional researchers. The facilitators should plan to conduct workshop on research. Chairman Weagba also informed the body that UMU-Liberia will explore the possibility of having two of its graduating seniors present their thesis after a vigorous selections process.
* Date of the Workshop-it seems the date of the workshop may change from March to another month, considering that elections will be held in Sierra Leone in the same month and members of the Task Force from Sierra Leone need to participate in the process. Chairman Weagba asked Rev. Aske to consult with the Steering Committee and other stakeholders to determine a convenient time.
  1. **Business:**

1. Report on Study Tour in Ghana: The Coordinator of the WARC, Mr. Morris reported on the following:

* The study tour was held in Accra, Ghana, on August 13-18, 2017 with the following persons on the tour, Dr. George Weagba, Chairman of the Task Force, Dr. Victor Massaquoi, Vice Chairman of the Task Force, Prof. Sam Slewion, Secretary of the Task Force, Ms. Emma Okai, Director of CODEVPRO, Mr. Smart Senesie, Director of CELAD and Mr. Morris, Coordinator of WARC.
* The institutions visited in Ghana include West Africa Network for Peace Building (WAPNET), Methodist University College-Ghana, West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) and Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center.
* The tour provided an opportunity for the Task Force to observe the modus operandi of the facilities visited, their training centers, seminar rooms, libraries (i.e. manual and e-libraries) and research centers.
* A debriefing session was held by the participants at the end of the tour with the following outcome and task assigned: A full report to be prepared by the Coordinator; development of the mission, vision and objectives of the WARC (Dr. Weagba and Prof. Slewion) and submission of a Strategic Framework for the WARC by Dr. Massaquoi.

1. Discussion of Report: The Task Force Members discussed the report and derived the following: Infrastructure need to be improved to ensure that the WARC is operating within best practices; Administrative staff need to be improved to make the Center effective; Material resources need to be obtained including developing a website for the WARC to enhance its awareness and accessibility.

The Chairman of the Task Force, Dr. Weagba, thanked the funders for the making the Tour possible. However, he clarified that the Task Force does not intent to make another Study Tour any time soon although the report may give the impression of such action. He then encouraged the members of the Task Force to give serious consideration to the recommendations and Action Items of the Report.

***Note: Full report of the Study Tour is available for review.***

(c) Update on WARC: The Coordinator of the Center, Mr. Morris, provided the following updates:

* Submitted two proposals for funding, including a Civic Voter Education Project with the National Elections Commission (NEC) of Liberia and a Global Environmental Security Monitoring Project with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Liberia. He said he is still awaiting response on these projects.
* Devising Marketing Strategies to create awareness for the Center among students and other professionals.
* Continue to mobilize research materials for the Center.
* Voluntarily increase his work days at the Center due to his commitment and the demand of the Center. Presently, his official work days are Three days a week (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday-9-5pm). His probation ends on September 30, 2017 and he began work on July 1st.

Discussion of the Updates: The participants discussed the updates and resolved on the following:

* The salary of the Coordinator need to be revisited to ensure that it commensurate with the expectation of the relevant authorities of the WARC.
* The idea of student interns is pursued to augment the staffing of the Center as was initially envisaged. Prof. Slewion told the body that he will assist in the implementation of this idea because the Social Work Department of the UMU regularly send students for Field Practicum and will consider the Center for this semester.

After the discussion of the report, the Task Force adopted the following Action Items for the Coordinator:

* Intensify Resource Mobilization for the Center
* Develop and Submit a Monthly PID Update to the Steering Committee and Task Force, mostly focusing on the work of CELAD and CODEVPRO.
* Produce a Quarterly Newsletter for the Center for more awareness
* Explore the development of a website for the Center.

(d) Presentation & Discussion of Strategic Plan Framework:

-Dr. Massaquoi presented a draft Strategic Plan Framework for discussion by the members. After review and discussion of the Framework, the body agreed on the following:

* Inclusion of Foreword in the Plan.
* Inclusion of an Organogram in the Plan.
* The SWOT Analysis should be focused on the WARC only.
* The MDGs in the draft should be changed to SDGs
* The Mission and Vision of the WARC should remain as they are contained in the Brochure disseminated during the formal launching and opening of the Center in 2016. However, it was agreed that the WARC Brochure be revised to reflect its new realities.
* The body agreed that the Core Values of the Center be as follows:

-Dedication to improve lives.

