

# THE FORCE OF PEACE



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Let us advance on the road to peace



**unoci Days**

ALEPE AND GUIBEROUA

CÔTE D'1VOIRE

**EDITORIAL****LOOKING FORWARD TO THE START OF THE VERIFICATION OF THE WHITE LIST**

**W**hile the updating of the final statistics on the appeals process on the Grey List, containing names of registered voters who still needed to provide proof of their nationality, is currently going on throughout the country, the launch of a verification operation on the White List is eagerly awaited by Ivorians and their partners in the crisis-resolution process.

The reason for this is that a consensus on the White List was reached at a meeting held last May between the Head of state, Laurent Gbagbo, and opposition leaders who are members of the Permanent Consultative Framework (CPC). Furthermore, a modus operandi was agreed and adopted on 4 June by the same group with the support of the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the Burkinabe Facilitation. This milestone was viewed by many observers as a good sign for the success of the remaining phases of the electoral process.

Unfortunately, a short while after, a heated argument on the White List broke out after it was decided that the eligibility of some 1.8 million people out of a total of 5.3 million – representing a third of potential voters – should be further verified. This was interpreted by some as another veiled attempt to exclude legitimate voters from the electoral process while others felt that the White List was full of irregularities and should therefore be cleaned up.

In an interview on 28 June in the newspaper *Fraternité Matin*, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister in charge of the crisis-resolution process, Paul Koffi Koffi, tried to appease the two sides “This verification process is not a pre-electoral operation”, he said, adding that the operation was “aimed at reassuring everyone by comparing registered voters with those found in registry offices around the country”.

For its part, UNOCI, within the framework of its mandate, which is to accompany the Ivorian crisis-resolution process, is well aware of the urgency to end the Ivorian crisis through a peaceful electoral process. In this regard, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Y.J. Choi, reminded the main Ivorian political actors of the need to focus on the ways and means of producing and publishing a definitive electoral list as quickly as possible. The electoral list is important not only for the holding of free, fair and transparent elections, but also for the reunification of the country, because it will resolve the identification issue”, Mr. Choi said after a meeting with President Gbagbo.

This is also the position of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the sub-regional organisation of which Côte d'Ivoire is a member. At the end of a meeting with the head of UNOCI, the President of the ECOWAS

Commission, James Victor Gbeho, praised the growing partnership between his community and the UN in an effort to help Côte d'Ivoire succeed in its crisis-resolution process.

With regard to military issues, UNOCI, while stressing its role to support the peace process with which it has been entrusted by the international community, welcomed the beginning of the cantonment process for ex-combatants of the Armed Forces of Forces Nouvelles (FAFN), which 580 km north of Abidjan.

It also encouraged all the parties to work towards the success of the process. An UNOCI delegation led by Mr. Abou Moussa, Principal Deputy SRSG attended the launching ceremony of the cantonment of the Volunteers for the New Army (VAN) and the demobilization of ex-combatants of the FAFN, held in the northern Ivorian town.

The success of this operation would, without doubt, give a strong momentum to the electoral process. However, at this moment, all eyes are on the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the main political actors and the institutions involved in the organization of elections. Ivorians are anxiously waiting for any sign of the beginning of the last phase of this process – the publication of a definitive electoral list and a clear and concise timetable for the holding of elections.

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# CRISIS, RESOLUTION PROCESS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE: Y. J. CHOI CALLS FOR REUNIFICATION AND ELECTIONS



The SRG speaking to the press after one of his meetings © UN / ONUCI

**A**fter his presentation on the Ivorian peace process to the United Nations Security Council in New York on 3 June, 2010, Y.J. Choi returned to Abidjan to resume consultations with the protagonists of the Ivorian crisis.

With President Laurent Gbagbo, Mr. Choi discussed ways in which UNOCI and Côte d'Ivoire could continue to work together on the crisis-resolution process which, in his opinion, was going through a very delicate period. "We now have two ways to resolve the crisis: reunification and elections," the Special Representative said. For this reason, he added, peace and stability in the country must be preserved. Mr. Choi also said that it was possible to go forward on

these two axes.

He felt that in order to achieve this objective, everything must be done to produce a final electoral list. "The list is important, not only for elections but also for the reunification because it will resolve the issue of identification," he said.

