



UNOWAS Magazine

Together for Peace

Quarterly Magazine of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel - N8 - JUNE 2019

Political rally during the February 2019 presidential election in Senegal. Photo: UNOWAS SCPIO

Peaceful elections in Senegal and Nigeria

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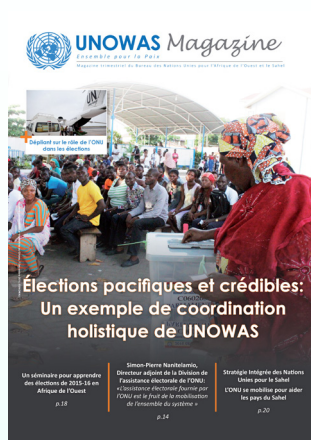
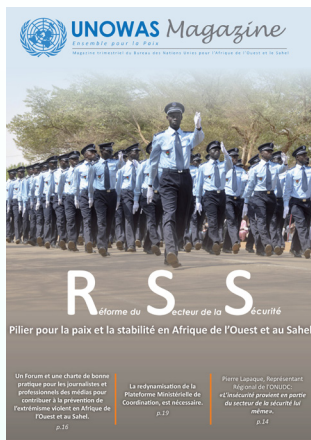
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Together for Peace

Quarterly Magazine of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel



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THE NEW LOOK OF UNOWAS MAG

The eighth issue of UNOWAS Magazine that you are holding is different from the previous ones.

Indeed, after more than two years of its launch, it seemed necessary to us to bring a creative change to improve the content and the design.

We have the great pleasure to share with you this new edition which is easier to access, more balance and more diverse in its content.

It contains several interviews, rich in information, which cover different questions and topics, the Focus section offers several angles of the main subject. The new edition also suggests "the Photo of the Mag" a choice of the editor to share an emotion, an information, or to provoke reflection.

While hoping that you will like this new edition, we will continue to remain mobilized to offer you a quality magazine that will inform you about the work of UNOWAS and important issues in West Africa and the Sahel.

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PHOTO OF THE MAG SIMB GAINDE



We are Friday 22 February 2019, last day of the presidential election campaign in Senegal. A festive atmosphere reigns in the streets of Dakar. Animated cars decorated with the effigy of the different candidates circulate in the streets and political meetings are organized in strategic places of the city.

In this photo, two young fake lions (Simb Gainde in Ouolof) dance on the rhythm of drums and music, for the purpose of adding to the ambiance of a political rally in Dakar.

The tradition of the dance of the fake lions originated in old animist rites of bewitchment in Senegal. According to the legend, a hunter survived a lion attack. He then became strange, roaring like a lion, eating only raw meat, with hairs growing on his body. He had become the lion. To heal him, the healers then proceeded with rituals of “ bewitchment “.



Mohamed Ibn Chambas

Special Representative
of the Secretary-General
and Head of United
Nations Office for West
Africa and the Sahel
(UNOWAS)

« Peaceful elections »

Two major countries in West Africa and the Sahel conducted peaceful presidential elections, despite a postponement of the election date in one and some incidents in the other. These countries are Senegal and Nigeria.

Major countries by their geostrategic position, their economic and political vitality, their history, but also and above all, by the determination of both populations to achieve a better future through a responsible, free and peaceful vote.

This quiet force, which also flows through other countries in the sub-region, speaks volumes about political maturity, especially among young people, and about the engagement of all social categories in electoral processes.

Other countries in the sub-region will hold presidential and legislative elections by the end of this year and early next year. They will undoubtedly mark an important step in the consolidation of democracy in Africa. They will also provide an opportunity to initiate new social projects that are likely to meet the expectations of the populations.

But these expectations are so high that elections polarize tensions and produce, in some cases, violence. This shows the importance of everyone's commitment to elections that respect the laws and constitutions in force. This also highlights the importance of the role of all actors in maintaining social cohesion and peace.

Looking at the mobilization of youth during the presidential elections in Senegal and Nigeria, and their active participation as voters, but also as members

of civil society organizations, such as the “Not Too Young to Run” campaign, which aimed to reduce the age limit for running for elections in Nigeria and around the world, we are entitled to expect that African youth will have an increasingly prominent role in the conduct of elections, and ultimately in the consolidation of democracy.

Despite a security context marked by the persistent threat of Boko Haram, the dialogue and peace initiatives held before the presidential elections in Nigeria, for example, demonstrated the determination of national and local authorities and all actors to sensitize voters to ensure that the election takes place in peace and with respect for the other parties.

In Senegal, the country of “teranga”, calls for calm by national authorities, political actors and civil society organisations after some incidents observed during the election campaign, also showed the mobilization of all to ensure a peaceful election.

As the sub-region prepares for another round of presidential elections, it is important to recall that each citizen, each institution must play its full role in ensuring peaceful, free and democratic elections.

The elected candidates will be responsible for implementing their development programs. They will also have an obligation to meet the expectations of their citizens.

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The UN and the EU support Lake Chad Basin countries



Following the call made by Security Council Resolution 2349 (2017), the United Nations and the European Union have decided to combine their efforts to support the countries of the region and the sub region as well as regional organizations to stem the effects of violence, particularly committed by Boko Haram and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), whose negative impacts threaten peace and stability in the region.

It is in this context that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Central

Africa (UNOCA), François Fall, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohammed Ibn Chambas and the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel (EU), Angel Losada, undertook several high-level joint missions to Chad, from 14 to 16 March 2019, Cameroon, from 23 to 27 April 2019, and then Niger, from 27 to 30 April. In Chad, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), Michèle Coninx, took part in the mission.

During their various missions, they were able to assess the security and humanitarian situation of the Lake Chad Basin countries, especially the response provided by local, national and international actors in the framework of the implementation of the Regional Strategy for stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Lake Chad Basin areas affected by Boko Haram. Mr. Fall, Ibn Chambas and Mr. Losada also met with people affected by the violence, including in Bol, Lac Province and Diffa, the region most affected by Boko Haram activities in Niger.

The United Nations / European Union delegation also reiterated its support to local authorities and actors to promote development projects to improve the living conditions of the population.

UNOWAS calls on dialogue in Benin



“Benin is the vitrine of democracy in West Africa and Africa,” said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, during his visit from 18 to 20 March. This mission was part of the UN’s ongoing support to the countries of the subregion in their efforts to consolidate democracy and development. During his visit, Mr. Ibn Chambas met with the highest national authorities, including the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Patrice Talon, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Adrien Houngbedji, the President of the Constitutional Court Mr. Joseph Djogbenou, as well as the former Presidents of the Republic, Mr. Nicéphore Dieudonné Soglo, and Mr. Thomas Boni Yayi.

Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/2KwdpPn>

UNOWAS supports peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire



The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas,

visited Côte d'Ivoire from 15 to 16 April. This visit, part of UNOWAS's good offices missions in the subregion, aimed to continue consultations with the authorities and to exchange views with key stakeholders in Ivorian society on various issues. national and regional levels, and on strengthening United Nations support for Côte d'Ivoire. During his visit, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations met, inter alia, with the Vice-President of Côte d'Ivoire, Daniel Kablan Duncan; the President of the Senate, Jeannot Kouadio Ahoussou; the president of the National Assembly, Amadou Soumahoro and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marcel Amon Tanoh. Mr. Ibn Chambas also had discussions with representatives of political parties, civil society and the United Nations Country Team, as well as the diplomatic corps. "The presidential elections scheduled for 2020 are a major step in the consolidation of peace, democracy and development."

Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/2Zns83l>

SRSG Ibn Chambas visits Mauritania ahead of presidential elections



In preparation of presidential elections scheduled for 22 June, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, conducted a three-day visit to Mauritania from 13 to 15 May. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations was received in audience by the President of Mauritania, HE Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. He also had a series of talks with the Minister of Justice, Dia Mactar Malal, the Minister of the Interior and Decentralization, Ahmedou Ould Abdalla and the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), Mohamed Vall Ould bellal. Mr. Ibn Chambas also met the six candidates for the presidential election, the accredited diplomatic corps in Mauritania and the United Nations country team.

Mr. Ibn Chambas called on all stakeholders to take the necessary steps to organize peaceful, inclusive, free, transparent and credible elections. "The presidential elections are an opportunity for the Mauritanian people to achieve their aspiration for peace and prosperity," he added.

Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/2Ww45gu>

Territorial governance, peace and security discussed at UNOWAS “Arbre à Palabres”



In the framework of consultative meetings entitled “Arbre à Palabres” which is an exchange platform on the state of governance, human rights, peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel, UNOWAS held on 18 April 2019 a session on “Territorial Governance, Peace and Security”.

This study takes stock of the place given to peace and security in decentralization processes in Ghana, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Senegal. It also formulates recommendations to strengthen the role of local and regional authorities in preventing, resolving conflicts and building social cohesion.

“In a context of multifaceted threats to stability and social cohesion, this exchange session allows us to discover new ways to strengthen territorial governance in the service of peace, democracy and sustainable development,” said Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel.

Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/2XDfHQf>

UNOWAS support National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)



In her remarks at the regional consultation for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) for West Africa, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, called on NHRIs to remain key players in the electoral process and underscored

the importance of ensuring their independence. Ms. Sandhu-Rojon also urged them to remain the main advocates for inclusivity in both policies and practice while reiterating the support of the UN to the work of human rights defenders including NHRIs.

The NHRIs agreed to build strategic and operational partnerships with Elections Management Bodies, national peace architectures, the civil society, security forces, political actors and other relevant stakeholders in their respective countries in order to promote peaceful, credible and transparent processes. The NHRIs from countries organizing elections agreed to closely monitor the process and issue an analytical report thereafter.

The regional consultation for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) for West Africa was organized from 29 to 31 May in Accra, by UNOWAS, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - West Africa Regional Office (OHCHR-WARO), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice of Ghana and the Network of National Human Rights Institutions.

UNOWAS's preventive action, contribution to peaceful elections in Nigeria

Given Nigeria's strategic position in West Africa and in the continent, and given the internal challenges, it was vital to support Nigeria in conducting peaceful, free and credible elections. This is the work that UNOWAS undertook with various regional and international partners to help ensure peaceful elections and prevent any outbreak of violence.

Within the framework of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)'s mandate to support peaceful political processes including free, and credible elections, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, undertook several missions to Nigeria with the objective of supporting the country's efforts towards conducting peaceful 2019 general elections. These interventions intensified as the country approached the presidential and national assembly elections of 23 February, and the governorship and state assembly elections of 9 March 2019.

As a follow-up to previous missions, Ibn Chambas visited Abuja from 7 to 9 October 2018 for consultations on support to the 2019 elections. The visit took place immediately after the conventions of the political parties and the nomination of their respective flagbearers

From 29 to 31 October, the Special Representative participated in a joint pre-electoral mission to Nigeria with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU). The mission consulted with President Muhammadu Buhari, the Office of the Inspector General of Police, senior military officials, civil society organizations and other key actors and institutions on national efforts and the partner's support to ensure peaceful elections.

Consultations with key stakeholders

In the same vein, from 11 to 24 November 2018, Ibn Chambas visited stakeholders in Kaduna, Rivers, Anambra and Benue states, and engaged the State

Governors, the Resident Electoral Commissioners, state security officials, as well as civil society on preparations for the elections. The objective was to sustain UN's efforts in support of peaceful, free, fair and credible elections, with a focus on possible election hotspots. To this end, he carried out consultations with key stakeholders both at federal and state levels and held debriefing sessions with international partners and the diplomatic corps accredited to Nigeria with an aim to garner their support and enhance coherence in the international community support.

From 11 to 12 December 2018, the Head of UNOWAS witnessed the signing of the Peace Accord between the political parties and their presidential candidates, committing to a peaceful process and outcome. Subsequently, on 13 February 2019, he also attended the second signing of the National Peace Accord by candidates for the presidential election. During the ceremony, Ibn Chambas underlined the huge role and responsibility of candidates, their parties and supporters in ensuring that the process remains peaceful, credible and transparent. He encouraged all stakeholders to respect the rule of law they may have arising from the process.

Throughout his visits, the Special Representative consistently stressed that Nigeria occupies a strategic position in West Africa, in the continent and indeed globally. In this regard, he underlined how crucial it was that Nigeria delivers credible, peaceful and fair elections in 2019, in a manner that improves upon the performance of the 2015 elections.

In preparation for the elections, UNOWAS, in partnership with the National Peace Committee (NPC) and the UN country team in Nigeria organized a series of events in a number of potential hotspot



Signing of the National Peace Accord by candidates for the presidential election, 13 February 2019 in Abuja- Nigeria. Photo: DR

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The UN
contributed
to defuse
tensions
around the
elections

states including Benue, Kaduna, Kano, and Kwara, to galvanize stakeholders' support towards peaceful 2019 elections. The events brought together the leadership of political parties in the respective States, candidates for various elections, traditional and religious leaders, security services, federal and state institutions, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), civil society organizations including youth, women's groups and persons with disability as well as the media.

Promoting peaceful elections and democratic consolidation in Nigeria

The state-level events aimed to reinforce sensitization and awareness, facilitate exchange and build synergy among stakeholders for peaceful 2019 elections. This initiative was also geared towards complementing ongoing peace and development initiatives in the various states to promote violence-free and an inclusive process before, during and after the voting and the declaration of the final election results.

During the state-level fora, the Head of UNOWAS reiterated the UN's resolve to support initiatives at both the state and federal levels, in alignment with regional efforts aimed at promoting peaceful elections and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. He urged all stakeholders, in accordance with their

pledges, to avoid hate messages and the politics of acrimony, bitterness, and rancor that undermine peaceful conduct of elections. He also called on all to work towards improving on the numbers of youths and women fielded by political parties in future elections.