-Research Production and sharing

-Productive partnership and community participation

-Accountability, transparency and integrity

-Gender equality and social inclusion

-Teamwork and diversity.

* The strategic direction of the Center should focus on the below Pillars:

-Research and Community Participation

-Documentation

-Sustainability and Capacity Building

-Publication

The body agreed that based on the changes and inputs made to the Framework, Dr. Massaquoi now go ahead and develop a full Strategic Plan with the inputs of other members of the Task Force. It was also agreed that once the Plan is developed it should be send to the Steering Committee for their contributions. It is expected that the final Plan will be reviewed and approved during next Task Force meeting in Liberia, 2018.

(e) Progress Reports on VBL Curriculum Development & Integration:

The Chairman asked each Academic Coordinators to present a report or updates on the matter.

* Dr. Roar reported that he has asked students from his University to research on Global issues (not theology). He said one student has positively responded and presently in Sierra Leone to conduct his research on the CELAD projects. He said the student is from the SDA faith and an Elder in his Church. The student has also conducted research in Ghana. He said another female student is expected to conduct a research from an outside perspective (interview with people in the communities). He said hopefully will begin the implementation of a VBL curriculum at his University in June, 2018.
* Dr. Massaquoi reported the VBL will commence as a Course at the UMU-Sierra Leone in the School of Theology. MA students will also be encouraged to conduct research on PID and sponsored by CELAD. But he asked that exemption be made for Sierra Leone to allow for the use of BA students to conduct research outside of the standard policy based on the scarcity of MA students in the country. There are plans to conduct training in VBL with women and women and issued certificates.
* Dr. Roslyn Yatta Young, Academic Coordinator at UMU-Liberia, was in Sierra Leone, but did not attend the Task Force meeting due to illness. She was unable to leave her hotel. However, the body agreed that she be informed to present a report which should be attached to the Minutes of the meeting.

**Other Matters:**

* Drop Box-the body agreed that the Drop box be created and efforts be made to connect members of the Task Force.
* A What’s Up account is created for Task Force members to enhance communication among the members.

Following the exhaustion of the Agenda the meeting adjourned at 5:45pm. Mr. Morris offered the Benediction.

**Action Items:**

* Task Force to Explore EU funding during application process in 2019.
* Responsible Person: Dr. Roar Fotland.
* Task Force to explore funding alternatives in Sierra Leone.

Responsible Person: Dr. Massaquoi

* WARC Logo to be presented to Steering Committee for review and endorsement.

-Responsible Person: Rev. Aske.

* VBL Training to be held in Liberia with a research-focused once the date is determined.

Responsible Persons: Dr. George Weagba and Dr. Yatta Young.

* New Brochure for WARC to be produce to reflect changes.

Responsible Person: Mr. D. Siafa Morris, Coordinator of WARC

* Steering Committee to be consulted to determine new date for VBL training in Liberia, 2018.

Responsible Person: Rev. Aske.

* Updates on results of WARC proposals submitted to NEC and EPA.

Responsible Person: Mr. Morris, WARC Coordinator.

* WARC Coordinator, to perform the following Task:

-Intensify Resource Mobilization for the Center

-Develop and Submit a Monthly PID Update to the Steering Committee and Task Force, mostly focusing on the work of CELAD and CODEVPRO.

-Produce a Quarterly Newsletter for the Center for more awareness

-Explore the development of a website for the Center.

* WARC draft Three-year Strategic Plan Framework to be fully developed based on the inclusions from the Task Force meeting.

Responsible Person: Dr. Massaquoi

* WARC draft Strategic Plan to be presented to Steering Committee for review and inputs.

Responsible Person: Rev. Aske & Dr. Massaquoi.

* Task Force to review and approval final WARC Strategic Plan during regular Meeting in Liberia, 2018.

Responsible Person: Dr. Weagba and Dr. Massaquoi.

* Academic Coordinators to develop and Integrate VBL Curriculum in their respective academic institutions.

Responsible Person: Dr. Roar, Dr. Young and Dr. Massaquoi

* Dr. Young to submit report specifically on updates on VBL curriculum development and integration at UMU-Liberia. The report to be attached to the Minutes of the meeting.

Responsible Person: Dr. Young

Respectfully Submitted:

Prof. Sam Slewion

Secretary-Task Force