Mr. Choi talked again about the significance of a final list, after two separate meetings with Henri Konan Bédié and Alassane Ouattara, leaders of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) and the Rally of Republicans (RDR) respectively. He stressed that it was essential to preserve the achievements made so far and resume the appeals process on the provisional

electoral list as soon as possible.

On 30 June, the Security Council passed Resolution 1933, which extended UNOCI and Force Licorne's mandate for a further six months. The new mandate required UNOCI to consolidate the stability in the country, protect civilians, monitor the arms embargo, promote human rights, support humanitarian operations, contribute to the electoral process and the identification of the population, contribute to the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the ex-combatants of both parties and militia members and provide storage for weapons handed in during the process. The resolution reaffirmed the need to hold an inclusive election. It stated that the fundamental rights "of every Ivorian" must be ensured under the electoral system. Freedom of opinion and expression must be respected. The Council also stressed the urgency to continue identification operations, even after the elections.

In addition to his meetings with different the actors of the Ivorian crisis, Mr. Choi also met with a delegation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led by the Chairman of the ECOWAS Commission, James Victor Gbeho, at UNOCI headquarters in Abidjan. They talked about the situation in Côte d'Ivoire in particular and in West Africa. Mr. Gbeho thanked the Special Representative for the partnership that had developed between ECOWAS and the UN to assist Côte d'Ivoire achieve to peace.

By Juliette Mandan Amantchi

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AND PERSONAL SECURITY.

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# unoci Days

## UNOCI TAKES ALEPE BY STORM



Unoci Deputy Spokesman addressing the audience during UNOCI Days in Alépé © UN / ONUCI

**P**etit Alepe , the divisional headquarters of Alepe division, located some 50 km. East of Abidjan, hosted the 9th edition of UNOCI Days , an information and sensitization programme of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), from 9 - 11 June 2010.

For three days running, this small town of about 15,000 inhabitants was buzzing with meetings, musical and dance performances, sporting events, film shows and live public screening of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa-- all blended in an entertaining carnival atmosphere that the people were not likely to forget for a long time to come.

A delegation of UNOCI personnel, led by Kenneth Blackman of the Public Information Office, arrived in Alepe on the first day and went straight to the offices of the local administrative authorities to meet Prefect Ernest Boni Koffi to explain the reasons for UNOCI's presence in his district. Mr. Blackman told the local authorities that



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UNOCI had come to spread the message of peace and the need to create a peaceful electoral environment and to learn more about the difficulties and expectations of the local population.

Right there and then, the President of the General Council, Leon N'cho Aboya, brandished a file containing a request that had been submitted several months earlier to UNOCI asking it for assistance in rehabilitating



One of the aims of UNOCI Days is to use sport to promote peace © UN / ONUCI

a bridge and two schools that had been damaged by a thunderstorm and to equip classrooms with desks. Mr. Blackman promised to reactivate their application with the relevant UNOCI sections.

The Prefect in turn made an overall presentation of his district, describing it as the breadbasket of Abidjan with plentiful food crops such as cassava, rice, palm oil and groundnuts as well as cash crops including cocoa, coffee and rubber.

These preliminaries were followed by an indepth discussion about the Atite, Agni and Gwa ethnic groups who populate the area and their traditional system of ruling, which alternates between an older age group and a younger one according to a fixed system and the designation of village chiefs by consensus. This system, the UNOCI delegation was told, was the reason for the lower level of conflict and high sense of social cohesion in the area compared to others.

From the Prefect's office, everyone moved on to the town council where several hundred inhabitants had come despite the rain to receive free medical consultation and treatment provided by the Jordanian battalion of UNOCI under the watchful supervision of Lieutenant-Colonel Al Sarhan.

Later that afternoon, various work shops were conducted by UNOCI staff for youths, women, traditional and religious leaders and media practitioners. The groups examined issues of mutual interest and were especially assigned to find out ways in which they could help to create a peaceful electoral environment by identifying and suggesting ways to eradicate problems that constitute an obstacle to the achievement of social cohesion.

On the second day, which was the highlight of the three-day event, all the various groups, administrative authorities and the entire population came together at the esplanade of the town hall to listen to resolutions made by the various social groups to promote peaceful coexistence. It also gave UNOCI sections the opportunity to present their mandate and activities and discuss local concerns with the population.

