



**2008 Sixtieth Anniversary of Bice**

**2009 Twentieth Anniversary of the  
Convention on the Rights of the Child**

## **Position Paper – Africa Region**

**June 2008**

## **Tomorrow, which world for our children?**

### **Position Paper of the Africa Region**

On 20 November 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child whose drafting began in the early 80s. By bringing together these rights in a consolidated text that strengthens them, the Convention has three objectives:

- To reaffirm to the specific intent of children, rights that other treaties have already granted to all human beings.
- To provide a specific recognition to a series of fundamental human rights in light of children's special needs and their vulnerability.
- To develop standards in areas that relate specifically or exclusively to children.

It introduces the concept of "child subject of rights" and abolishes the notion of "child object of needs" moving from compassion to responsibility. The radical change brought by the Convention stands precisely in the introduction of the notion of States and families' responsibility vis-à-vis children.

African States welcomed the universal, indivisible and inalienable character of the Convention and accepted the idea of their responsibility. They rapidly ratified and integrated its main provisions in their national legislation. In addition, on 18 July 1990, the General Assembly of the Organization of the African Union adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. This instrument not only confers rights to children but also recognizes their duties.

The Convention and the African Charter urge States to honor the commitments undertaken to respect children. Today, nearly 20 years after the adoption of the Convention, it is time to address the question of its implementation.

It is important to raise the following questions:

1. What are the most significant progress achieved in the past 20 years for the dignity and the rights of the child?
2. What are the most critical situations in terms of violations of child rights?
3. What are the main challenges and promising factors in the coming years?

Beforehand, we believe that it is still necessary to recall that long before the ratification of these international instruments, the child had a privileged place within the African family. They have always been regarded as a treasure, a blessing from God. Countries and even earlier, traditional societies had established mechanisms to protect their most vulnerable members, including children, in order to perpetuate and develop.

However, the concept of modern state is relatively new in Africa. It went through significant changes and still faces considerable difficulties in implementing its institutions due to persistent poor economic conditions and regional conflicts occurred during the last 20 years.

## **1. Most significant progress made since the last 20 years for the dignity and the rights of the child**

In the last 20 years, despite all the existing difficulties, progress made for the dignity and the rights of the child are multiple and undeniable. A meticulous research conducted for this purpose shows it. As it would be tedious to present it exhaustively, we will focus on three aspects:

### **1.1. Awareness of child rights, the child is recognized as a right-holder**

Both in large African towns and in smaller provinces and villages, political leaders and civil society actors are aware of the notion of child rights. Clearly, these rights are no longer marginal. Thanks to NGOs, governmental officers and the media, everyone knows the message of the Convention or at least some of its aspects; the text has made its way into people's minds. It is part of the framework of social policies. Tangible results are there. Some well-rooted taboos fall, long-term forms of discrimination are gradually disappearing.

Ten years ago in Abidjan, disabled children were at best hidden, and at worst, disappeared after magical religious beliefs were invoked in traditional ceremonies. Their mothers were expelled from the community. Today, parents take care of their children, fathers accompany their newborn to functional rehabilitation; they participate with their wives in parents' groups and talk about their difficulties and suffering.

Girls victims of rape are no longer systematically hidden or married to their torturer to avoid the opprobrium of the community. Thanks to the encouragement and support of organizations protecting child rights, families begin to file complaints so that their daughters can be treated and rehabilitated.

### **1.2. There is a political will to implement child rights; the normative and institutional child protection framework is strengthened**

Children are by nature a vulnerable group, but some children need protection because of their parents or relatives' difficulties to play, even partially, their protection role, or because of domestic or external problems, which put them directly into danger.

If child protection concerns all children, it particularly relates to those who are in danger, either because they face specific difficulties in their life, or are ill-treated. The danger is evaluated in terms of risk to the best interests of the child, understood as their physical, intellectual, emotional and social harmony.

Governments are aware and trying to set up protection mechanisms. This political will is translated into changes in the legal and institutional framework, on the one hand, and in taking specific protection measures on the other. As such, we can mention:

- **More appropriate legal instruments**

In many countries, death penalty against children has been abolished. In all States, child protection institutions have been created; texts, laws and decrees in accordance with the Convention and dealing with the protection of children, have been developed and promulgated. We can refer to laws and programs that protect children in vulnerable situations such as bilateral or multilateral agreements to fight against human trafficking and sexual violence. The harmonization of national legislation with international standards is completed or underway in many countries. Mali has adopted a Code of Child Protection in 2002. A new

Code of Child Protection has been drafted in Togo as well; another one is being adopted by the Parliament of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). Efforts are undertaken by many States to facilitate births registration (lengthening of legal deadlines for reporting and decreasing costs for parents e.g. Mali) and thereby give legal status to children.

