

# THE FORCE OF PEACE



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**Let us advance on the road to peace**

**CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

## EDITORIAL

### ELECTORAL PROCESS: AN EVENTFUL MONTH OF AUGUST

**S**ome people think and rightly so that usually, the month of August can only be lethargic. With the judicial recess, the school break, the summer holidays that empty the offices, in many countries, everything seems to be at a standstill at this time of the year.

*One would reasonably think that Côte d'Ivoire is no exception to the rule. Not in the least. To face the exceptional situation in which their country has been in the past few years, Ivorian main actors have luckily developed a high sense of urgency. They have, this year, given up their holidays to stand by the side of their country affected by an enduring crisis whose effects have been sorely felt by the population for more than a decade.*

One of the first results of their resolve is that like never before, the month of August has been so eventful. Amongst those events, The Force of Peace has chosen two of the most significant: the announcement made by the Prime Minister about holding of the presidential election on 31 October and the completion of the judicial phase of the provisional electoral list.

This progress has been saluted by Ivorians --who were not so long ago very sceptical about the evolution of the process-- in spite of the numerous difficulties and political tensions that have marred the delicate phase of litigation. Amongst those setbacks, it is worth mentioning controversy created by the thousands of requests to remove names of the potential voters from the provisional electoral lists.

The official closing of the electoral litigation announced on 26 August was regarded by the international community

as an important step towards the return of normalcy in Cote d'Ivoire.

Commenting the choice of 31 October as a date for the Presidential election, Principal Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Cote d'Ivoire (PDSRSG), Abou Moussa said on the Mission's Radio ONUCI FM that this decision was the choice of Ivorians through the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

Sceptical minds did not miss the opportunity to remind him that a similar evolution was seen before without concrete results. "The situation is now more favorable to go to elections than in the past," the Mission's number 2 retorted.

However, Mr. Abou Moussa is of the view that in spite of such a positive evolution there is nothing to crow about. Even though a date for the elections was announced, he stated, several tasks remain to be accomplished.

On the political field, the high stakes represented by the upcoming elections have again exacerbated frictions between political parties, mostly over the decision taken during the judicial phase of the electoral litigation. There is a general feeling that if no attention is paid to this lingering issue, the publication process of the final list would take more time than necessary and such a situation could derail the electoral agenda.

Furthermore, should we pass this important milestone, Mr. Abou Moussa reminded, more obstacles are to be overcome. Amongst them, the production of electoral documents, such as voting cards and the publication of

the distribution lists.

Equally important are the transportation and delivery of voting cards and electoral materials to the interior of Cote d'Ivoire, as well as the recruitment and training of electoral personnel.

Another crucial phase for the success of the electoral process is without doubt the cantonment of ex-combatants of the Armed Forces of Forces Nouvelles (FAFN), and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion (DDR) programme. This operation which started on 15 June in Korhogo is ongoing. If it is carried through, there is high hope that one important clause of the Ouagadougou Peace Accord (APO) would have been implemented.

As for the securing of the elections, the commanders of the four forces: the Defence and Security Forces of Cote d'Ivoire (FDS-CI), FAFN, UNOCI and Licorne, are continuing their discussions to better harmonize their actions in the field.

On the issue of the financing of the elections, the international community again reminded Ivorians that it is ready for action. More funds can be mobilized, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) and Humanitarian Coordinator in Cote d'Ivoire recently said. According to Ndolamb Ngockwey, the decision taken by Ivorian authorities to hold the elections on 31 October, will allow additional resources to be allocated to this country.

Such incentives should encourage and even convince Cote d'Ivoire main stakeholders to do their utmost to carry the electoral process to completion in order to allow their country to fully recover.

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# ARRIVAL OF NDOLAMB NGOKWEY, NEW DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR CÔTE D'IVOIRE

**T**he new Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Ndolamb Ngokwey, took up his duties on 2 August 2010 in Abidjan, with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). He replaces Georg Charpentier from Finland, who was appointed Deputy Special Representative and UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan in December 2009.

