



UN
Volunteers

inspiration in action

Bimonthly Newsletter

August 2015

UNV Flash

Côte d'Ivoire

N° 3 Special Issue on gender



Special folder:

UN volunteers in the field involved in gender issues

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EDITO

Dear Volunteers, dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to introduce the third UNV newsletter in Côte d'Ivoire, featuring various interesting events and activities that the UNV Programme recently handled in the country.

In May, we had the pleasure and pride to welcome a delegation from our UNV Headquarters, namely Ms. Rosemary Kalapurakal, UNV Deputy Executive Coordinator, and Mr. Francesco Galtieri, UNV Chief of Peace Programming Section. Their visit was a wonderful opportunity for our UN Volunteers to showcase their contributions to peace and development in the country, and exchange and discuss with our Headquarters' representatives. Undoubtedly, our guests have been very astonished by the hospitality and professionalism of the UN Volunteers in their different sections and agencies.

Like the entire ONUCI, our UN Volunteers are now facing a challenging transition, and while some of them have already been affected by the downsizing process, we will be here to provide all the necessary support in the following months. We are also getting ready for the upcoming electoral period in Côte d'Ivoire, when all UN Volunteers will definitely have a role to play. We sincerely hope this time to be a peaceful one.

I cannot forget also to mention that, starting from July 2015, we have launched the full implementation of the new Conditions of service for UN Volunteers, involving a number of changes in policy and entitlements, after 2 years of consultations. Although we acknowledge that this has created sometimes controversial discussions, we will continue to support the UN Volunteers along their assignment and we hope this will finally result in a positive change for all of them.

The UNV Programme in Côte d'Ivoire is also hitting the ground with the start off of the

national programme of volunteerism, under the leadership of the Ministry of Youth in Côte d'Ivoire. This new programme will enable the Ivorian government to capitalize on national competencies and expertise, through volunteerism. We are planning to initiate the project in two pilot regions, Tonkpi and Gbeke, which I had the opportunity to visit in June and July, and where I could already consult local youth and hear their concerns and suggestions for the project to achieve successfully its results.

Last but not least, this newsletter is focusing on Gender: the articles and memories reported by some UN Volunteers highlight the importance of involving women and girls in our daily work. This is useful to remind us all that inclusion of women is one big and essential part of sustainable development.

I take this opportunity to address my sincere thanks to all the UN Volunteers serving in Côte d'Ivoire. Since I am here, I have heard many times the famous phrase "on est ensemble!", and I believe volunteering is the best way to actually feature it.

Enjoy your reading!

Pauline Deneufbourg

UNV Programme Manager



About us

UNV programme :

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide.

Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform the pace and nature of development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation.

UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for recognition of volunteers, working with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced UN Volunteers, throughout the world. UNV embraces volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognizes volunteerism in its diversity as well as the values that sustain it : free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity.

www.unv.org

Online Volunteering :

The Online Volunteering service is one of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme's corporate tools to mobilize volunteers for development.

The Online Volunteering service connects volunteers with organizations working for sustainable human development. Volunteers contribute their skills online to help organizations address development challenges.

Online volunteers are...

professionals, students, homemakers, retirees, people with disabilities and expatriates from across the globe who support organizations over the Internet. They are people who commit their time and skills over the Internet, freely and without financial considerations, for the benefit of society. What they have in common is a strong commitment to making a real difference to development.

www.onlinevolunteering.org



Introducing...