During the elections, Ibn Chambas contributed to coordinating the international community's support to national efforts for peaceful elections. He held regular consultations with the Heads of the International Observers Missions deployed to Nigeria and worked closely with national observers. In this regard, the UN contributed to defusing tensions around the elections and encouraged all stakeholders to resolutely work towards peaceful and credible elections in the country. Following the postponement of the general elections from 16 to 23 February, UNOWAS, together with the electoral observers of ECOWAS, AU, The Commonwealth, Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), EU, NDI/IRI, OIC, called on all Nigerians to continue to remain calm and supportive of the electoral process as INEC worked to implement its new timeline.

SRSB Chambas continued engagement with key political actors even after the elections and the proclamation of results to urge them to address any contentious issues in line with the rule of law.

INTERVIEW

AYISHA
OSORI

“Holding regular elections is not democracy”



Ayisha Osori. Photo: DR

Ayisha Osori is the Executive Director of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). She's the writer of the book "Love does not win elections". A personal experience that talks about politics and elections in Nigeria. Interview.

Your book, published in 2017, "Love doesn't win elections", is a statement. What does win elections?

In the context in which the book was written i.e., about politics and elections in Nigeria, what wins elections is control over the institutions that are supposed to ensure electoral accountability namely the political parties, the judiciary, the election management body, and to a lesser extent the security agencies. This might sound familiar to others working in the democratic governance space in other west African countries.

But you wrote, that "there is no doubt that we need more people in the political space. The space is messy, but there is a little choice but to continue to engage", do you think Nigerian citizens, particularly women and youth are involved in the political space?

A women and young people are increasingly becoming involved in the political space in Nigeria. Steady calls for affirmative action for women's representation as well as the success of the Not to Young to Run

campaign (which has been adopted globally) which saw a reduction of the minimum age eligibility requirements of some positions is evidence of this fact. One could argue however, looking at the declining number of women being voted into national and state parliament since 2007 that the results do not yet the involvement. Likewise- despite more young people contesting elections, the representation of youth in decision making, across board is still low.

More citizens – beyond those who are putting themselves forward for elective positions- need to become more active participants in local and national politics. The declining num-

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As a region, we are only partly through getting a good grasp of institutionalizing democracy.

ber of ballots cast (35% in the just concluded 2019 general elections) indicates that majority are disengaged which is why I call for more people to get involved, not just as candidates/aspirants but as voters, campaigners for accountability and citizens who pressure government to make good on the social contract.

Last February, Nigeria went through another presidential election. Would you say that there was an improvement in terms of participation comparing to 2015 presidential elections?

No, there isn't an improvement in participation if one looks at voter turnout. In fact, the data on presidential elections shows a steady decline in the number of Nigerians coming out to vote, with 2019 having the lowest ever since 1999. However, some might argue that with social media, the conversations are becoming more issues based and more are sharing their views and taking an active part in campaigning for their candidates/parties – unfortunately there is no data yet to prove or disprove this.

After Nigeria and Senegal, West Africa region will be witnessing a number of presidential and parliamentary elections. What is your advice to politicians and young contestants to help strengthen their commitment to good governance and to change the “political culture”?

There is a trend across West Africa where we see elections holding more regularly but we are observing less democratic values and practices. This is evident in the nature of electoral reforms and laws which limit choice

and participation, the way incumbents treat the opposition, the way institutions responsible for electoral accountability are compromised and even the growing trend of manipulating constitutions. The result is that these governments perception of legitimacy is weakened and the distance between the elected and the electorate is widening with citizens across the region also facing common problems such as growing poverty rates even in countries measuring steady growth.

My advice to politicians is to take note of the trends across Africa and the rest of the world – citizens are increasingly impatient to enjoy the benefits of good governance and states that are empathetic to the aspirations of the majority who are young. There must be a review of the politics of self- with an end to the colonial model of ensuring those in government are extremely comfortable to the detriment of the majority of the people.

My advise to young contestants is this: to reimagine what governance, politics and elections can be for them and their communities. The current model of politics and governance in most West African countries is not sustainable and if the young contestants can come up with ways to disrupt and replace (being ready to replace is very important because where there is disruption without a ready alternative model, chaos follows), it will be ultimately rewarding for them, their countries and the region as a whole.

More broadly, what is your view regarding the effective role of elections in consolidating democracy in West Africa?

Elections are not democracy. Holding regular elections is not democracy. Holding regular elections that are well orchestrated is not democracy. While there is a certain measure of comfort that across West Africa elections are being held regularly, the disaffection of citizens indicates that many are questioning the link between regular elections and good governance that impacts positively on their lives. A recent Afrobarometer study indicates that the majority of Africans appreciate democracy as a system but only 15% are ready to defend it and the low voter turnout that we see in some of our countries indicates a growing disenchantment with democracy.

There needs to be a link between elections and the quality of citizens lives and the quality of government services. Better choices and options at the ballot, increased ease and simplicity of being able to vote and be a voter for, decreasing violence, decreasing cost of elections (as borne by the state and by citizens) and strong soft democratic norms upheld by citizens and politicians alike are all important in consolidating democracy in West Africa. As a region, we are only partly through getting a good grasp of institutionalizing democracy.



Book of Ayisha Osori:
“Love does not win elections”
Narrative Landscape Press



Presidential election in Senegal, a voter at the poll center of HLM 5 neighborhood in Dakar. 24 February 2019. Photo: UNOWAS SCPIO

“A matter of taste!”

The presidential election held on 24 February 2019 revealed the political maturity of the Senegalese people, who were mobilized across all social categories to elect the president of the Republic of Senegal.

“I have never missed a single electoral appointment, I have always voted,” says Mrs. Rokhaya Mal, who proudly holds a small “gargote” on the Place du Souvenir Africain, at the Corniche de Dakar. In her fifties, she is confident that the candidate for whom she will vote will win the presidential elections. Above all, Ms. Mal hopes that the elections will take place in a peaceful atmosphere. “I pray that the elections go well. People should go and vote and should accept the results of the ballot box,” said Ms. Mal. “You know, if you don’t have peace you have nothing,” she adds, while serving her customers sitting around a makeshift table to enjoy the traditional Thiebou Dieune (Fish and Rice).

The often-subjective opinions tinged with a dose of militancy are all over the place. This is normal, we are on the eve of the presidential election in Senegal and everyone has something to say! Under a tree, while the sun is at its peak, Ms. Mal and her clients, do not deviate from the rule. Through small talk, they discuss the presidential election that will take place the next day, 24 February.

Ms. Mal’s wishes

Ms. Mal’s wishes have come true! Unanimously, international and national observers accredited to monitor the elections rated the elections as “calm, participatory and transparent, despite some irregularities”. This was not a foregone conclusion because, during the election campaign, incidents were observed in various localities that prompted the authorities to take measures to ensure the safety of the population, and candidates to launch appeals for calm and restraint.