### **A less traumatic juvenile justice system**

The juvenile justice sector has also improved. Considerable efforts have been made, progress is indisputable. Before the Convention, children were incarcerated with adults and often forgotten in prisons. Since then, specifically trained police officers have changed their way of proceeding. Police violence has significantly decreased and the dignity and the rights of the child are better observed. Special courts for minors, such as juvenile courts and juvenile judges have been established in many countries as well as brigades for the protection of minors and educational support services. Alternative measures to imprisonment are considered and implemented in different countries. In prisons, juvenile areas in line with the requirements of international standards are set up. Bice significantly contributed in this direction in the countries where it operates or is involved (Ivory Coast, DR Congo, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Senegal, and Togo).

### **Better protection of child health**

The right to life and health of young children is greatly implemented as well. The mortality of children under the age of 5 decreased from 150/1000 to 40/1000 thanks to the many maternal and infant measures adopted. The development of a number of community health centers, encouraging mothers to give birth in maternity hospitals and dispensaries, the important results obtained in terms of vaccination are the most notorious examples. Nowadays, polio is almost eradicated.

## **1.3. Children are the protagonists and argue their right to participation**

To this end, we observe:

### **Diverse and dynamic children's organizations**

The creation of "Children's Parliament" in different countries, the involvement of children in seminars concerning their participation in national and international meetings, their public speaking, children's action groups in schools, as the children's government in Mali, youth movements, or children's and young workers' associations such as the AEJT movement, active throughout West Africa, are all signs of dynamism and of the diversity of children's participation. They take their role seriously and feel invested to take up their mission with responsibility. In many places, children and adolescents mobilize themselves to publicize their rights and ask adults not only to consider them, but also to better protect the most vulnerable children.

### **Promotion of new initiatives**

Bice has trained these groups of children to know their rights. It continues supporting them; some took the name of Local Committees for the Promotion of the Rights of the Child (CLPJ). These young people are fighting to be respected and have already deployed a lot of energy particularly in the provinces of Kasai in the DR Congo. For example, they have educated adults to no longer discriminate girls about their school registration and to grant them protection from abuse: violence in schools, their workplace or family. They also understood the

importance for their future life of having a legal recognition in order to pass school examinations and ask their parents to take steps to regularize their situation vis-à-vis the State Civil Service. Others declared themselves 'junior journalists' and conduct investigations into violations of children's rights in their town. They realize then radio broadcasts on the antennas of their elders in order to ask adults and the authorities, to review their position, grant adequate protection or facilitate certain administrative formalities.

In developing these various initiatives, children show great maturity and a sense of responsibility. Their commitment, their generosity and their desire for change are real signs of hope for the future.

We should have also mentioned further progress, including measures taken to facilitate access to education for every child, particularly primary education, and the specific efforts to improve girls' education.

It is clear that these achievements are sometimes below hope. Globalization, natural disasters such as droughts, the devastation of crops by locusts, repeated armed conflicts, and political crises have often undermined the political engagement African States manifested in ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This leads us to address the second part of this document.

## **2. Critical violations of the dignity and the rights of the child**

Highlighting them is not an indictment against political leaders but rather a realistic observation in view of making a diagnosis without complacency to enable States and agencies, such as Bice, to protect child rights and point out the challenges they will face in the years to come.

We can examine these situations from two perspectives: some present structural causes linked to gaps in implementing legal protection and social policies; others have more socio-cultural causes. They generate a range of situations where child rights are violated and violence is committed against children.

### **2.1. Violations of child rights related to structural aspects**

With regard to violations of child rights related to structural aspects, the establishment of a legal and institutional framework is not sufficient to respect child rights. It must also be operational. In many southern States, inefficiencies and the lack of sufficient resources are major barriers to guarantee children's access to their rights. Poverty is a predominant slowing down factor.

Among the most important elements, we include:

- **The lack of access to education and health care**

Too many children still lack access to education, due to the enormous costs that a large number of families cannot sustain in the current economic environment. The most vulnerable children, such as the poorest children, orphans, children affected or infected by HIV/AIDS, disabled children cannot receive adequate support or care because of the lack of material and sufficiently qualified human resources.