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mr. Ngokwey will also take up the post of Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Co-ordinator in Côte d'Ivoire.

Like his predecessor, the new number 3 at UNOCI, will ensure that the 20 UN agencies represented in the country will work in synergy with the peacekeeping mission. In UNOCI, Mr. Ngokwey will be in charge of overseeing HIV/AIDS, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants and Civil Affairs.

On the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Ngokwey welcomed the achievements made after the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and highlighted the need to consolidate these achievements which are the foundation for peace. He reiterated the international community's willingness to support the Ivorian government in obtaining its priorities and to work with civil society. He also recalled that the basket fund to finance the electoral process in Côte d'Ivoire contains almost 14 million euros.



Ndolamb Ngokwey © UN / ONUCI

With regard to the cantonment process, Mr. Ngokwey said he was optimistic that the Ivorian government will find the necessary means to satisfactorily resolve the issue. In terms of the United Nations contribution, after praising the 1000 microprojects initiative, which he described as laudable, he announced that a second series of microprojects is to be launched. « We should learn lessons from what worked and what did not work and be assured that past failures can be rectified for a better future, » he said.

Referring to the collateral damage

caused by conflict which among other things results in an influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) Mr. Ngokwey said that UN agencies were working with local authorities and IDPs to ensure « that people are reintegrated into their communities without much problem».

He therefore took the opportunity during the celebration on 19 August 2010 of World Humanitarian Day to pay tribute to all who work for this cause and those who have lost their lives while serving this cause. « This action by the United Nations continues to bear fruit by preventing deaths because above all, humanitarianism means not just saving lives but also preserving life, » he said. He also recalled that humanitarianism means total commitment.

Mr. Ngokwey, who joined the United Nations in 1986, worked as UN Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Mozambique.

He has a doctorate in sociology and anthropology from the University of California as well as a Masters in Public Health and a Masters in Anthropology from the same university. He also obtained a Bachelors Degree in Sociology from the University of Zaire (now DRC). Before joining the United Nations, Mr. Ngokwey taught at universities in Congo, the United States and Brazil.

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# UNOCI PARTICIPATES IN CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY IN COCODY



Young people came in huge numbers to celebrate their day © UN / ONUCI

**T**he International Youth Day for this year coincides with the launch of the World Youth Year. The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on 12 August celebrated this special occasion in Abidjan together with their partner, the International Association Africa Survival (IAAS). For this day which is celebrated by the international community throughout all the continents, a conference was organized in Cocody on the theme "Fighting poverty together."

The choice of the theme is not by chance. The youth which is the most representative layer of the Ivorian population is highly affected by the drawbacks of the crisis that the country has been going through since 2002. This is why on the occasion of the ceremony which was attended by nearly 200 persons from youth groups and associations and representatives of development partners, the Chairman of the IAAS, Silvère Kouakou Kouamé,

denounced the poverty that seriously affects the Ivorian population and its harmful effects on the youth wing. He therefore proposed "as a guarantee for lasting development, an institutional support to kick-start the diversification of activities for young people as well as a support to the development of micro-finance".

On behalf of the UN mission, Mrs. Marie-Irène Richmond Ahoua reaffirmed UNOCI's determination to continue to provide support to the Ivorian Government and all the structures involved in the process in order to lead the crisis-resolution process to a successful conclusion. "To succeed in this challenge, we rely on you the youth. As you know, the first plinth for the fight against poverty is peace. We are partners, because you will be beneficiaries of what is being built today", she said.

For her part, Mrs. Marie-Josiane Ogou of the UNDP defined poverty as the lack of material resources, such as food, drinking water, garments,

accommodation, living condition in general, but also of immaterial resources like access to education, the practice of enhancing activity and respect for others. "For the UNDP, poverty is not only a money-related problem, it also stems from failure to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Reducing poverty is the main objective of the UNDP's work and human development is emerging as the key for its action", she outlined. She then recalled the creation of a Plan for the Reduction of Poverty as part of the Millennium Development Goal, which was ratified in 2000 by the U.N. members States.