For its part, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) has not remained inactive. Committed to preventing all types of violence, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, visited the campaign offices of the five contesting candidates before the elections were held to raise awareness and encourage them to work towards peaceful elections. “The 2019 election is a major step in the consolidation of democracy that has always been achieved in peace and tolerance,” he said, while encouraging Senegalese to continue to promote this spirit of peace and tolerance.



A woman casting her vote at the poll center of HLM 5 neighborhood during the presidential election in Senegal. 24 February 2019. Photo: UNOWAS SCPIO

Five candidates for one seat

The discussion between Ms. Mal's clients came to life and became increasingly tense when a young girl, spoon in hand, revealed, with laughter, that she still did not know who to vote for. "I don't trust any of the candidates! Maybe I will vote for Ousmane Sonko, because he is young and has the ambition to make the difference," she says. "Anyway, we already know who's going to win!" she concludes. Another customer to acquiesce and shout with great gestures: "but President Macky Sall, with the sponsorship, he will certainly win."

Sponsorship, the novelty of this electoral process, has caused a lot of ink to flow in Senegal. According to Act No. 2018-22 of 4 July 2018 revising the Electoral Code, all presidential, legislative and local elections are now subject to citizen sponsorship. Only voters who are regularly registered on the voters' lists may sponsor a candidacy. Before 2018, sponsorship was only required for independent presidential candidates. Now, each candidate must collect at least 0.8% of the signatures of the electors entered on the electoral roll from at least 7 regions. Out of the 27 applications submitted, only 7 were able to pass the sponsorship test. In the end, 5 applications were validated by the Constitutional Council.

Ms. Mal smiles maliciously and says with conviction "in any case, it's a matter of taste! Macky Sall is my candidate and I will vote for him. He has been able to preserve stability and peace in the country. So

why would you want to change the president? ». And then to specify: "I have my candidate! That's right, and I want him to win. But, no matter what, whether people go to the polls and whatever the results, we will have to accept the will of the people and preserve peace"

On February 24, 2019, voting day, more than 6.69 million Senegalese voters were called to go to the polls to choose who will lead the country. They had to choose between the outgoing president Macky Sall (Coalition Benno Bokk Yakaar) and his opponents, Idrissa Seck (Coalition Idy 2019), Madické Niang (Coalition Madické 2019), Issa Sall (PUR) and Ousmane Sonko (Coalition Sonko President).

But where are the women?

Continuing their debate, Ms. Mal and her clients are engaged in an exercise of prognosis and speculation on the "happy man" of this presidential election. Racky Ndiaye, a young woman barely 30 years old, who came to buy food, intervened in the discussion to say, a little disappointed and sad, that women were the main absentees from this race for presidential election: "It is a pity that there is no a woman candidate. I remember that in 2012, Am-satou Sow Sidibe and Diouma Dieng Diakhaté beat the campaign".

Women constitute the clear majority of the Senegalese electorate. They are an electoral issue and a political force, which, through their commitment, can turn an election upside down. By way of illus-

tration, in 2000, they made a major contribution to the emergence of Senegal's first political changeover. The 2000 election was the first in Senegal's political history to register a female candidate.

However, three of them, namely Aissata Tall Sall, Aida Mbodj and Amsatou Sow Sidibé, had submitted their candidacy for the Constitutional Council. According to some analysts, the sponsorship exercise is a major factor and women candidates could not obtain the required 53,000 signatures.

“I hope you will vote tomorrow”

Enthusiastic, like an activist, Racky still calls out to customers: “You who are arguing, I hope you will vote tomorrow”, she asserts. “If you want to see things change, this is your opportunity to express yourself through the ballot box,” she adds. Racky finally told the group of people she had just met that she was part of the Sunu Election monitoring platform and that she would wake up early the next day to vote and then go to her assigned observer position.

The 2019 presidential election recorded a record turnout of 66 per cent, compared to 51.58 per cent in 2012 and 60.17 per cent in 2000. A strong citizen mobilization that confirms Senegalese people political maturity. Indeed, more than 4 million citizens turned out to vote. Already at midday on polling day, the turnout was reported at over 40%!

For this presidential election, the domestic observers did a remarkable job. 5,003 observers were accredited by the Ministry of the Interior to observe the presidential election. Of these, there were just over 4,100 Senegalese volunteers, most of whom were deployed throughout the country by civil society. Including, the Catholic Church who, for its part, mobilized 1,000 observers. International and regional organizations, namely ECOWAS, the African Union and the European Union, have also deployed observation missions.

High challenges for the President-elect

A little over a week after the election, a period characterized by a “war of numbers” between opposition candidates and the ruling party, the Constitutional Council declared candidate Macky Sall, winner in the first round with 58.27% of the votes. He was followed by Idrissa Seck with 20.5%, then Ousmane Sonko with 15.67%. The candidates Issa Sall and Madické Niang manage to get 4.07% and 1.58% respectively.

After nearly an hour of discussion on the presidential election, Ms. Mal finally explained to her clients that she had been working for years to accomplish all the projects she had set out to do. “Life is very difficult! I hope that the cost of living in Senegal will decrease



“
Life is very difficult! I
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decrease considerably

considerably,” she says. She hopes that the President-elect will do everything possible to ensure that staple foods are accessible. “Really, I don’t earn money like I used to,” she complains.

This complaint is shared by almost all her customers, who agree and comment casually on the difficulties of everyday life. “I graduated several years ago with a master’s degree in management, but I’m struggling to find a job. I have to do odd jobs to get by,” says Issa, a 33-year-old man. “The school system must be restructured, jobs created, access to health improved. We have good doctors who work in difficult conditions, in hospitals that lack everything,” says Issa, with a voice tinged with passion.

The elections were conducted in a peaceful and participatory manner, and the outgoing President, Macky Sall, was re-elected for a second 5-year term. Echoing the expectations of the Senegalese population, the commentators at Ms. Mal’s restaurant, before getting rid of their plate of thiebou Dieune, unanimously insisted that whoever is elected president, “he will be the president of all Senegalese. He will have to do everything to improve the country’s development”, a huge program!

“Which President for the Senegalese Family” ?

The role of the family, and that of women, is fundamental in the consolidation of good governance. Supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Women Leaders Caucus initiated an initiative to raise awareness among political actors and candidates for the 2019 presidential elections to better integrate gender and family issues into their programs and projects.



▲
Workshop for the validation of the evaluation of the integration of gender and family issues into the programs of candidates for the 2019 presidential elections. Photo: UNDP

The socio-economic and political dynamism that Senegal has known for decades allows the various actors, particularly civil society, to play a leading role in strengthening good governance and the preservation and respect of human rights. Also, presidential or legislative elections are a major moment in the political life of each country. Because, beyond the choice of a

candidate, it is a question of ensuring the progress of society through a program that takes into account the expectations of the population and the contribution of its components.