The UN Volunteers in Ivory Coast

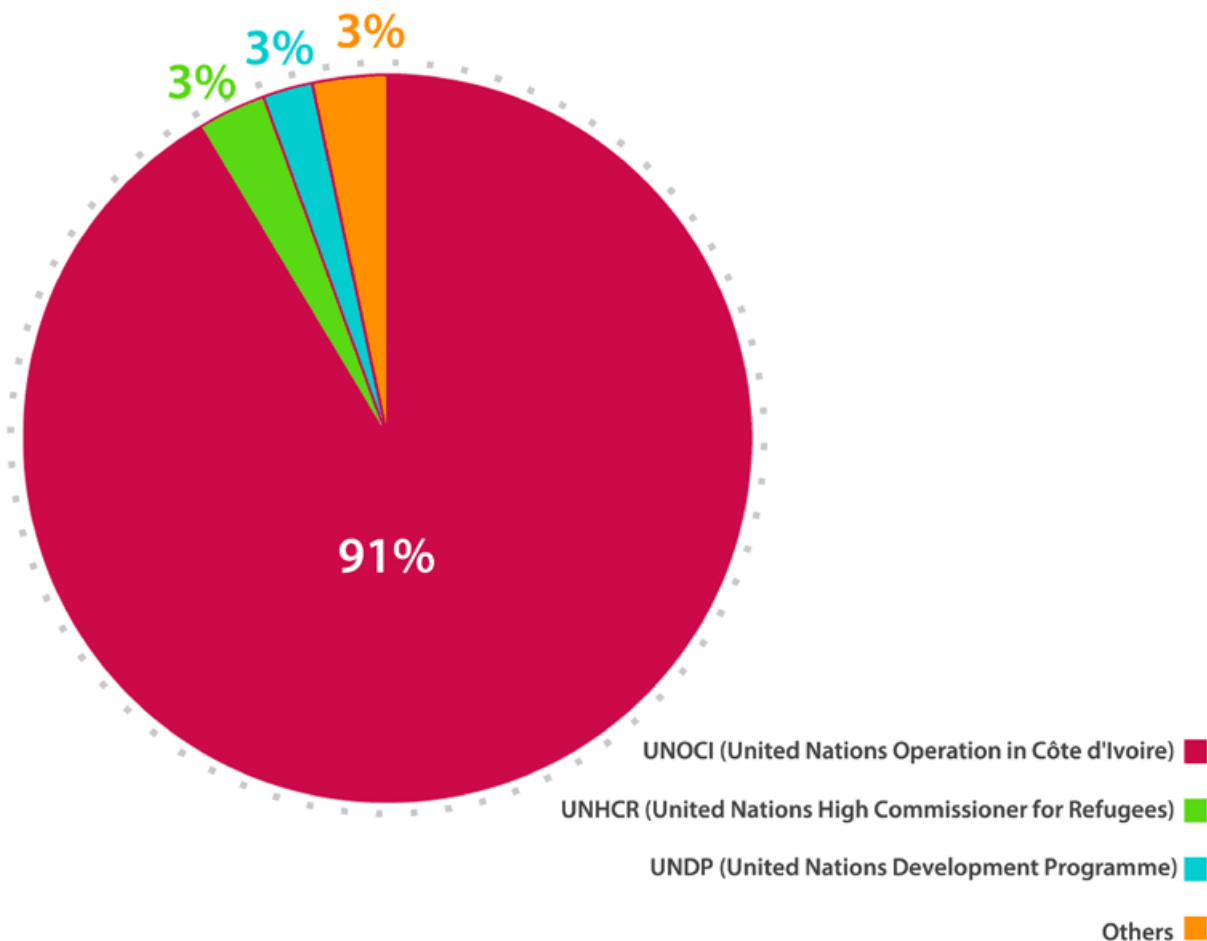
In every edition of the UNV newsletter, we try to provide you information about the UN Volunteers serving in the country. Here are some figures that were interesting to us.

We have **139 UN Volunteers on board** (129 in the mission and 10 in the UN agencies, funds and programmes).

The **average age** of UN Volunteers in Côte d'Ivoire is **40 years old** (37 years for female volunteers and 41 for Male volunteers).

The **average length of service** for volunteers who are currently serving is **2 years and 2 months**.

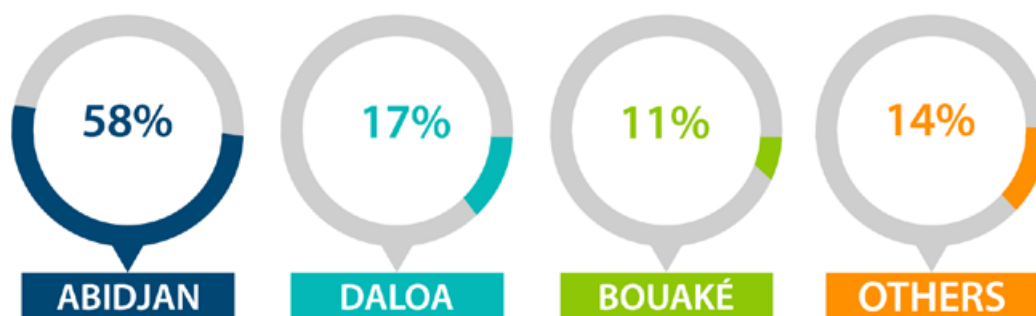
Which organizations mobilize the most UN Volunteers in Côte d'Ivoire?