- **The non-registration of births**

Too many children still have no legal existence, they grow and sometimes die, without any trace of their social life; like ghosts they do not exist for governments that cannot include them in future forecasts; they will never be real citizens.

- **Some problems in juvenile justice**

Despite the progress outlined above, juvenile justice, remains a major concern. Without adequate resources for its proper functioning and due to a lack of regular training of officers, implementation remains a source of major violations of child rights. For instance, we can mention:

- Lack of food for children in custody in police stations who may stay longer than 24 hours without anything to eat, and unable to inform the guardian, as a result, the child will not be released to his/her parent;
- A sometimes approximate qualification of alleged incidents leading to too heavy penalties;
- The absence of court-appointed lawyer and the consecutive postponement of the audience; the child remains in detention while he/she could have been released;
- Conditions of detention are still problematic in many places because of outdated and inadequate prisons, the lack of psychosocial support and training for detained young people, children are idle and feel abandoned by all;
- Lack of support to facilitate reintegration, the child does not know where to go when he leaves the prison.

Other difficulties could be listed. If we try to put a child's face behind all these situations, we can imagine the daily dramas that children live in police stations, courts and detention centers. After 12 years of ongoing commitment to the cause of children deprived of their liberty in several countries, Bice considers that this component of child rights remains a priority.

## **2.2. Violations of child rights related to socio-cultural aspects**

Other cultural or societal factors play a significant role and make the living conditions of many children critical.

Globalization has positive aspects but also creates a cultural shock. These shocks are amplified by the mass exodus from rural areas pushing millions of people to concentrate in urban areas not equipped to offer them adequate housing, services (access to clean water, electricity, and waste disposal) and appropriate socio-economic infrastructures. This situation does not favor human development and already contains the seeds of the problems faced by these populations, such as:

- **The exploitation of children**

Too many children are driven by the need to rapidly enter into the labor market. Economic exploitation, the worst forms of child labor, sexual exploitation, nothing is spared. From the girl who sells bags of ice water in one of the African capitals to the child kidnapped from school and recruited by armed groups in Sierra Leone, Liberia or Congo, the difference is made of nuances in the degree of endangering their lives, their pain and the suffering they endure.

Behind every exploited child, there is an adult who takes advantage of his/her vulnerability,

his/her credulity, who abuses his/her trust, his/her innocence. There are also gaps in the framework of protection, even complicity or complacency of governments.

- **Violence against children**

Present changes are **weakening family organization and structure**. Families hardly resist, and couples are more fragile. Especially in urban areas, single parent or reconstituted families are increasingly numerous and have plenty of problems with their children; in addition the absence of efficient social services prevents an early and effective regulation of failures. The child is less and less perceived as a gift, and more and more as a burden.

This new perception **fosters neglect, ill-treatments, and the trivialization of child rights' violations**. Through its projects, Bice found out that 80% of street children accommodated in welfare centers come from this new type of families. In the DR Congo, a similar proportion of so-called witch-children, expelled by their families, are orphans of at least one parent or suffering from a disease or a disorder that makes their supervision more difficult or costly.

- **Some harmful and traditional practices**

In traditional cultures, the child is not entitled to speak. He/she cannot give his/her opinion and has to comply with adults' decisions. In traditional rural areas, family resists better, but the frontal impact between traditions and modernity does not happen without causing problems between parents and children. Customs that once were justified in a particular context, are currently questioned due to the changing of mentalities, and are considered harmful. Young people no longer subscribe to these behaviors. Girls oppose early or forced marriage, or being forcibly fed in view of an early marriage. Currently, 10% of girls in Mali are married before their 18th birthday. Girls also want to have their chance to study, to choose their future. This divergence of views is causing many problems.

Other customs are abandoned such as the tradition (widespread in West Africa) of fostering a child to a relative living in town to complete his/her education and strengthening family ties. Under the present circumstances, boys and girls are recruited for the purpose of labor exploitation and suffer the yoke of greedy and unscrupulous bosses who disregard children's health and consider them as beasts of burden. As part of its plans to support domestic girls, and porter girls and to fight against human trafficking, BICE has focused on training activities and awareness raising about this phenomenon as well as the rehabilitation and reintegration of children rescued from exploitative situations.

This rapid overview of our not exhaustive findings, leads us to the last part of our paper.