It is in this sense, and in keeping with its role as a facilitator of local capacities to strengthen national ownership, that UNDP Senegal did not hesitate to support the Women Leaders

Caucus in the implementation of its activities, in particular in the organization of a workshop to validate the evaluation of the integration of gender and family issues into the programs of candidates for the 2019 presidential elections. The workshop was held on 20 February 2019 in partnership with Enda, Rasef, Article 19, the Gender and Family Institute, Africa-Jom and Jamra. In addition to

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this initiative, a series of radio and television debates were organized at the national level to engage political parties, civil society, the media, religious, customary and traditional leaders to also advocate for gender mainstreaming in public policies.

Created in 2010, the Women Leaders Caucus brings together women from political parties, trade unions and civil society. After successfully leading the mobilization for the adoption of the parity law, it trained women candidates in the 2012 legislative elections and supported women candidates in the 2014 local elections.

For the 2019 presidential elections, the Women Leaders Caucus, through the organization of this workshop, wanted to sensitize the various political actors, including political parties, to take family and gender issues into account in the development of candidates' programs.

During this workshop on 20 february 2019, participants, including representatives of the five candidates for the presidential election, were able to assess the extent to which gender and family issues were included in the candidates' programs. But

far from pointing the finger at the “wrong candidate”, the workshop identified shortcomings and formulated responses to improve the consideration of diverse and important issues, such as breastfeeding and pregnant women in prison, exclusive breastfeeding and maternity leave, care for the mentally ill, isolation of the elderly, management of specific diseases, care for people with disabilities (education, mobility), the fight against violence and rape, and many other issues that reveal a deep family crisis.

The family, a political issue

Indeed, the National Agency of Statistics and Demography (ANSD) and the work of the Gender Laboratory of the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) of the Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD) in Dakar on the family have produced data that reveal a deep crisis in Senegalese society. Both institutions estimate that 46% of children do not live with both parents, and that women as mothers have “less access to knowledge, professional skills and resources”, which promotes their fragility.

Other figures are equally revealing of the low participation of women in the economic field. In the agricultural sector, women farm an average of 0.4 ha of land compared to 1.3 ha for men. In addition, only 13.8% of women own the land they cultivate. In terms of economic governance, women represent only 6.4% of industrial leaders and own only 18.9% of small and medium-sized enterprises. This situation is aggravated by violence against women and children, which makes the family unit much more fragile.

In response to this situation, the Women Leaders Caucus believes that presidential candidates must play a more active role by committing to concrete actions, such as the rigorous enforcement of laws against gender-based violence, the use of DNA testing to restore children born of rape to their human

rights, and the economic empowerment of women for a better and equitable distribution in the new facilities. In addition, a portion of gas and oil revenues could be programmed by the Government to finance women's activities through an entrepreneurship fund.

According to the Women Leaders Caucus, these actions should not only be included in the candidates' programs, but above all they should be effectively considered in all political projects and programs that the various political parties are developing in order to further consolidate democracy and good governance in Senegal.

A diagnostic document on this major issue was shared with all stakeholders, including all candidates. For the next phase of this initiative, the Women Leaders Caucus will collect contributions and new ideas generated through media debates, social networks and interactive programs to improve the document that will be sent to political actors and parties to ensure that the issue of family and women is placed among the priority issues in their political project.



Brochure « Elections 2019, quel président pour la famille sénégalaise ? »

[Download on: www.sn.undp.org]



Situation room of the civil society during the presidential election in Senegal, 24 February 2019. Photo: UNOWAS SCPIO

National observer, a civic commitment for peaceful elections

Some Senegalese citizens did not only vote in the presidential election, but they wanted to wear the observer's cap to help organize a peaceful election, thus contributing to the consolidation of democracy in Senegal.

On 24 February, the day of the presidential election in Senegal, the streets of Dakar are calm. A good-natured atmosphere reigns around the polling centres, which spontaneously transforms into meeting places for neighbours and friends who have not seen each other for a long time. Groups were formed and the vote was discussed. In the mouths, the main question keeps coming up: "Have you already voted?"

At midday, long queues form as people arrive in front of the polling stations in the centre of HLM 6. In one of the offices, two young men, Moussa Sy and Birima Ngom, dressed in light grey vests, broke in and asked to meet the president. After greetings, they present their accreditation card issued by the Ministry of the Interior before inquiring about the

voting process and the arrangements that have been made to enable citizens to vote under the required conditions.

4,100 Senegalese observers

Moussa Sy and Birima Ngom, are young volunteers from the Sunu Election programme (our election). They are among the 4,100 Senegalese observers deployed throughout the country by the civil society to ensure transparency, credibility of the election and civic participation. For that purpose, the two volunteers must visit a number of polling stations in order to record all kinds of information on the process, that they will then send to the technical service of the electoral monitoring unit responsible for compiling and processing the first



The objective of the Sunu Election program is to create the conditions for Senegalese people to familiarize themselves with the different procedures of the electoral process

field data that provides an indication on the quality of the voting process.

In Senegal, the civil society was heavily involved in the electoral process through its work as observer, sensitizer and facilitator. Thus, several citizen actions have been initiated. These activities range from raising awareness for a widespread participation in voting, election observation to the facilitation in order to correct possible dysfunctions related to the vote process.

In a room of a local hotel, a group of women and young people analyze the data gathered from the field. We are in the electoral monitoring unit of the Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel Working Group, set up with the financial support of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and UN Women. The working group deployed 50 observers across the national territory who visited 971 polling stations with the objective of collecting information on women's participation.

Just next door, another much larger room is crowded with people, it houses the Sunu Election program watch cell, in partnership with the Gorée Institute, which is responsible for monitoring electoral violence, and the Senegal Vote program, which is responsible for monitoring on social networks. Despite the comings and goings of international observers, in particular ECOWAS and the European Union, who come to obtain the latest information on the conduct of the vote, a serene working atmosphere prevails in this room.

Massive engagement of young people

For me, voting is a civic act and participating in such a civil society initiative that promotes participatory and peaceful elections is important," says Albert Kaly, a young volunteer. Sitting in front of his computer, Mr. Kaly carefully records the information received by telephone from the field on the platform used to process the data received from some 2,000 observers deployed throughout Senegal by the Sunu Election program. There are 25 young people, like Mr. Kaly, assigned to the technical component of the electoral monitoring structure.

These data collected and processed are then sent to a political cell made up of personalities and civil society leaders. After a much more in-depth analysis, the members of the political cell report to the authorities the dysfunctions detected for rapid correction. This was how they were able to alert to the issue of voters who could not find their names on the voters' lists.