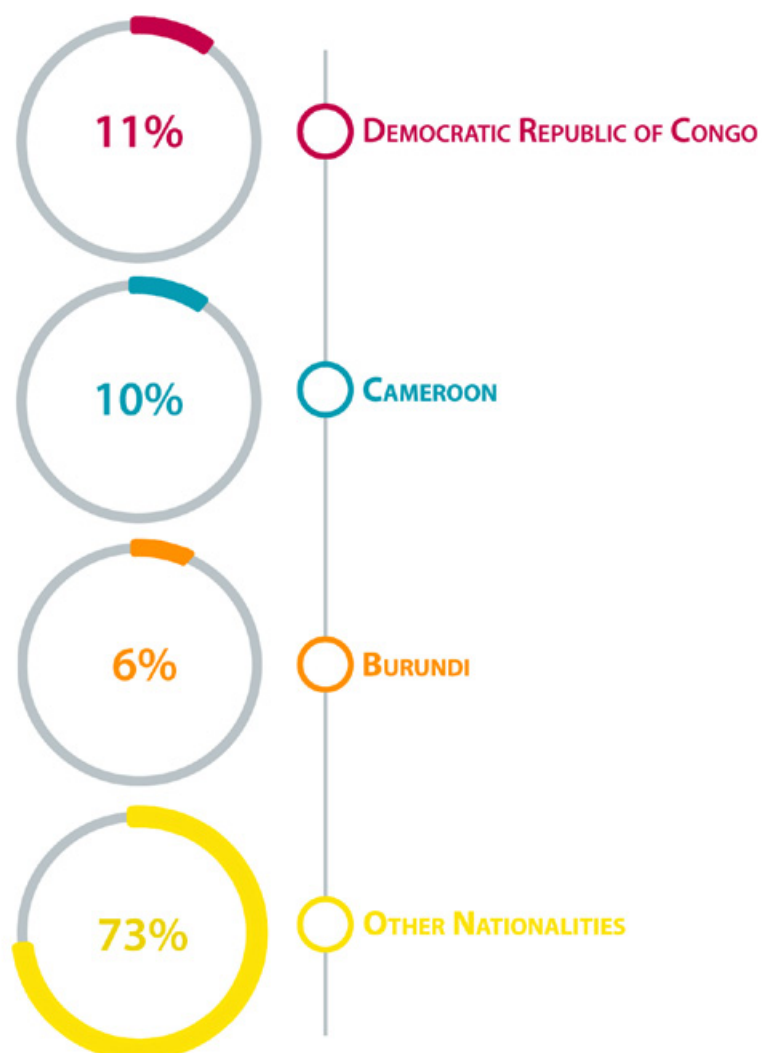
What is the gender repartition among UN Volunteers in Côte d'Ivoire?



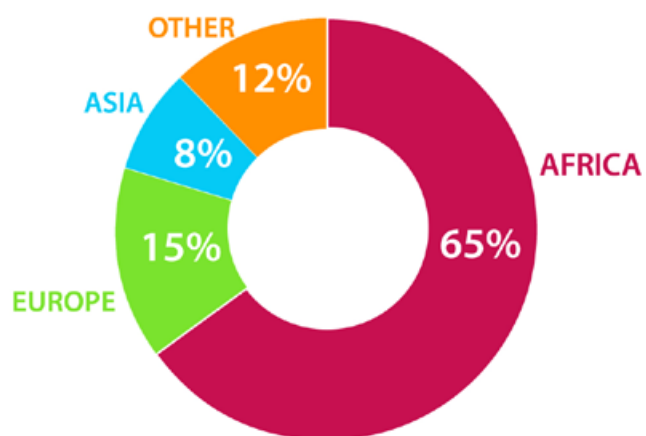
Which duty stations have the highest UN Volunteer presence?



Nationality representation among UN Volunteers



UN Volunteers in Côte d'Ivoire by continent



Etiam Fiagan

UNV Associate Human Resources Officer,
Recruitment Unit , Abidjan



UNV event: the official visit from HQ

From the 10 to the 15th of May, we had the pleasure of welcoming an official visit from the UNV Programme's HQ (Bonn, Germany). Many of us had the pleasure to meet Rosemary Kalapurakal, Deputy Executive Coordinator of the Programme, and Francesco Galtieri, Chief Peace Programming Section.

After the courtesy meetings with the Mission's and agencies' (UNDP, UNFPA and UNHCR) senior management, we tried to share with our guests what being a UN

Volunteer in Côte d'Ivoire meant on a daily basis. It was particularly important to us as Rosemary had never been in a peacekeeping mission. In ONUCI HQ, we introduced

Rosemary and Francesco to the UN Volunteers working in the Clinic, JOC (Joint Operations Center) and JMAC (Joint Mission Analysis Center).



Manjula, UN Volunteer in JOC (Joint Operation Center) (UNV Programme, 2015).



Olivia, the UN Volunteer Lab technician in the ONUCI Clinic with Rosemary (UNV Programme, 2015).

The next day, we went to the UN airport and met with the UN Volunteers in Movcon (Movement Control), before taking a Helicopter to Daloa. Jean Bosco explained the activities undergone by the Airoperations section, and

allowed us to visit the control tower. We also met with the UN Volunteers of the Engineering section (the section hosting the most volunteers: 30!), and visited a small construction project in the compound. We learnt about the diversity

of profiles and activities by these volunteers (water and sanitation, architecture, engineering, electricity...) covering even the most remote duty stations (where only military components are based) in the whole west sector!





Jean Bosco (Airops) showing the control tower in Daloa to our visitors (UNV Programme, 2015).

In Guiglo, Maxime and Ernestine, UN Volunteers in UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), are in charge of monitoring the protection, rights and well being of the Ivorian repatriates and Liberian refugees. The reintegration involves housing rehabilitation/construction, access to education, water and sanitation, gender based violence activities (sensitizations, psychosocial support...), income generating activities and much more.