Prior to this, there were other supporting activities with dances, singing and quizzes, and prizes for children who were able to explain what they knew about children's rights. A variety of Ivorian folk music and popular dance tunes was on the menu, giving a very lively atmosphere of learning and entertainment. In the evening a movie, *l'Otage*, produced by UNOCI's Human

Rights department to condemn malpractices related to gender-based violence was screened, with the teenage protagonists capturing the imagination of the crowd.

The final day, a bright and sunny morning, kicked off with a cross-country race for all categories, followed by two football matches that could be said to be a foretaste of the World Cup tournament in South Africa which UNOCI had arranged to be broadcast live in the town square in the afternoon. The sporting events were exploited to highlight messages of peace and values such as fair play, respect for one another, tolerance and justice.

After the World Cup opening match, the fun-loving population gathered again down town for a non-stop evening of entertainment: stand-up comedians and a display of African ballet depicting the folk dance and music of the Senoufo, Baoule and Bete peoples of Côte d'Ivoire. The show was crowned by a concert of Ivorian pop music as everyone took to the floor, including UNOCI staff, to share in the joy of the people of Alepe.

By Michael Sam-Nuvala Fonkem

# unoci Days

## GUIBÉROUA CLOSES FIRST SERIES OF UNOCI DAYS

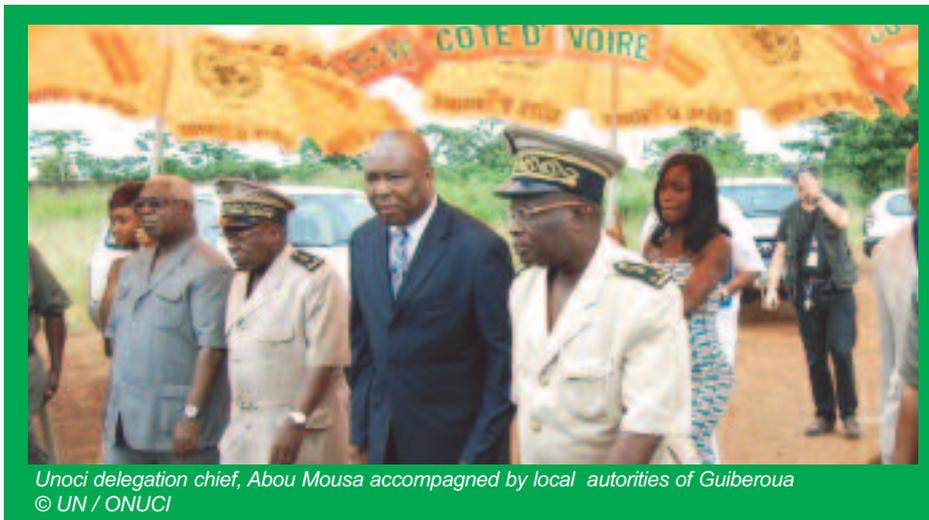
**T**he United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) ended the first series of its information and sensitization campaign, known as UNOCI Days, in joy and popular enthusiasm in Guibéroua, some 350 km from Abidjan,

For three days, UNOCI's delegation, led by Abou Moussa, discussed the mandate and the activities of the mission with the authorities of the department and the population. During the Forum, the Principal Deputy Special Representative launched a campaign against all forms of exploitation and abuses against women. According to Mr. Moussa, the campaign, initiated by the Mission's Conduct and Discipline Unit, will be backed by several partners including state agencies and civil society.

The representatives of the Mission's sections explained their role within UNOCI and their various initiatives for the benefit of the population.

As with other UNOCI Days, the event in Guibéroua began with free medical consultations provided to more than 400 people by the Moroccan contingent's medical team headed by Dr. Amin Raggabi.

The secretary general of the Prefecture of Gagnoa, Stephen Kre Kamenan, praised the "edifying work" carried out by UNOCI to sensitize and educate people through such events. He recalled the various initiatives carried out by UNOCI for the benefit of the population, including the 1000 micro-projects programme to help ex-combatants and young people at risk. "If UNOCI had not existed, it would have been invented. Côte d'Ivoire knows and needs its friends in this difficult period," he said. Mr. Kamenan reiterated the commitment of the population of Guibéroua to creating a



Unoci delegation chief, Abou Mousa accompanied by local authorities of Guiberoua © UN / ONUCI



Every effort is rewarded © UN / ONUCI

peaceful electoral environment.