The Sunu Election programme was set up by the Collective of Civil Society Organisations for Elections (COSCE) and the Platform of Non-State Actors. "The objective of the Sunu Election program is to create the conditions for Senegalese people to familiarize themselves with the different procedures of the electoral process. And, encourage them to express their will while ensuring that the elections are held in a transparent and peaceful manner," said Ndiaga Sylla, Head of Elections for the programme. "That's why, through the Sama baat (my voice) campaign, we have deployed long-term observers over the past three months, who have contributed to the massive withdrawal of voter cards," explains Mr. Sylla.

Similar initiatives for a massive and quality mobilization have been carried out by other structures. Senegal Vote, for example, wanted to play its part on social networks. "On our Senegal Vote platform, we have a map that provides information on polling centres and stations, a voter's guide and a showcase for candidates who wanted to share the different axes of their programmes," says Ms Jaly Badiane, Coordinator of the initiative. "It is a way of informing citizens about the content of the various candidates' programs and raising awareness about one of the major issues of citizenship, which is voting," she added.

All these initiatives have contributed in one way or another to strengthening democracy in Senegal through the mobilization of citizens for peaceful and participatory elections.

“We provide technological solutions to increase the quality of democracy and development”

Tuwindi, a Malian organization that promotes social and economic development using information and communication technologies. It is active in the areas of governance, democracy, citizenship and human rights. It has provided an essential support the holding of transparent elections in Senegal. Tidjani Togola, the Executive Director and Founder of Tuwindi, agreed to answer our questions. Interview.

Mr. Tidjani Togola, could you introduce your organization?

The Tuwindi Foundation is an organization specialized in civic technology. We use technologies to increase citizens' participation in everything related to their political and public rights. We provide technological solutions to increase the quality of democracy and development. The idea is to ensure that the citizen is at the heart of the decision-making process and take part in the building of the economic and social life.

What justifies your current presence in Senegal?

We are here in Senegal as part of the elections. We support civil society organizations in the electoral monitoring through the provision of a technological platform that will allow to collect observation information by SMS. This information will then be inserted into the data-

base for a real-time processing. We have trained 2,000 observers and 27 platform managers. Observers are deployed across Senegal, which would allow us to have statistically representative data.

You are Malian and you support an initiative of Senegalese civil society organizations for the presidential election. What motivates you?

My motivation is the quest for transparency, respect for the rights of citizens. There is no difference between a citizen of Mali or Senegal since we can build together our future. We have the same future! if democracy is not strong in Senegal, it will not be in Mali. Maybe it's an exaggeration to say it, but I'm wherever we need to defend the values of democracy and respect for human rights; wherever good governance practices need to be promoted. That's my battle!

I am a computer engineer and I use my knowledge to serve citizen participation

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We support civil society organizations in the electoral monitoring through the provision of a technological platform



Mr. Tidjani Togola (left). Photo: DR

in good governance. Engaging with civil society organizations in Senegal is both an honor and a duty. That's why we're here to work on the USAID-funded program, Sunu Election. We bring our technical contribution to a work that I consider noble and necessary. My motivation is to defend democracy wherever we can and with all my energy.

Tell us a bit about Tuwindi's activities in the region

The Tuwindi Foundation is very active in the region. We regularly organize training workshops for civil society organizations from different African countries. We equip them and prepare them to set up an electoral watch room in their respective countries. In general, they receive advanced training on state-of-the-art technology tools for the implementation of

the monitoring room, including the OpenESR election information system software that we use.

Through these initiatives, we are trying to innovate election observation and enhance the transparency, integrity and credibility of elections in Africa.

What are your relations with governments? are they always open for such initiatives?

We have good relations with the governments of the countries where we operate. This is necessary because our aim is to ensure that the authorities, in charge of the organization of the elections, correct the irregularities that we find on the ground and which do not respect the regulation in force on the elections. So, we do not hesitate to invite them to understand our work which is also done

in all legality and legitimacy. In general, they cooperate.

What are your prospects for the future? Do you plan to do this work for a long time?

We will continue to support electoral actors in African countries. We will continue to increase the capabilities of our technologies to support the entire electoral cycle. We will also pursue the development of other methodological approaches and software solutions best suited to the needs of actors in their mission of supporting democracy, freedom of expression and other fundamental rights. We also plan to work on the issue of infox (fake news) and strengthen our collaboration with different stakeholders to introduce Information and Communication Technologies in their activities in general.

UNOWAS and ECOWAS build women capacities for a better peacebuilding

Women play an increasingly important role in consolidating peace in the region. To strengthen their capacities, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) organized from 13 to 17 May 2019 in Accra, Ghana, a training of trainers for a better empowerment of women.

Building on their commitment to empowering women peacebuilders in West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the Community Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with the support of the government of the Netherlands and in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) gathered from 13-17 May 2019 in KAIPTC premises in Accra, more than 30 people representing eleven countries in the region, for a training of trainers workshop.

Thirty people trained in conflict analysis and mediation

For five days, these women and men, including civil society actors or members of Women, Youth, Peace and Security networks and working groups, were equipped with the skills needed to train women stakeholders in conflict analysis and prevention in their own countries and communities. They were trained in conflict analysis, mediation and gender dimensions of conflict, mainly drawn from the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework and the UNOWAS Conflict Analysis Handbook.

According to the United Nations Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, without women's inclusion, peace is not sustainable. "Today there is a positive momentum in West Africa in terms of the awareness of promoting women leadership and participation in peace-making. We need to redouble our efforts to support capacity-building and skills training for women. UNOWAS is committed to working with ECOWAS to achieve this important objective," said Ibn Chambas at the closing ceremony.

Regional partnership to increase women's empowerment efforts

To enhance these efforts, ECOWAS and UNOWAS agreed to strengthen linkages between regional, national and local peace initiatives by capitalizing on existing institutional structures, including ECOWAS early warning and special representatives' offices and the regional Working Group on women, youth, peace and security.

"The regional Training of Trainers Workshop coincides with the 10th anniversary of the ground-breaking ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) of which Women, Peace and Security is one of the fifteen components," said Ms. Onyinye Onwuka,

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We need to redouble our efforts to support capacity-building and skills training for women »

Mohamed Ibn Chambas

Special Representative of the Secretary-General in West Africa and the Sahel



Over 30 participants representing 11 countries in the region were trained in conflict analysis, mediation and gender dimensions of conflict. 13 May 2019 in Accra. Photo: KAIPTC

ECOWAS Head of the Political Affairs and International Cooperation Division. it is crucial to encourage an integrated approach among international, regional and national actors to accentuate women's capacities for conflict analysis and prevention," she said.

Renewing their commitment, participants and organizers agreed to continue this mobilization to train more trainers to consolidate peace and security in the region.

Metsi Makhetha, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Burkina Faso



Metsi Makhetha. Photo: DR

“The response must be multidimensional, multisectoral and regional”

Mrs. Metsi Makhetha, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Burkina Faso since 2016, talks about the security and humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso. She also talks about the support of the United Nations and the international community to the Burkinabe government. Interview!