Family picture in front of the HCR in Guiglo (UNV Programme, 2015).



We visited two projects for the reinsertion of ex-combatants: a fishing boat project in Guiglo and a manufacture and commercialization of "Cabakrou soap" project in Duekoue.

Cabakrou means stone or rock in Dioula (an ethnic group from northern Côte d'Ivoire). We learnt about the whole fabrication process from the oil extraction to the final product.

The palm oil needs to be heated at a very high temperature, and will then be mixed with caustic acid, which explains the need to wear gloves and masks during the fabrication process.



Anatole, UN Volunteer in DDR Section (Guiglo), introducing us to the beneficiaries of the fishing boat project: the men mostly do the fishing and the women sell the fish on the markets (UNV Programme, 2015).



On the way to the fishing boats... (UNV Programme 2015).





The fabrication process from the palm fruit to the soap (UNV Programme, 2015).



The Cabakrou mixed team, with their outfits! (UNV Programme, 2015).

In Duekoue, we also had the privilege of meeting an amazing group of **women, from different communities, who has decided to gather in order to prevent future conflicts between their respective communities and offer psychosocial support to the other women, first victims during the post-electoral crises in 2011.**

Ramillo, UN Volunteer in Civil Affairs, explains the history of the project (UNV Programme, 2015).



Duekoue was one of the zones the most violently struck by the conflict, and Sexual (SGBV) had reached tragic proportions. This women and gender-based violence



Photo de famille devant le centre d'écoute de Duékoué (Programme VNU, 2015).

counselling and orientation to the local women. To crown the week, a town hall meeting was organized for all the UN volunteers, in order to share experiences and address their main concerns. We would like to take this occasion

group took action during a visit of Mme Aichatou Mindaoudou, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), asking for a “listening” center for women. A Quick Impact Project (QIP) was decided by Madame, and implemented by the UN Volunteers serving in Civil Affairs section (ONUCI). The center is now built, just waiting for its furniture. It will allow the women to organize meetings, trainings and conferences for the communities, and also offer

to thank once again Rosemary and Francesco for their careful attention, generosity in sharing their professional experience, open-mind and open-heart.

Isabelle Rampa

UNV Project and Capacity Development Officer,
UNV Support Office, Abidjan



Special folder: UN Volunteers in the Field involved in gender issues

• Tobey, DDR Officer and gender focal point

• Lee, Fistula Project Officer

Tobey, UNV DDR Officer and gender focal point

Interview with **BERRAULT Tobey** UN volunteer from Canada, working in the DDR section in UNOCI.



Tobey (left) with other DDR and ADDR officers, the village chief and the beneficiaries of the reinsertion project "elevation porc" in the village of Pona , West (Tobey, 2015).

Tobey what motivated you to become a UN Volunteer?

As a master student in Canada, I studied DDR processes in West African countries. While doing my internship with UNDP Namibia, a colleague who was a UNV, encouraged me to make an online profile. I did not have a clue what the UNV programme was, but I took her advice anyways. About a year later, I was

recruited for the post of DDR officer, which is basically an academic dream come true for me. I devoted over 3 years of my academic life to studying these processes, so to work in a real DDR programme is excellent practical experience to complement the theoretical foundations I developed in school.

How has this new position of UN Volunteer in a DDR program changed your life?

As far as my knowledge of DDR processes goes, I am learning that things are much more complex than when they are seen from the outside looking in. It is a challenging environment while at the same time an extremely enriching experience. Being granted the opportunity to see first-hand

the different social, economic, political, and security implications has not only broadened my understanding of what it is to implement a functional DDR programme in practice, but has also opened my eyes to what it means to be a part of a peacekeeping mission in general.



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Tell us a bit about your work in the DDR division.

I do a little bit of everything these days. At first, I spent most of my time working on the Community-Based Reinsertion projects for ex-combatants. More and more, I am working with the Disarmament and Demobilization (DD) operations at the Anyama Camp in Abidjan. In the DD operations, we collect weapons, grenades, unexploded ordnances,

and munitions, demobilize ex-combatants, generate relevant statistics, and assist the national ADDR. The reinsertion projects complement these efforts by providing income-generating activities to ex-combatants and host communities to ensure a more sustainable transition from ex-combatant to civilian life.

In addition to those you are also the gender focal point in DDR. What does this mean?

Yes, I am also the gender focal point for DDR. It means that if people have questions about gender and how it relates to the DDR process

here in Côte d'Ivoire, I would be the initial person to approach.

What are your responsibilities as gender focal point in the DDR?