UNOCI Days in Guibéroua had a special addition with public screenings of the World Cup matches at a youth recreation centre. Besides the World Cup matches, two films: "The Hostage," a film produced by UNOCI's Human Rights Division, and "Zero Tolerance" of the Conduct and Discipline section were also screened during the event. There was a massive turnout at all these screenings. At the end of each screening, people discussed issues pertaining to the organization of the elections, the

protection of children, human rights, and gender-based violence with the representatives of UNOCI sections.

The highlight of the event was undoubtedly the musical and artistic performance of Luckson Padaud, one of the best known Ivorian musicians and a native of Guibéroua. Through his hit songs, the promoter of "Iaba-laba", a popular dance from the Bété tradition, Luckson Padaud entertained the crowd some of whom came from some of the surrounding villages. More important, the singer urged his fans to cultivate peace, tolerance, forgiveness and love. "We are all brothers and we must help UNOCI to help us end this crisis," he told them. In return, women, youth, community, traditional and religious leaders, expressed not only their commitment to preserve peace in their villages, but also their approval of the actions of UNOCI.

In terms of mobilization and participation of administrative authorities, UNOCI Days in Guibéroua fulfilled all expectations. The Deputy Prefect Gabriel Zoni and Mayor Zadi Guédé, took part in all the activities.

By Juliette Mandan Amantchi

# UNOCI USES SPORT AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING PEACE



The mission often uses sport to promote peace © UN / UNOCI

**T**he United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) uses sport as an integral part of its communication strategy to promote a peaceful electoral environment. From August 2009 to June 2010, many competitions have been organized throughout the country to promote peace, national reconciliation, and social cohesion using the values promoted by sport.

In this regard, on 22 June 2010 in Facobly, in the west of Côte d'Ivoire, UNOCI organized the final activity of the first edition of its "Sport and Peace" programme for 2009-2010. The activity started about one year ago, on 7 August 2009 in Man, in the west, during celebrations for the 49th anniversary of Côte d'Ivoire's independence. A gala football match marked the day.

The UN mission is not alone in this initiative. From Duekoué to Adzopé, Bocanda, Bondoukou, Bouaké, Daloa, Divo, Séguéla, San Pedro and Yamoussoukro, young people, women and men mobilized to contribute to peace through sport. They ran, sweated, played and read out messages of peace, such as: "Sport is a powerful tool to promote peace, tolerance and dialogue",

"Fair play means respecting rules, self-control and dignity in victory as well as defeat", "Sport is character-forming, helps to better know oneself and better respect others", or "Sport as tool for sensitization".

UNOCI also uses national sports activities or creates new ones to promote peace, reinforce social cohesion and consolidate national reconciliation. In fact, during crucial moments in the Ivorian crisis, Ivorian athletes, judo experts, cyclists and footballers proved to be the main unifying forces in the country. Before the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) in March 2007, cycling, judo and karate competitions, were held in the areas controlled by the Forces Nouvelles. The athletes wanted and succeeded in showing that sport could overcome difficulties and contribute to peace.

The main objective of UNOCI's support to athletes is to give the United Nations, athletes, the public, as well as the population as a whole, the opportunity to unite around sport, meet and exchange views through the platform provided by sport. The UN mission also couples the organization

of sporting events with sensitization to the culture of peace, dialogue, tolerance, human rights and any other issue which contributes to establishing peace and development.

Local partners have also been using the platforms as an opportunity to exchange views with the population and reinforce their information and sensitization campaigns. Their contribution is important, both in terms of ownership of the programme and with regard to their actual involvement. UNOCI communicates messages of peace, behaviour change in communities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods and groups through the population.

By conducting sporting activities with the principal objective of peace, the UN mission does not only promote sport as an element of physical education but also wants the nation to adhere to values such as fair-play and respect. Sport also means respecting the rules of the game during a competition, the decision of the referee of the game, and respecting one's opponent. But above all sport teaches us that defeat should be accepted with humility.