The event ended with the award of certificates of distinction to youth groups and various institutions involved in the promotion of environmental protection.

UNOCI's information stand attracted many people and raised much interest from the participants.

By Marie-Irene

# UNOCI HOLDS WORKSHOP FOR PRISON GUARDS ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS DETAINEES

**T**he Rule of Law Office of the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the Ivorian Department of Penitentiary Administration (DAP) organised two training seminars on prison rules and operational procedures pertaining to personnel of penitentiary administration with the financial support of the German Cooperation Agency (GTZ) in August.

The seminars which took place at the School of Prison Administration and Social Rehabilitation located at the Abidjan Prison were destined for prison managers from various prisons throughout Cote d'Ivoire and were aimed at reinforcing their knowledge of the application of international standards of prison administration and to comply with them in the management of their respective establishments.

The training also focused on the use of restraining techniques, disciplinary rules, the administrative handling of deaths, search, and other subjects which the participants were expected to impart to their subordinates in the various prisons of the country.

In situating the context of the seminar, the head of the Rule of Law Office, Françoise Simard said the seminar was the result of a long and exacting task undertaken by the Department of Prison Administration and the Rule of Law Office which is in charge of penitentiary matters at UNOCI. The aim, she said, was to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among professionals on the implementation of national, regional and international standards of discipline, procedures for handling cases of death, the use of the means of restraint and search operations. "You would be the effective transmitters of this knowledge on the implementation of these procedural standards to the agents under your supervision," Mrs. Simard told the participants.

She said the training was the result of a



The participants and their trainers © UN / UNOCI

wide consultation between the staff at all levels of responsibility in the targeted prison establishments in Abidjan, Adzope, Grand Bassam, Dabou, Dimbroko, Daloa, Soubre, among others, and UNOCI's Rule of Law Office. Consequently, she made it a point to praise the adoption of the participatory approach which would contribute to "a better streamlining of our penitentiary methods with national legislation and international standards," she told participants.

The Director of Penitentiary Administration, Mohammed Vabe Coulibaly welcomed the seminar, saying it had come to fill a gap in the training program which was limited in the past to theoretical education, military training and a brief practical internship in a penitentiary establishment. Without failing to thank the German Cooperation Agency and UNOCI, Mr. Coulibaly said the content of the training course was in conformity with the rules and regulations in force in Cote d'Ivoire and international norms.

He called on the participants to believe in the appropriateness of the prescribed procedures in order to faithfully transmit the knowledge acquired."

The GTZ representative, Benjamin Moch said GTZ has been collaborating with UNOCI to reinforce the capacity of penitentiary establishments in Cote d'Ivoire. "We hope the seminar would serve as a platform for identifying the needs to be met and encourage the involvement and active participation of the different actors in your countries," he added.

The Director-General of the National Legal Training Institute, Yves Sylla Roux, for his part, said he believed the workshop would enable participants to be constantly concerned about guaranteeing the respect of the dignity and rights of detainees. Some thirty prison officials from various penitentiary establishments took part in the training

By Marie-Mactar Niang

# UN POLICE TRAIN MEMBERS OF DEFENSE AND SECURITY FORCES



UNPOL and members of the FDS in session © UN / ONUCI

**The United Nations Police organised a training course last month for some members of the Ivorian Defense and Security Forces (FDS) on the maintenance of order within the framework of the role of the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in the crisis-resolution process.**

The training course which held in Yamoussoukro was attended by 34 officers of the Police Prefecture and covered topics such as the setting up of roadblocks, the monitoring of checkpoints and the use of special anti riot engines and crowd control.

According to the UN Coordinator of the Formed Police Unit, Captain Marc Gucciardi, the workshop was a success. The training, he said, would improve the officers' intervention capacity and how they relate with the population before, during and after the presidential election.