My daily responsibilities involve collecting and archiving relevant gender-disaggregated data for all processes of the programme and to align our programme as much as possible with the United Nations standards for a gender-responsive DDR programme. **Traditional conceptions of a DDR programme tend to favor the reintegration of male armed combatants. While many women also take up arms, there is an increased risk of sidelining them in the process as the roles they held may have been supportive rather than active combat. If a DDR process is limited in its ability to cater to these**

varying roles, it runs the risk of becoming an exclusive process, potentially relegating vulnerable groups to the side and limiting their ability to sustainably economically and socially reintegrate into their communities. That being said, to have an inclusive DDR process, it is important to integrate a gendered perspective into it. So my responsibility, as gender focal point is to try to adjust our programme, where possible within the confines of our mandate, to consider the gendered dynamic and to align it as much as possible with the United Nations' vision of a gender responsive DDR process.

How does this translate to work in the field?

The gender responsive DDR process takes into consideration things like **needs assessments for female beneficiaries and communities**, identification and tracking of who is involved in our processes and in what capacities, whether our processes can meet their specific needs, and whether **our own staff and partners are sufficiently capacitated to implement gender-responsive activities**. **Gender responsive**

monitoring and evaluation is another point. It has to do with reviewing the implementation and performance of the programme's components to see if they did meet our desired outcomes both internally and within the country as a whole. This task is quite large, and I am thankful to my fellow DDR colleagues for their continued collaboration and contributions to integrate gender into our respective tasks.

As UN Volunteer in the DDR Division, what has marked you in your day to day work?

One of the things that we've been focusing on is making sure that we have an adequate system of tracking female participation in the

disarmament and demobilization processes, and also in reinsertion of ex-combatants or of civilians who maybe benefiting from our ONUCI-



DDR projects. Not only have we increasingly focused our efforts on generating this type of data, we have been trying to report on it more consistently as well. Some of the areas where we have effectively begun to track this data are with the daily DD statistics sheets and the recording of payments to ex-combatants. It is a starting point, because that's where you have to get your baseline from. Once you have a solid baseline, you can measure if you are improving or not. If you don't have a baseline because one week you have the statistics, the next month you don't, it is difficult to tell if anything is moving forwards. So I really focus on statistics and do the collection of it. Our division has also been encouraging the national government to generate gender disaggregated data, and it has been working. One of our main efforts, however, has been to showcase and track the involvement of female beneficiaries in our reinsertion projects. The

projects are particularly interesting because the benefits have the potential to extend beyond the livelihoods of the ex-combatants and into those of the communities themselves. It's really tangible and rewarding to see when beneficiaries and receiving communities are happy. I know that in a lot of our projects, our field colleagues are working with the implementing partners to make sure that the projects are conducive for female participation. Some NGOs have put many females in key roles within the project boards such as financial secretary or as the President of the organization. It is an extremely positive thing for ONUCI to be able to say that **our projects really do place importance on female participation and have, in many cases, enabled the female participants to become leaders within the projects and their communities.** I am proud to say that we have done a very good job on this, particularly with the projects in the Man area.

Tobey would you recommend people to apply for a UNV experience?

Oh yes! Definitely! I think it is a great professional experience. One should not let the title UN "Volunteer" deter them from applying and potentially missing out on substantial work. It is a great stepping stone in one's carrier. It is a rare combination of interesting work, and global opportunities. I highly recommend the programme.

Dancing with beneficiaries from the reinsertion project "transformation de Manioc" in the Bangolo area, West, (Tobey, 2015).



Olga E.D. Kokode Nounagnon

UNV Radio Producer,
Communication and Public Information, Abidjan



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UN Volunteer story

Witnessing the change of lives

My name is **Lee Jung Eun**. I am from South Korea and have been serving in the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) since February 2014. I am finishing my assignment and will soon be leaving this country for a new start in a new place. Before I go, I would like to share my story.

I came to Côte d'Ivoire in October 2013 in Abidjan with my husband. I met him in 2011 in Timor Leste: I was completing a six-month internship in UNDP while he was working in the UN mission. Unlike here, the capital

of East Timor is quite small. Many UN agencies shared the compound of the UN mission, and everyone knew each other. During six months, **I met a large number of UN Volunteers from all over the world and they inspired me.** When I finished my internship, I registered on the UNV roster, not knowing when I would have a chance to serve.

The chance was not far. In December 2013 the Obstetrical Fistula project in UNFPA was looking for a Korean national project officer. I applied and

was assigned to the project as a locally recruited UNV. It was a good opportunity to get to learn more about maternal health in Côte d'Ivoire and put my experience at the service of the UN system. **The reason I joined development studies was to contribute to making a difference in the world in the area of maternal health. Pregnancy can be either the most joyful event or the biggest fatal risk depending on where you live.** UNFPA is the perfect host organization for me.



Lee with her team at UNFPA (Lee, 2015).

In addition, good news came in pairs! I discovered that I was pregnant. It was not easy at the beginning. I struggled with morning sickness and the difficulties in the French language (which were greater than I imagined). Some field missions were not approved due to my health status. In September 2014, my baby girl was born in Abidjan. I asked my mother in Korea to come here and help me find a balance between work and family. She stayed for several months. I have had the luck to always be able to rely on my family when I was in need of help. Being a working mother is not easy anywhere in this world, but international working mothers, far from their relatives and family, must face many additional difficulties.