By Eliane Hervo Akendengue

# UNOCI CELEBRATES THE DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD



Participants at the seminar on child protection © UN / ONUCI

**The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) took an active part in celebrations to mark the Day of the African Child initiated by the African Union to commemorate the uprising on 16 June 1976, by children in Soweto, South Africa, who were demanding their right to quality education.**

As a prelude to the celebration, UNOCI held a seminar at its headquarters in Seboko on the protection of the child under the theme: "50 years of independence and the policy of child protection in Cote d'Ivoire".

The seminar, organised in collaboration with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ivorian Ministry of Family, Women and Social Affairs, was aimed at organizations involved in child protection. Mr. Miguel Corte-Real, who spoke on behalf of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Cote d'Ivoire, Y.J. Choi, urged participants to double their efforts in the fight to end violence against children.

of the extent of the commitment made at the national and international levels, adding: "The protection of children is a task that must be collectively carried out by the government, local authorities, development partners, and NGOs," she



Children also participated at the event to commemorate their day © UN / ONUCI

stressed.

The president of the Forum of NGOs, Desire Koukou, called on NGOs to be part of the brainstorming on the issue of child protection that has become

imperative with the celebration of the golden jubilee of Côte d'Ivoire's independence.

The President of the Children's Parliament of Côte d'Ivoire, Aude Paule Boukouri, advocated for greater participation of children in decision-making at the national level and expressed the wish to see the Children's Parliament transformed into a consultative chamber at the Economic and Social Council. Topics discussed at the seminar ranged from policy planning, child protection, violence against and exploitation of children and the situation of minors who break the law to the plight of handicapped children.

UNOCI also took part in Day of the African Child celebrations in other parts of Côte d'Ivoire such as Korhogo, Duekoue and Bondoukou, during which issues related to the promotion of children's rights, violence against children, early and forced marriages, female genital circumcision, sexual abuse and child labour were examined.

An official of the child protection section of UNICEF, Laetitia Bazzi, said the meeting was an occasion to take stock

# WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY CELEBRATED IN FERKESSÉDOUGOU



Youths in Ferkessedougou try to educate the population through sketches on World Environment Day © UN / ONUCI

**The World Environment Day was celebrated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) on Monday 7 June 2010. The celebration was attended by more than 500 school children and teachers of the Lycée Moderne of Ferkessedougou, 620 km north of Abidjan.**

The celebration for this year, which focussed on the theme “Millions of species – One planet – a common future” consisted of dramatic sketches on the protection of environment and a tree-planting operation; an initiative which was aimed at sensitizing school children and their teachers on the urgent need to preserve environment.

The choice of Ferkessedougou, a town situated in the Savanes region, was not

by chance. This region of Côte d'Ivoire has suffered directly from the drawbacks of the crisis the country has been going through since 2002. Alarming observation: the degradation of the vegetation, consequence of an uncontrolled cutting of trees to obtain timber or firewood, continues unabated threatening the ecosystem and endangering people's lives.

The UNDP's Regional Coordinator for the Savanes, Denguélé and Worodougou regions, Peyogori Ouattara, recalled on this occasion that the United Nations, being aware of the stakes and challenges involved in the preservation of biological diversity, named 2010 the “International year of biodiversity”. “Biodiversity, a national property which is vital for every people and country, is closely related to man's needs, health, food and wealth”, he said and he underlined that “everyone

should take an active part in guaranteeing the protection of the ecosystem.”

Speaking about the importance of preserving the environment as part of peacekeeping operations, UNOCI's Public Information officer for the Savanes region, Bakary Bakayoko, stressed that environmental protection should be considered as an essential pillar for stability and peacekeeping, especially in zones where vegetation's degradation of the vegetation is a reality in the post-conflict period.

For his part, the Chairman of the ceremony, District Director for Commerce, Ernest Guirabou, said that the day was a form of sensitization and education of the population. “This is one way to remind us that every action against the environment can result in harmful effects and we must always remember that we have to leave the best for the young generations”, he said. For his part, the Head Teacher of the Lycée, Valère Touré, said he was glad to host this event and called on school children and teachers to become really involved in keeping the school environment clean.

The Chairman of the Environment and Peace Club of the Lycée, Aboubakar Soma, a third-form student, said that environmental protection is crucial because “speaking about environment means speaking about health and health means life”.