On behalf of the Prefect of Police, Commissioner Samouka Diomande, expressed satisfaction, saying he hoped "it was the beginning of closer ties between UNOCI and our forces." In Abidjan, some 60 FDS officers (gendarmes and mobile policemen) have also been undergoing a training course conducted by UNPOL.

The 3-week course comprises three phases with the first one centering on rules and regulations, professional ethics and pedagogy as well as the policing of polling stations. The second phase focuses on fundamental knowledge of maintenance of order and the method of teaching future students. The third phase lays emphasis on practical exercises in the maintenance of public order.

According to Lt. Claudon, the training could be extended to members of the Integrated Command Centre. "Our superiors are seriously contemplating

the possibility. The more agents we can train, the more we can guarantee the security of the elections," the Coordinator of UNPOL observed.

The current wave of training courses is the first in a long series which will end next October. Another batch of 30 gendarme officers was expected to be officered by UNPOL in mid September.

These training courses are in keeping with the provisions of UN Security Council resolution 1933 of 30 June 2010 which clearly demands the UN Operation on Cote d'Ivoire and the impartial forces with whom it collaborates, to give support to the Ivorian authorities to reinforce the capacity of their gendarmerie and police to maintain public order and control crowds in order to guarantee peaceful, free and transparent elections

# UNIFEM AND UNOCI ADVOCATE FOR GREATER FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE FOR WOMEN IN ODIENNE

**A**s part of its programme to promote financial independence for women and girls in rural areas, and the fight against gender-based violence (GBV), the country director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Fatima Maïga, paid a familiarisation visit to Odienné, situated 867 km northwest of Abidjan from 13 to 16 August 2010 with the Rule of Law section of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

The city of Odienné, with an estimated population of 52, 710 inhabitants and situated in an agricultural area, has an economy which is based on the cultivation of cashew nuts. However, since the start of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002, the capital of Denguélé, like a good number of cities and towns in the centre, north and west of the country, is characterised by a situation of general poverty, especially among women.

Conscious of this situation, the United Nations, through UNIFEM and UNOCI, decided to meet groups in charge of community-based projects and members of women's associations working in

poverty reduction and against the exclusion of women. The objective is to eliminate violence against women and increase their access to jobs in the post-conflict reconstruction.

During their mission, Mrs Maïga and Rosalie Billaut of UNOCI's Rule of Law section met some 20 women and men from a dozen NGOs and associations in the region.

Participants at the meeting deplored the burden of tradition, the absence of basic literacy training for women, all of which have had a negative impact on the living conditions.

It should be remembered, however, that the United Nations system is working to promote the financial independence of women through a number of sensitisation and outreach programs such as Quick Impact Projects.

Mrs Maïga urged the women to become more involved in promoting and defending their rights, while Ms Billaut explained that one of the objectives of their mission was to assess whether the courts and other judicial structures were giving the

appropriate response to victims of gender-based violence in the area.

Apart from attacks against their physical, moral and psychological integrity of Odienné's women, they also have to endure underage and forced marriages; rape, owing to the impunity which reigns since the outbreak of conflict; sexual abuses by teachers on pupils and female genital mutilation (FGM).

In a lot of cases, according to the local prosecutor Armand Palenqué, the traditional system of resolving conflicts, is still the main tool used to solve cases of abuse and conflicts in the region. These amicable settlements, made under the aegis of village leaders or Imams, often slow down any recourse to state justice by the victims, who are sometimes even threatened if they try to use the legal channel.

As part of the solution, Aminata Sylla, president of the NGO Promo Femme 2000, urged men to respect and promote a code of conduct towards women in the Denguélé region, a document established with the support of men, village chiefs and community leaders.

At the end of the fruitful and frank discussions, the UNIFEM Country Director and UNOCI's Rule of Law section expressed the hope of establishing a system of leadership and mutual responsibility aimed at promoting the emancipation of women and ensuring equality of the sexes. The UNOCI/UNIFEM delegation also urged the women to take an active part in festivities marking the 16 days of campaign against gender-based violence observed in December every year.