The project I am assigned to is to prevent and treat obstetrical fistula. Fistula normally refers to a hole and obstetric fistula is a hole created in women's vagina after prolonged (a few days to a week!) labor linking with bladder and/or rectum. Fetus cannot survive most of the time and victims of fistula suffer from incontrollable urine and feces through vagina, which isolates these women from their families and excludes them from ordinary lives.

UNFPA has implemented a Campaign to End Fistula worldwide since 2003. Approximately 2 million women are affected in Africa, Asia and Arab regions. In Côte d'Ivoire, UNFPA focuses on

surgical treatment, community awareness raising to prevent harmful traditional practices and to increase assisted birth, and reintegration of former patients by providing income generation activities support.

Many of you have probably never heard of this problem. I hadn't either until the recruitment notice popped up. This tragic medical condition is 100 percent preventable if medical intervention (caesarian) is available during labor. That is why obstetrical fistula cannot be found in developed countries anymore. It is mostly derived from poor maternal health follow-up, access to appropriate medical care even in case of complicated pregnancy/labor nor birth control, and awareness among the public. Early pregnancies and female genital mutilation are also known causes.

My first field experience in this assignment was Bouake University Hospital where UNFPA and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire opened an operative mission. Surprisingly, many of the victims looked much younger than I thought. School uniform would have fit better for them than bladder catheter. When the fistula expert, Dr. Bile Kouame explained the situation of victims, I was surprised. Some women did not know their age and they could not recall accurately when they got married or first got pregnant. For them, prenatal and postnatal checkups and delivering babies assisted by a

professional were considered unnecessary just like their mothers and grandmothers had children without any medical intervention.

Becoming a mother gave me a totally different point of view on the project. After a comparably short time of labor, without any complication, I gave birth to my baby. While I waited an anesthetist to inject pain relieving medicine, I thought about the victims of fistula. "How possibly could they endure this pain, and even worse, for a few days and even over a week? It is obviously a serious violation of human rights to leave women without appropriate medical care during labor!" I said to my colleagues in UNFPA after I came back to work. Likewise, whenever I had a chance to listen to testimonies of former victims of fistula, I wept on the inside when they mentioned about their babies already died on the way to meet them. Becoming a mother myself brought me even closer to these women.

There are plenty of faces of poverty in Abidjan everywhere around us. But the patients of fistula are the most vulnerable and unprivileged population. **I was inspired by the strong mothers who survived and found the way to change their lives, and by the doctors who chose to dedicate themselves to this neglected medical condition.**

I sometimes thought about what it would have been like if I had rejected the offer



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after learning that I was pregnant. If it wasn't for the project, I would not have been aware of this tragic medical condition and the efforts to tackle it. I wouldn't have met wonderful people in the office and in the field. **Volunteering gave me back more than what I contributed to, and has been an unforgettable experience.**

Visiting patients at the hospital with the doctors (Lee, 2014).



Lee Jung Eun

UNV Fistula project Officer,
UNFPA, Abidjan



- Marta Civil Affairs Officer in Korhogo
- Daouda Field coordinator for UN Women in Danané

Marta UNV Civil Affairs Officer in Korhogo

I was working in Ecuador as a legal advisor for refugees when I received my offer to work as a UNV Civil Affairs Officer in Côte d'Ivoire. I was very excited to be given the opportunity to work for the UN and also to contribute to peacebuilding in Africa.



Women's group - Inter-community dialogue Kong, Tchologo region, (Marta Romero, 2015).

I flew from one continent to another and finally arrived in my duty station Korhogo, situated in the Savane region, the northern part of the country. One of the things that I like being assigned to Korhogo is that by working in the field you visit many local communities, you learn about their local customs and you get to interact with the population. As a Spaniard, I find it easy to connect with Ivoirians. Once they know where I come from, they will greet me saying ¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás? Most of them studied Spanish in school, so they like to practice their language skills.

As a Civil Affairs Officer, I realized how important it is to have a cordial relationship with all the actors in a conflict or post-conflict context and be approachable to enable

open discussions and sharing of information. The dominant ethnic group in Korhogo is Senoufo. On my arrival, I was warmly welcomed and given the name, Tchefigué, which means "woman of light skin" in Senoufo language. This enabled me to interact freely with all the communities I visit. They identify with me because of the name.

The work of a Civil Affairs Officer is very diverse, highly field-based and analytical, especially in the daily report writing. On a daily basis, I visit communities, which will always greet me saying Fotamanan! (Welcome! in Senoufo) and talk with government authorities or traditional and religious leaders to monitor and collect information on any potential or imminent conflicts.

However, during a field visit to a community, unexpected events may occur. I remember once, when I was driving to a village called Karakoro (Poro region), I was stranded in the middle of nowhere (bush) because of a flat tire. Fortunately, a person on his way to the farm readily gave me a helping hand to fix the tire.