What is your assessment of the situation in Burkina Faso?

Burkina Faso is currently experiencing a difficult and complex situation. The security context leaves no respite, with very frequent attacks against the defense and security forces, public officials, schools, health centers, customary chiefs, Imams and, recently, churches, pastors, Christian priests.

I take this opportunity to reiterate all our compassion with the families who have been bereaved by the attacks of the armed groups and our solidarity with the people of Burkina Faso.

By its impacts, this situation may delay the country's progress towards its goals of development and lasting peace. It undermines social cohesion and has displaced thousands of families, causing a humani-

tarian emergency that the country has never experienced. The number of displaced people has tripled, from 50,000 in early 2019 to more than 170,000 currently.

The United Nations is working with partners and the humanitarian community, and, remains strongly committed to the government to provide the necessary assistance to the most vulnerable people. However, the rapidity of the deteriorating conditions has surprised many actors.

With regard to the United Nations support, an inter-agency mission requested by the Secretary-General took place from 19 to 25 February under the leadership of the Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas. What was its purpose and what are the results and recommendations?

The Secretary-General wanted the United Nations to adapt and strengthen the whole system support to provide an adequate and integrated response in the difficult context I have just described. Obviously, the answer must be multidimensional and multi-sectoral.

It is a question of readjusting the framework of our interventions, defined jointly with the government according to the priorities of the country and which is part of the 2030 agenda, with for main objective- to support effectively the march of the country towards a development and a sustainable peace.

Through the inter-agency mission we also want to translate the core of the system's reforms in the field in particular, an approach aiming to act both on reducing the humanitarian needs while strengthening the syner-

gies with the development actions and the promotion of a sustainable peace, rooted in respect for rights.

Moreover, this approach had already been identified as an essential accelerator for the effective implementation of the priorities defined in the country's reference framework, the National Program for Economic and Social Development (PNDES 2016-2020) and to enable the country to implement these ambitions by 2030.

The context has changed so we respond differently to current issues. The main recommendations of the mission were to reinforce ourselves, to adapt our working methods by projecting an additional presence on the ground, in order to support more adapted responses to local issues.

Of course, the commitment to social cohesion and political stability as led by Ibn Chambas remains paramount, because the country is in the process of preparing the 2020 elections.

What is the top priority today to deal with this situation?

The restoration of security conditions is essential for social tranquility, the return of thousands of displaced families, the reopening of schools and the good functioning of the state through these different services. The government has the means to deal with it but the situation is complex, the response remains multidimensional, cross-border and regional.

Currently the country is facing a humanitarian emergency that requires a quick and immediate response for both, the most vulnerable people and the host communities. We have – the United Nations with the humanitarian community and the government- launched a response plan in Feb-

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Burkina is facing a humanitarian emergency that requires a quick and immediate response for both, the most vulnerable people and the host communities

ruary 2019. The plan requests US \$ 100 million to support 1.2 million people in need. This plan is now funded at less than 50%. Yet the challenges on the ground are steadily increasing.

The response of the system should be fast, and it must also remain consistent. This is an opportunity for us to implement systemic reforms as adopted by all member states through the General Assembly. But the results and conditions of our engagement remain a mutual and shared responsibility; United Nations, government and partners [development / humanitarian and peace and security].

We can congratulate ourselves that Burkina Faso's partners have responded to the challenges and are coordinating closely. The recent visit of the Security Council also underlined the international solidarity that will lead to an effective assistance.

A success in the resolution of boundary dispute



Secondary boundary pillar physically demarcating the border. It is placed at every 500m, allowing local population to be aware of where the border is. Photo: D. BARIL

The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission has been established in 2002 to facilitate the implementation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment on the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary dispute as well as the demarcating of the land and maritime boundary between the two countries. Below three things you should know about the CNMC whose achievements are recognized as a success of preventive diplomacy.

WHAT IS THE CAMEROON-NIGERIA MIXED COMMISSION? WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

The border conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria was ignited by competing claims of sovereignty over the Bakassi peninsula. Cameroon brought the case to the ICJ to resolve its claims on Bakassi. The CNMC was then established in November 2002 by the UN Secretary-General at the request of Presidents Paul Biya and Olusegun Obasanjo of Cameroon and Nigeria respectively. The main goal of the CNMC is to facilitate the implementation of the 10 October 2002 judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary dispute.

WHAT ARE CNMC'S ACTIVITIES AND MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS?

Under the Chair of Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, who also serves as Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, regular meetings are alternatively held in Yaoundé and Abuja. The commission continues to mediate with the two Heads of Delegation of Cameroon and Nigeria to resolve and conclude the outstanding demarcation disagreements between the Parties. To date, 2,001 kilometers of boundary have been surveyed and agreed upon by the Parties (the total boundary is believed to be approximately 2,100 kilometers long).

The CNMC facilitated the peaceful transfer of authority over Bakassi to Cameroon through the Greentree Agreement, in conformity with the ICJ judgment. Bakassi is largely populated by persons identified as Nigerian nationals and it was the biggest

stake in the border disagreement. Beyond Bakassi, the CNMC's success in ensuring a peaceful resolution of the Parties' competing claims and characterizations of their common land boundary is indeed a great achievement. It has required technical expertise, diplomacy, patience, perseverance, and the ability to inspire trust and confidence.

At this stage of CNMC's mandate, CNMC is also involved in the planning of the logistics for the fieldwork of pillar construction, assess the security situation and carryout sensitization of the local population in the border area. CNMC, in liaison with the UNCTs as well as the state parties, have developed several projects for the benefit of local communities affected by the demarcation. These projects aimed at supporting confidence building measures, cross-border inter-community relations, and improving basic services. To fund these projects, CNMC is embarking in fund raising activities.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES CNMC IS CURRENTLY FACING?

CNMC's biggest challenges are related to the demarcation, political and security issues. Concerning demarcation, significant portions of the land boundary are difficult to access because of challenges of the terrain. This would include mountainous regions; waterways; overgrowth in natural fauna; unpaved roads; and climatic challenges, when the rainy season makes fieldwork impracticable. In addition, even though the court resolved disagreements over the interpretation to be given to the delimitation instruments, the Parties sometimes offer competing interpretations of the court's interpretations, which creates an impasse in completing the demarcation. In this regard, cumulatively, approxi-

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CNMC's biggest challenges are related to the demarcation, political and security issues

mately 99 km of the land boundary remain in dispute because the Parties have yet to achieve consensus on how the court's judgment should be implemented. What initially appeared to be a technical challenge hits a political impasse, since the concession-making required to resolve the disagreement can only be addressed at the highest levels of government authority.

As you may know, the process of demarcation is long, which is compounded when the demands of domestic politics in both Nigeria and Cameroon give priority to other issues, with the consequence that work on the demarcation may be delayed. For example, the Nigerian Presidential Election of 28 March 2015 created a delay in the project as the new Minister of Justice (in charge of the CNMC) was not nominated until October 2015, some ten months later.