The UNDP, as part of the celebration of that day, organized similar activities in Abidjan from 5 to 7 June 2010, under the slogan “Let us be green”.

Celebrated on every 5 June since 1972, World Environment Day (WED) is for the United Nations among the principal ways to stimulate world awareness on the environment and encourage political interest and action.

By Bakary Bakayoko

# UNOCI COMMEMORATES SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF RESOLUTION 1820

**T**his year, Toumodi was chosen by UNOCI and United Nations agencies for the official commemoration of the second anniversary of UN Resolution 1820. In addition to Toumodi, Resolution 1820 was celebrated in Bouaké, Korhogo and Bouna.

The central city of Toumodi was chosen to celebrate the second anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1820 as a tribute to the women there who showed their commitment to the fight against sexual violence by organising a march in December 2009. This was the explanation given by the chief of the Gender Unit of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Eva Dalak, on 19 June, 2010, in Toumodi, some 200 km in the north of Abidjan, at the start of the celebrations.

The march, which was attended by thousands of women, was held to protest against the killing of 13 women in the city, over a period of two and a half years, with no arrests. Most of the victims had been sexually abused before being killed. Therefore considering this year's theme, "Sexual violence: A threat to international security. Together, let's say no to the impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence", it was appropriate for the event to be held in Toumodi, Ms Dalak added.

According to Mrs. Dalak, sexual violence was a threat to national and international security. "In Côte d'Ivoire, the persistence of sexual violence against women and girls during the conflict and especially in this post-conflict period was a challenge to the national and international community," she explained. She then urged participants in the event to make a commitment to fight against it.

The celebration began at Toumodi town hall with a meeting involving civil society organizations working to end gender-based violence. Speaking at the meeting, the Mayor of Toumodi, Mrs.



Chief of UNOCI'S Gender Unit Eva Dalak (left) joins in the parade during the second anniversary celebration of UN Resolution 1820 in Toumodi © UN / ONUCI

Simone Tchina, said that the active presence of political and administrative authorities alongside the women of Toumodi showed their interest in improving women's status.

Organizations that campaign against sexual violence in Toumodi pledged to urge women of the city to better know their rights, in order to effectively fight against any kind of violence of which they may become victim. They asked the police to increase security patrols and recommended the creation of monitoring committees in the city's neighbourhoods that will report any cases of sexual violence, the training of police officers and gendarmes on the prevention and management of sexual violence by UNOCI's Gender Unit and the creation of a monitoring committee for the implementation of these measures.

In addition to Toumodi, several other cities, including Bouaké, Korhogo and Bouna, celebrated the second anniversary of UN resolution 1820.

In Korhogo, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) called for the adoption

of a common strategy to fight against sexual violence and capacity-building for those who fight against this scourge through training and media communication.

In Bouna, women's associations pledged to create a monitoring and investigation committee to educate women and help them report any case of violence and aggression against them.

In Bouake, community leaders, NGOs and various human rights associations, political and administrative authorities promised to become involved in the promotion of UN Resolution 1820. They recommended the creation of a monitoring committee, chaired by the Ministry of Family, Women and Social Affairs to fight against sexual violence.

UN Resolution 1820, which was unanimously passed by members of the UN Security Council on 19 June 2008, reaffirms the UN's political commitment to protect women and girls against sexual violence during armed conflict.

By Lassila Nzeyimana. and Kadizatou Cissé

## BIANKOUMA SENSITIZED ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



People in Biankouma during a sensibilisation session against gender-based violence © UN / UNOCI

**T**he Mountain region in the west of Côte d'Ivoire is a zone where people have practised female genital mutilation for generations. With the crisis that Côte d'Ivoire has been going through since 2002, all forms of abuse against women continued in the region despite the efforts of local and international organizations which have been recent years to end such practices.

The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which gives priority to human rights in general, and women and girls' rights in particular, is part of this large sensitization movement. In this regard, it recently initiated campaigns to stop violence against women and girls in the subdistrict of Biankouma, situated 622 km northwest of Abidjan.

People from the villages of Gan I, Gan II, Dingouin, Mangouin and Yrongouin flooded the main squares in their respective localities to follow a rare event: a sensitization session on Gender Based Violence (GBV) in a region where traditional practices sometimes defend and encourage it. In all the target villages, men, women and

children rushed in order not to miss the information session conducted by the Regional Human Rights Office in Duekoué and the Rule of Law Office in Man.