I also identify Quick Impact Projects to strengthen peace and social cohesion in villages, such as the rehabilitation of a school, a maternity, etc. A few days after I arrived in Korhogo, I participated in the inauguration ceremony of a primary school's rehabilitation in the village of Gbandjajougou (Poro region). The entire community welcomed the delegation with gratitude accompanied by the sound of the xylophone,



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drums, chants and the smiles of students. **Many children in the region, especially little girls do not have access to education because they are obliged to work in the field with their parents** and thus they are deprived of their right to education.

Through my field visits and

organization of activities, **I became sensitive and aware of the status and role of women in the region. I admire them. They are very hardworking, courageous and persevering.** But many times their rights are not respected. During an inter-community dialogue in Kong

(Tchologo region), I had the opportunity to talk with women and discuss **the challenges they face such as discrimination, inequality, poverty or gender-based violence including forced marriages, female genital mutilation, rape and domestic violence.**

In this case, sensitization sessions are paramount to promote women's rights

within the community and I try to focus on the participation of women in

all activities in which I am involved.

Despite all the difficulties they face, Ivorian women have demonstrated their extraordinary vitality, perseverance, solidarity and their willingness to take initiatives. One of these is the cooperative Wowêla in Niellé (Tchologo region), which has just initiated its activities and is composed of 610 women that come from 26 sections or women's associations of the agricultural sector. During the launching of the cooperative, the SRSG Aïchatou Mindaoudou graced the occasion and encouraged women to persevere in their union, understanding and cohesion. The cooperative not only contributes to their economic empowerment but also to the development of the region and the reinforcement of social cohesion in the community.

My UNV experience has been very rewarding. It has exposed me to various social and cultural diversities, which have made me grown professionally and



Inter-community dialogue in Kong, Tchologo region, family picture (Marta Romero, 2015).

personally. I have also learned a lot from all the communities that I have visited. Working in the field can be tough sometimes but I am also happy to have the support of other UN Volunteers and colleagues in the mission.

Marta Romero

UNV Civil Affairs Officer,
Civil Affairs, Korhogo



Daouda UNV Field Coordinator for UN Women in Danané

My name is **Daouda SERIFOU**, and I have been passionate about volunteering since I was a teenager. The whole time I spent at the modern high school of Daoukro (central Ivory Coast), I was actively involved in running various clubs devoted to the environment, then health, the economy and culture.

Volunteering for me has always been the sanctuary of the gift of self. **Working for others, helping others, and learning from them: bringing war-torn communities back together, helping desperate families find a smile, bringing light and joy into the heart of the most far-flung places: these are values that have always**

Moreover, my continued involvement within the National Youth Union of Côte d'Ivoire (UNAJECI) gave me the chance to serve Ivoirian youth by means of intense activity and some sacrifices. Actually, my voluntary experience as Secretary General of this organization was quite enriching for me. After several years working elsewhere, I returned with pleasure to volunteering in 2014, when I joined UN Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality and women's empowerment. **What a joy to be working for women and with women!**



Launching of the project "income generating activities" in Danane (Daouda Serifou, 2014).

pointed the way for me. At university, I volunteered in the Youth Network for literacy and the campaign against HIV/AIDS, where we helped countless families overcome the dramatic onslaught of HIV/AIDS. Our training sessions,

counselling, and awareness-raising have equipped the population of deprived neighbourhoods like Abobo and Adjamé so that in their darkest moments they could tackle HIV/AIDS.



Delivery of a cassava grinder in Danane. (Daouda Serifou, 2014).

For women, our mothers, are unstinting sources of love. As it happens, working in the West of the country under the slogan "Women's

Empowerment and Social Cohesion," **I was particularly struck by the steady flame of the willpower among these thousands of women,**



broken by the crisis and now returning home, to rebuild their lives. Despite their extreme vulnerability, **these women refuse to give up. They exhibit an overpowering strength in their work, and a desire to learn, to be taught. Despite**

their challenges, they are able to draw on their inner resourcefulness to support their families, their friends and their communities. This has moved me deeply.

I salute the NGOs, the UN system and all the volunteers

around the world for their concerted efforts to improve the quality of life for countless peoples.

I greatly appreciate my volunteer experience, and I can't wait to share it with other people elsewhere!



Working session with the Group Koualoussia: rice cultivation. Financed by UN Women and UNHCR. (Daouda Serifou, 2014).



Field visit to SIN HOUYE (Daouda Serifou, 2014).

DAOUDA SERIFOU

UNV Field coordinator,
UN Women, Danané



The country I come from: The Philippines

We invite you to visit our 7107 beautiful islands of the Philippines. We are called Filipino or Pinoy for slangs. Most of Filipinos can name the 3 Main big islands: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The capital is Manila located in Luzon. At the moment more than 4000 islands are uninhabited and there are still many islands without name.