CNMC staff work in a very challenging security environment. It has led to the loss of life of a UN consultant working on pillar construction with the TMT in the field. Tragically, on 31 January 2017, unidentified armed bandits attacked a CNMC team working on pillar construction. Five team members were killed in the attack. Since then, reinforced security measures were adopted.

UN Volunteerism, an inspiring source of creativity and energy to improve life conditions in West Africa

UN volunteers (UNV) operate to help improve life conditions of diverse communities all over the world. In West Africa, the UNVs are actively involved in several peace and development projects for the benefit of the local communities.

“**O**perating in the field and having direct contact with the people affected by the conflict, especially Internally Displaced Persons, was the motivating factor during my application. It was a huge task, as the only UN Community Volunteer coordinating the registration of such a large population, in an environment with diverse tribes, religions and cultures” This is an authentic testimony made by Ndachem Abubakar, a United Nations Volunteer (UNV).

Since February 2018, Ndachem Abubakar is one of the ten UN Community Volunteers that operate in ten communities throughout Adamawa, Brno and Yobe States in Northeast Nigeria. She serves in the Sengere community in the capacity of “Community Village Supervisor” where she is responsible for coordinating the participation of community members in the village savings and loan association (VSLA) which is a Community-Based Social Safety Nets (CBSSN) mechanism. In Sengere alone (a community with an estimated population of over 3000 people with about 3250 IDPs, a total of over 6000 people), she successfully created 86 women groups, 48 youth groups and 57 elder’s groups with 25 members per group, as beneficiaries of the VSLA.

Contributing to peace and development

The UN Community Volunteers is also active in Northeast Nigeria in implementing the ‘Volunteer Action Counts’ campaigns with the aim to bring community members in the driver’s seat of community development issues and promoting social cohesion, peace and development. Concretely, the UN Community Volunteers facilitate a bottoms-up prioritization of concerns in their respective communities. Together with the community they seek support (which can range from cash, skills, time, in-kind) from local actors such as religious leaders, Community Based Organizations, local companies and other.

Together with a modest complementary support from UNDP, the projects are implemented by the community members. The results have been inspiring: improved access to water through borehole rehabilitation, a healthier living environment through solid waste management initiatives and tree planting through joint initiatives with school. While the projects are small, the impact in terms of commu-



UN Community Volunteer with Children celebrating after successful repair of boreholes at Bara Community, Yobe State, North-East Nigeria. Photo: UNV



United Nations volunteers after repairing a borehole to facilitate access to water for vulnerable populations in the Uba community- Adamaoua State, northeast of Nigeria. Photo: UNV

nity empowerment is enormous. Volunteerism is at the heart of those uplifting dynamics. It is also the sense and the spirit of the action of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme which contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide.,

“We work with partners to integrate qualified, highly motivated and well supported UN Volunteers into development and peacebuilding programming and promote the value and global recognition of volunteerism. Volunteerism fosters participation and promotes inclusion,” said Afke Bootsman, the UNV Regional Manager for West and Central Africa.

UNV in West and Central Africa

In 2018, 7200 experienced professionals from 161 nationalities were assigned as UN Volunteers to UN agencies in 146 countries. Almost 2200 UN Volunteers, which translates into 30% of all UN Volunteers, were deployed in West and Central Africa. According to Mrs. Bootsman, this number is expected to grow in 2019 because of the organizational reform process the UNV programme has undergone last year. UNV is now a decentralized organization with five regional offices worldwide.

The regional offices are the first entry point for partners wishing to engage with UNV. They offer UNV services and solutions to government partners, UN entities, civil society and the private sector. They also provide oversight and strategic guidance to UNV’s field units in the regions. From Dakar, the UNV regional office is covering 24 countries in which there will be a physical presence in 16 countries by mid-2019.

As a result of the close proximity to the partners, innovative solutions have been conceived to empower people and make the UN system more inclusive through volunteerism. For example, together with UNHCR the first refugees have been integrated in UN offices and projects as UN Volunteers. In Ghana and Senegal, 14 refugees who graduated through a DAFI scholarship with a tertiary degree are currently serving with UNICEF, UNDP, UNWOMEN, UNFPA, IOM and other agencies. This year this initiative will be scaled up to give more refugees the chance to strengthen their capacities and make their voice heard as a UN Volunteer.

Another example is from Nigeria, the only country worldwide where UNV opened a presence as part of the organizational reform process, where UNV introduced the new UN Community Volunteer modality. UNDP expressed the need to strengthen their ties with community members in Northeast Nigeria in the implementation of their flagship community recovery programme. The added value of UN Community Volunteers is that they reside within their communities, they speak the local languages and understand the culture and norms of their communities. It builds on their local knowledge, access to networks and unique skills adapted to challenging contexts.

For any information about UNV kindly contact Afke Bootsman, Regional Manager for West and Central Africa / afke.bootsman@unv.org



International Women's Day

Innovation to achieve gender equality

Celebrated on March 8, International Women's Day is an opportunity to promote women's rights on a cultural, social, political and economic level. "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change" was the theme chosen this year, which places women and girls' innovation at the heart of efforts to achieve gender equality.

The United Nations system in Senegal, through the Regional Gender Thematic Group for West and Central Africa, celebrated on 6 March 2019 the International Women's Day. This event saw the participation of various United Nations agencies, diplomatic representations, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations based in Dakar.

Gender equality, a question of power

During his opening remarks, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative read the message of the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres. He called for renewed efforts to protect and promote women's rights, dignity and leadership. "Gender equality is fundamentally a question of power. We live in a male-dominated world with a male-dominated culture. Only when we see women's rights as our common objective, a route to change that benefits everyone, will we begin to shift the balance," said Ibn Chambas.

According to the report on Women and men in the informal economy of the International Labor Organization (ILO)¹, 740 million women currently make their living in the informal econ-

omy with limited access to social protection, public services and infrastructure that could increase their productivity and income security.

For example, women do 2.6 times more unpaid care and domestic work than men. In addition, only 41 per cent of the world's mothers² with newborns receiving maternity benefits. One in three women are likely to face violence in their lifetimes, yet public services, urban planning and transport systems are rarely planned with women's safety and mobility in mind. Therefore, this year's focus brings innovation to the center stage and leverages it for gender equality and women's empowerment globally.

A "Market Place" to promote women's rights!

To mark this women's day, a "Market Place" was also organized to give greater visibility to the efforts of organizations in terms of gender equality, and to mobilize resources for a better implementation of projects to improve the quality of life of women and girls in West Africa. United Nations agencies and their partners, including women's rights groups, were able to present their activities and display processing products.

¹ https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang--fr/index.htm

² [Rapport mondial sur la protection sociale 2017-2019 : Protection sociale universelle pour atteindre les Objectifs de développement durable](#)