Before leaving Odienne, the delegation met with local authorities in the region including the local prosecutor, officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the police commissioner. It also visited sites and projects set up by UNOCI and UNIFEM.



Women of Odienné want to defend their rights © UN / UNOCI

By Kebe Yacouba

# UNOCI'S SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT ON EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 2010 RECOMMENDS REINFORCEMENT OF MEASURES TO PROTECT CIVILIANS



Simon Munzu, director of UNOCI's Human Rights Division presenting the report © UN / ONUCI

**T**he events organized in February 2010 by the Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) to protest against the double dissolution of the Government and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) revealed an obvious deficiency regarding the measures for civilians' protection both from the Defence and Security Forces (FDS), the Forces Nouvelles (FN) and the Integrated Command Centre (ICC), says a special investigative report by the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

The report, published on 26 August describes atrocities committed by the security forces on several persons as well as plunder perpetrated by demonstrators and assesses the human and material damages. At the human level, 13 deaths and at least 94 injured – including 18 elements of the security forces are registered. 95 persons were arrested and prosecuted, in some cases for disturbance of public

order. At the material level, the report estimates the damage at about 900 millions FCFA (1.8 millions dollars).

The cases of human rights violations observed by the investigators are characterized by: "Disproportionate use of force by the FDS; summary and extrajudicial killings and physical attack resulting in death; physical violence; intimidation, arrest and arbitrary detention as well as violence and plunder committed by the demonstrators", Mr. Simon Munzu, Chief of UNOCI's Human Rights Division explained. "The conclusion of the investigation on the events of February should be a warning in order to avoid repeating past errors in this pre-electoral period (...)", Mr. Munzu concluded.

The report which was shared with Ivorian authorities before its completion, especially the Government, the leadership of the Forces Nouvelles and the RHDP to obtain their observations, contains a series of recommendations

to these authorities as well as the international community.

The recommendations especially call for the reinforcement of measures for the protection of civilians by the FDS-CI, FDS-FAFN and the ICC as well as the impartial forces. They also invite the UN Security Council to "examine with benevolence" any request by Ivorian authorities for the partial lifting of the arms embargo imposed on Côte d'Ivoire. The derogation should help acquire anti-riot material, which will prevent the security forces resort to fire arms during their interventions.

The report also recommends that the government conducts immediate and impartial investigations on the acts of violence committed by the security forces, but also the pillage and destruction of properties in order to prosecute the authors. The report proposes compensation for the victims.

By Parfait Kouassi

# KORHOGO REGION WELCOMES FIGHT AGAINST FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

**S**alif Boité is at present the interim Chief of the UN Regional Human Rights Office. He has, within the framework of his duties, conducted several campaigns against gender-based violence such as female circumcision, a practice which is widespread in the Savannes region where he was deployed in 2007. UNOCI's magazine, *The Force of Peace*, met him for his views on the issue.

**Could you please define female circumcision?**

Female genital mutilation or female circumcision is the partial or total removal of the external genital organs of a woman. It affects the physical and moral integrity of the woman and constitutes violence against the woman. But the term "Female Genital Mutilation" (FGM) was coined in the 1970s and was adopted by the World Health Organisation (WHO), The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Population Fund, (UNFPA). It is also the term that has been adopted by the United Nations in general and international conferences.

**What explains the persistence of the practice?**

According to certain beliefs, certain parts of the female genital are unclean, they are "ugly" and female genital mutilation is a means of really becoming a "pure woman". Others believe FGM is an initiation into femininity and tribal integration; the uncircumcised cannot get married without conforming to the rite. Still other ignorant practitioners attach a religious significance by indicating that God approves the practice.

**What are the consequences of female circumcision?**

The consequences are twofold:

physical and psychological.

Physically and in the short term, women experience bleeding, pains and shocks due to pain and bleeding; deaths resulting from bleeding or localised septic infections, hepatitis B, and HIV infection, and urinary retention, urethral or anal wounds.



