

Returning Peace to Ituri

A collaborative project by four agencies of the United Nations is helping to re-establish security in the war-torn region of Ituri in the Democratic Republic of Congo. **Jean-François Dubuisson** of the UN Development Programme reports from Ituri.

The Ituri region of northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo was devastated by the armed clashes of 1999–2007 between the Lendu and Hema ethnic populations. More than 50,000 people were killed in the clashes, and hundreds of thousands displaced. Today, four United Nations agencies are working together to return safety and security to the local population.

The Community Empowerment and Peace-building in Ituri (CEPI) project is the first joint UN project to be implemented in eastern DR Congo. Funded by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (a total disbursement of 5,022,817 dollars) (see **box**), it aims at consolidating lasting peace and reconciliation between the antagonistic communities.

The activities implemented through the project relate to the different pillars of human security: economic development, access to basic social services and the promotion of peaceful co-existence between communities. The simultaneous combination of complementary interventions is intended to restore the socio-economic, physical and legal security of local communities.

Particular attention has been given to the social integration of young people. In the absence of qualifications and jobs, young people can be tempted to join armed groups and, thus, represent a threat to community stability.



The UNDP's Jean-François Dubuisson talks with villagers on a field trip in Ituri.

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Therefore, the UN, in close cooperation with the local authorities, has built and equipped training centers where—once fully functional in the course of 2011—780 young people will benefit every year from training in fields such as plumbing, carpentry, farming and engineering.

The National Congolese Police (PNC) is another key beneficiary of the project. In the cities of Bunia, Mahagi and Djugu, the PNC forces are now accommodated in three brand-new police stations equipped with solar panels. They have at their disposal motorcycles and vehicles in good condition, equipment which affords them mobility and the opportunity for rapid intervention.

Among the various and numerous achievements of the project, the revitalization of three strategic locations (crossroads for different ethnic groups) was made effective further to the rehabilitation of their local markets. Moreover, crop multiplication and diversification has

strengthened economic exchanges between the communities and helped to reduce hunger.

Thanks to the CEPI project, the people of Ituri feel hopeful again. Alphonsine Omoy from Bunia, for example, deeply appreciates that policemen now patrol the streets on a daily basis. "Security is coming back little by little," she says. "The situation is not perfect yet, but I must say that our freedom of movement is much better."

Juvenal Bideko, a major in the PNC, explains that his working conditions have improved a lot since the building of the new police stations: "We used to work in shacks. Now, all officers have their own office. In addition, a special office has been devoted exclusively to sexual violence cases, which require anonymity."

Charles Nobirabo, chief of the PNC in Djugu, adds that crime is on the decrease in areas where police stations are operational.

Eugenie Angeango, a greengrocer at the new Komanda open-air market, says, "Now we have stalls our products are protected from bad weather conditions. I am convinced that the market will attract more customers and that I will increase my earnings, which will

allow me to pay my children's school fees. Moreover, the market, because of its central geographical position, should link different ethnic groups from North-Kivu and Ituri."

CEPI is being jointly implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with the UNDP being in charge of interagency coordination.

Each agency has brought its own expertise to the project and has implemented its activities with partners ranging from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), international and national NGOs, UN-HABITAT, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to Congolese authorities. At the community level, local peace and development committees have been established in order to ensure the planning, follow-up and adherence to the project by the beneficiaries themselves.

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The Trust Fund for Human Security

In his policy speech at the ASEAN Summit in Hanoi in December 1998, late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi announced that a Trust Fund for Human Security would be established in the United Nations. The Government of Japan fulfilled this commitment and founded the Trust Fund for Human Security in March 1999, with an initial contribution of about 500 million yen. By fiscal year 2009, total contributions amounted to some 39 billion yen, making the Trust Fund one of the largest of its kind established in the UN.

The objective of the Fund is to translate the concept of human security into concrete activities implemented by UN agencies through supporting projects that address diverse threats including poverty, environmental degradation, conflicts, landmines, refugee problems, illicit drugs and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, thus to secure people's lives, livelihoods and dignity in the real world.

Source: www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human_secu/index.html