An article is not enough to describe each and every island. Let me just pick some of my favorite places.

One of them is the Bicol Region.



Maria Vicenta, in front of the flag of her country (Maria Vicenta Medina, 2009).

Besides the beautiful pearly white oceans to swim and dive, you can also climb to the mountains and volcanoes.

One of them is the majestic Mayon Volcano that erupts every 10 yrs. When it happens all the hotels are fully booked to witness this magnificent event. Mayon Volcano is known as the the world's most perfect cone volcano.



Mayon Volcano (Aran Bondocoy, 2014).

We have the majestic volcano but we also have the smallest volcano: Taal Vocano in Tagaytay, which is in the middle of a lake.



Taal Volcano: View from Picnic Grove Tagaytay (Roberto Verzo, 2010).

If you don't want to see it by foot you can hang there by the zipline and hold your breath for excitement.



Maria Vicenta and her family in front of the ziplineTagaytay (Maria Vicenta, 2009).



Maria Vicenta with her family on the ziplineTagaytay to enjoy the Taal volcano view from the air! (Maria Vicenta, 2009).

If after all this action, you would like to relax, have a foot spa with the piranhas!!! You can choose if you want the big ones or the smallest ones to clean your feet!

We have modern architecture and malls, in which you can not only go shopping, but also ice skate! Yes! Ice skates in a tropical country!!!



Maria Vicenta with her family enjoying the foot spa with the piranhas (Maria Vicenta, 2009).



Maria Vicenta Ice skating with her son (Maria Vicenta Bondocoy, 2009).

Food is not expensive and we have a large choice of restaurants. Hotels and accommodation are cheap too and easy to find

in most of the islands. Personally, my favorite food is chicken or pork adobo to share with friends because it is easy to cook: you just put

all the ingredients in the pot (chicken, garlic, soy sauce, laurel, salt and pepper to taste) and let it boil and simmer, and voilà! It is ready to eat! Tagalog is our national language among 180 dialects. Most of us are bilingual, speaking Tagalog and our own dialect. Getting around isn't difficult for visitors because Filipinos speak

English (even on the tiniest islands) and most of us can also speak Spanish specially in the South.

In behalf of my Filipino Colleagues, we wish to see you there one day and we promise you will love the scenery and warm hospitality of our country.

MARIA VICENTA MEDINA

Former UNV Supply assistant
Ration Unit, Supply Office, Abidjan



Places to visit : Bouaké!

Dear readers,

If like me you like to change scenery on weekends and are looking for a different place (other than Assinie for once), why not consider.... **Bouake** !

It's a bit more than a 4 hour drive from Abidjan, 2 hours from Korhogo and 3 hours from Daloa (and actually way less if you don't have a car beeping as soon as you reach 80km /h)...



Just the hotel mon Afrik is worth the trip : it is one of our favorite places in Côte

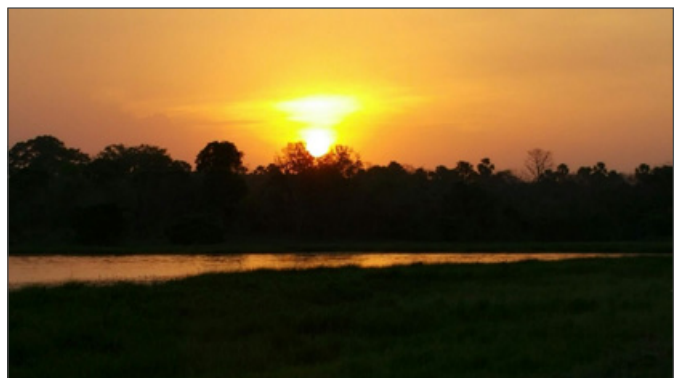
d'Ivoire... swim in the pool and watch a deer come drink the water...or enjoy the company

of the giant turtle and the colorful birds...



Hotel mon Afrik, Bouake, 2015 .

Now if you want to get out of the city and enjoy the nature, you should definitely go visit the lake « la loca » ; on the road to Beoumi, about 20 km from Bouake. Another type of visit is the trip to Tanou Sakassou (only 10km from Bouake), a traditional potter's village worth the ride!



Sunset at la loca (Cham, 2015).





If you don't want to go that far, you can take a walk along the « barrage », right near the UN base ; or in the colorful market...

« Le barrage », Bouake (Olivier, 2015).



Fish shop (Anabella Corridoni, 2014).



Walking accross Bouaké's market (Anabella Corridoni, 2014).

You can't leave Bouake without having a meal at Rama's « la Verdure ». This maquis has not only a lovely setting, they actually serve great food ! We particularly recommend the meat brochettes and the fish soup... enjoy !

Rama la Verdure, Bouake, 2015.



you can find both the Hotel Mon Afrik and Rama la verdure en



Hotel mon Afrik: (+22)5011124040

<http://www.hotel-mon-afrik-bouake.com/>

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