Salif Boité © UN / ONUCI

The long term effects include scarification, cyst, chronic pelvic infections, and the retention of menstrual discharges in the vagina and uterus, delivery complications, vaginal and recto-vaginal fistula.

Psychologically, FGM provokes anxiety and chronic irritability, moments of depression, frigidity, sexual dissatisfaction and fear of sexual intercourse.

**What is the contribution of the UNOCI's Human rights Office in the fight against this malpractice?**

To put an end to this practice, the regional human rights office has

undertaken a sensitization program for the population, political leaders, traditional chiefs and community leaders, women's associations and non-governmental organizations on the consequences of female circumcision. It has also educated the people on national and international legal instruments such as Law No. 98-757 of 23 December 1998 prohibiting the practice and the sanctions awaiting offenders up to the fourth degree.

**Why does the office involve itself in this sensitization against female circumcision?**

The mandate of Human Rights Division is to contribute to the promotion of human rights and paying particular attention to the specific needs of women and children. It is thus in conformity with the mission of UNOCI's Human Rights Division to initiate, lead and support activities aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls. Female genital mutilation affects the physical and moral integrity of the woman and constitutes violence done to women which must be fought against.

**How do the people of Savannes region perceive the concerns of the UN mission?**

The involvement of the regional office of human rights is well perceived by the population, some of whom have not failed to draw our attention to the benefits of our action in the course of our sensitization campaigns.

Ceremonies renouncing the practice of female circumcision are held frequently. We have occasionally received reports exposing attempts to perform excision in some communities which have benefitted from our sensitization program.

# UNOCI AND INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE EXPLORE WAYS TO COLLABORATE



UNOCI and the IOC make plans to collaborate in the future © UN / ONUCI

**A** visit to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) by the director of international co-operation and development of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Thomas Sithole, on 27 August 2010, presented an opportunity for the two institutions to explore ways in which they can collaborate.

The promotion of values shared by the Olympics and the United Nations, as well as the training of journalists, were two of the main points of interest discussed during an exploratory meeting.

Mr. Sithole was accompanied by the president of the National Olympic Committee, Constant Roux. The two men held discussions with representatives of the Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Ndolamb Ngokwey, the Public Information Office and the United Nations Office of Sport for the Development of Peace.

UNOCI's sport and peace programme and the Education Programme of Olympic Values (EPOV), organised by the IOC and UNESCO, were identified as points of convergence during the discussions. The EPOV teaches

olympic values such as: the joy of making an effort, fair play, respect for others, the pursuit of excellence and the balance between the body, the will and the spirit. It has produced a manual which is available to teachers who would like to promote these values among their pupils, as well as an interactive database on the different programmes and olympic education tools which can be obtained at the national and international level.

Similarly, UNOCI's Sport and Peace programme seeks to promote values and attitudes which favour peace through sport. It encourages respect for others, tolerance, as well as dialogue, respect for the rules of the game and acceptance of the results. In this regard, UNOCI organises or supports sports activities which promote peace.

The IOC representatives, also showed interest in becoming involved in the training organised by UNOCI for the media, especially sports journalists. According to Mr. Sithole, the IOC regards the training of journalists as one of its priorities.

The IOC already collaborates with the UN in various areas, said Mr. Sithole, such as the Youth Employment Network project (YEN) which unites the UN Secretary-General, the World Bank and

the International Labour Organisation and which receives financial support from the Committee.

He also said that his organisation supports initiatives which seek to strengthen the capacity of young people through sports infrastructure projects organised by UN Habitat.

The IOC has a particular interest in projects aimed at women, said Mr. Sithole, who also explained that the Committee is financing a project on gender-based violence set up in Kenya by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and a similar project organised by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Colombia.