Through a participatory method in which everyone spoke in turn, Edwige Flora Touali, UNOCI Human Rights Officer in Duekoué, explained the meaning of GBV using examples from the populations' daily life in order to make them understand her message.

In turn, the population asked questions that helped them to make the difference between traditional beliefs and the laws of the land, as well as the difference between a case of violence and a case of self-defence.

Ms Touali also said that the frequency of cases of violation led her office to initiate the activity and she urged participants to help put an end to violence against women.

For his part, UNOCI's Rule of Law office in Man, Roger Yao Seny, said: "The law is not against custom and tradition which involves initiation ceremonies for young girls, but it condemns the

violation of their physical integrity and their right to life and health".

Did the message reach the audience? One could say yes, taking into account the words of the spokesman for the notables of Gan I, Celestin Diomandé Gouédé, who said that the population was committed to ending violence against women and young girls.

"Our ignorance of the dangers was the reason for our past reluctance to finally give up this practice. But today, thanks to the information we have received from UNOCI, we are now aware of the risks we are taking. We therefore make a commitment to fight against these harmful practices," he said.

UNOCI has been initiating several sensitizations campaigns to eradicate violence against women in the region, including the celebration of the first anniversary of the Security Council's Resolution 1820 on this issue in June 2009 in Danané, western Cote d'Ivoire.

# THE COORDINATOR OF UNOCI OFFICES IN SECTOR WEST CONCLUDES HER MISSION



Diane Pezzini © UN / ONUCI

**D**iane Pezzini, the Regional Office Coordinator of Sector West of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) has ended her mission. Before her departure, this "woman of the field", a veteran of peacekeeping operations, spoke about her feelings, the Ivorian peace process and her future.

**The Force of Peace: After years of good and loyal services with UNOCI you are leaving the Mission to return to your home country, Canada. How do you feel?**

**Diane Pezzini:** Let me recall that I first worked for UNOCI in 2006 and served for six months before returning to Canada. In 2008, I accepted the post of regional coordinator for Sector West. You see time passes very quickly.

With regard to my integration, I must admit I was easily accepted both by my colleagues and the population. This, to say the least, facilitated my work. It is

therefore certain that my colleagues will miss me. I go with double joy, because on the one hand serving Côte d'Ivoire and in Daloa in particular, gave me the opportunity to make many friends and on the other hand, I am returning to my family in my country.

**TFP: What memories do you have of Côte d'Ivoire?**

**DP:** My contacts with the population made me know that Ivorians very much appreciate efforts made by UNOCI for the consolidation of peace.

As for my personal souvenirs, I travelled to all four corners of Sector West and I realized the extreme beauty of nature, especially the trees. Besides the vegetation, I also like the way Ivorian women dress, especially the printed cloth. You can see that I'm wearing one now!

**TFP: With a few days to go before your departure can you give us your**

**opinion of the ongoing peace process?**

**DP:** Those who were in Daloa in 2006 must have noticed that there has been considerable improvement of the security situation. For my part, I realize with joy that there is willingness among the population to forget the past and to live henceforth in peace.

**TFP: Apart from accompanying the peace process, UNOCI also tries to alleviate the suffering of the population by financing small projects. Given your extensive knowledge of this part of the country, which sectors do you feel deserve to be given priority?**

**DP:** That said, it is not my place as a small civil servant to define the priorities of UNOCI. However, at my modest level, I think priority should henceforth be given to education, especially the education of girls. Recently the Moroccan battalion [of UNOCI] rehabilitated a school just after Guezon, on the way to Duekoue in the west of Côte d'Ivoire. This important project will make it possible for more than 200 pupils, including 80 girls, to attend school. The second priority area, in my opinion, is the health of the population.

**TFP: Should one expect to see you again with the UN system?**

**DP:** I'm not sure. You know the UN has given me the opportunity to work and give the best of myself and to bring me close to different cultures...I have also served in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Palestine, Sudan, Burundi and recently, Côte d'Ivoire. Who can ask for more? I have had 15 years experience with the world organization, therefore I say this: it is not goodbye but I should simply say, see you next time!

*Interview by Anicet Bekrou*

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