Before leaving UNOCI, the representatives of the IOC briefed the Deputy Special Representative on their discussions with the UNOCI team. During this meeting, Mr. Ngokwey confirmed the Mission's willingness to pursue the discussions with the IOC with regard to future collaboration between the two institutions. He also stressed his willingness to ensure the participation of the whole UN family in Côte d'Ivoire in sports initiatives to promote peace.

By Eliane Hervo-Akendengue

# TWINNING THE IVORIAN VILLAGE OF PETIT GBEPLEU WITH BANGLADESHI NEIGHBOURHOOD OF RUPOSHI



Bangladeshi peacekeepers regularly distribute water to the local population © UN / ONUCI

**S**ince the establishment of the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire on 4 April 2004, UN peacekeeping troops from various countries have been deployed throughout Cote d'Ivoire. As a result, the mountainous region of the West has hosted successive contingents from Bangladesh.

In the Man region, the camp of the Bangladeshi battalion is located near the village of Petit Gbepleu. Right from the outset, the peacekeepers encouraged the neighbouring villages to collaborate with them and soon after they began to appreciate the hospitality of the people of Petit Gbepleu. This cohabitation bred a friendship which resulted in the twinning of Petit Gbepleu and the Bangladeshi neighbourhood of Ruposhi in 2007.

At the twinning ceremony initiated by Captain Major Tondji, Commander of the Third Bangladeshi Battalion, and attended by all the chiefs of the neighbouring villages, Petit Gbepleu was nicknamed Ruposhi Bangla which means "the king's village" in the Bangladeshi language.

Speaking during the occasion, the



...and have installed waer pumps for them © UN / ONUCI

village chief, David Ouahou said UNOCI and its peacekeeping troops, particularly the Bangladeshi contingents that have lived in Petit Gbepleu have given invaluable assistance to the people of the area such as the construction of roads and the provision of drinking water every Tuesday and Sunday.

On Tuesdays, the Bangladeshi Battalion organizes free medical consultations and treatment for the inhabitants. The UN soldiers distribute food items to the

villagers, have rehabilitated the village water pump, as well as contribute to ensuring the security of the area by organizing regular military patrols.

The village chief recalls with pride the visits to his village of top ranking Bangladeshi military officers on mission to Cote d'Ivoire and expressed the conviction that the flame of friendship between the two peoples would forever be kept alive.

Par Josias Akossi

# BANGLADESHI ARMY CHIEF DONATES COMPUTERS TO EDUCATION AUTHORITIES IN ZUENOULA

**T**he Bangladeshi Army Chief of Staff, General Abdul Mubeen donated three computers to education authorities in Zuenoula during an inspection tour of Bangladeshi troops serving in the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

The donation was handed over in a ceremony attended by administrative authorities of the division in the village of Baazra, some 10 km from Zuenoula on 31 July 2010.

The computers, estimated at CFA 1000,000 francs, were to be distributed to various educational services including the school infirmary, the inspectorate of education and the government primary school of Baazra.

The head of the Bangladeshi army said the gift was a sign of the friendship between his country and Cote d'Ivoire and was meant to strengthen those ties. The General expressed the commitment of his troops to serve the UNOCI and work towards the final restoration of peace.

The Secretary-General of the Zuenoula Prefecture, Mr. Yeo Fatogoma, who was representing the Prefect, said he was pleased with the important contribution of the Bangladeshi contingent to the development of Zuenoula town in general and the school, in particular.

Bangladesh is the biggest troop contributor to the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire since April 2004 and has troops deployed in the north and west of the country. Bangladeshi troops do not only participate in providing security in the regions in which they are located, but also carry out humanitarian activities for the benefit of the population such as free medical consultations and



The head of bangladesh army donating computers for school children © UN / ONUCI



...with school children in Zuenoula © UN / ONUCI

treatment, provision of drinking water, and the refurbishing of schools and other community infrastructures.

This is not the first time the Bangladeshi contingent in Zuenoula is making such

a gesture towards the school. Last year, it rehabilitated the Baazra primary school within the framework of UNOCI's Quick Impact Projects (QIPS).

Anicet Bekrou