### **3. The challenges in the years to come**

In order to ensure a wider application of children's rights, **peace, is a fundamental condition**. Armed conflicts, civil or inter States wars carry the seeds of non-law as demonstrated by all recent conflicts. In these times of turmoil, children's rights are without any doubt seriously violated. **While recruitment of children for their participation in conflicts must be internationally sanctioned**, education to peace, citizenship, rights and values represent the long-term survival.

In a country at peace, the following three challenges can be identified as priority areas:

### **3.1. To strengthen the legal and institutional framework and to introduce specific protection measures**

This responsibility corresponds to States, which enjoy sovereign prerogatives and legitimate repression. It is therefore up to them to adopt ad hoc measures to respect human rights in general and child rights in particular. In this sense, democracy and good governance are necessary and indispensable prerequisites. These foundations lead to the construction of a legal and institutional framework respectful of individuals' fundamental rights. **To this end, the allocation of sufficient resources to implement it constitutes the first priority.**

- **Protecting families and the most vulnerable children**

The political will to implement the rights of the child needs to be sustained and translated into choices that enhance the concept of family and are able to support it, particularly when it is destitute, divorced and / or recomposed. Similarly, vulnerable children such as disabled children, orphans and children affected or infected by **HIV/AIDS**, child victims of sexual exploitation or trafficking and other forms of abuse need special measures of protection and care. Specialized personnel with operational resources should be deployed in key sectors in order to be able to carry out preventive actions and accompany children in their family environment. In addition, in relation to vulnerable or endangered children, a police protection component remains to be developed. It is still not a well enough appreciated concept in many countries. It wades through slowly; training and support initiatives in this direction need to be encouraged.

- **Ongoing Reforms**

It is also necessary to continue the harmonization of national legislation with international ratified standards and further to promulgate implementing decrees while approving the corresponding budget. The Orientation Disability Act has been adopted in Ivory Coast but its implementation decrees have never entered into force. The administration of juvenile justice and its effective implementation are a challenge for all countries, whose urgency is no doubt. The examples mentioned above show its relevance.

- **Make decentralization operational**

To be effective, this policy, cannot limit its outreach to major urban centers; rural areas should also be involved and engaged in the dynamics of change. The allocation of resources remains the keystone of the problem. Access to other basic rights such as health or education also depends on these resources. The issue is complex and related to the fight against poverty. Again, it is about choices, but also about global geopolitical considerations that we do not need to discuss at this stage.

The political will to register progress in the effective implementation of child rights is paramount, but the time of the "welfare state" in rich countries is over and there is no possibility for Southern countries to benefit from it. States bear the responsibility of implementing child rights, a shared responsibility with civil society and families, which brings us to the second priority challenges.

### **3.2. Involving civil society as action relays and removing cultural barriers**

- **Popularize the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter**

At the social level, the awareness of the Convention and its importance are acquired, it is on everyone's lips, but the issue of child rights is not always well understood by the public at

large, making its implementation problematic. Some parents see their authority challenged and give up. The important task of explaining this text must continue, especially in less educated circles. At the same time, it would also be useful to popularize the African Charter, which recognizes the same child rights as the Convention but is more specifically tailored to the African context. Rising awareness for behavioral changes, should these be harmful, media can have a considerable impact. Their involvement must be part of our priorities.

- **Inventing new solidarities**

Community mobilization is another card to play. Traditional solidarity has been the strength of Africa and mentioned as an example throughout the world. So far, social upheaval is severely affecting it. In urban areas, it is just a memory; the model of nuclear family takes precedence over the extended family, but each adult still remembers this solidarity and regrets it, though he is not prepared to invest in it. Individualism has gained ground; the struggle for personal success has become a shared sport. And yet, in the village or in the district, who is in a better position than a parent or a teacher or any adult to react when he sees a street child, or hears the cries of a child victim of ill treatments, or notice a child accomplishing too heavy tasks for his/her age at a construction site? Simple relay mechanisms may be sufficient to ensure that these children are adequately protected.

### **Building on the existing social tissue**

Associations and groups are numerous though most of them do not have child rights protection on top of their agendas. Sensitize them and stimulate reflections on public civism towards children in danger is not an impossible mission.

### **3.3. Last but not least: children's participation**

This challenge is perhaps also the most difficult one to face, between participation and demagogy or manipulation, the borders are tenuous, the risks of misappropriation are numerous as many examples remind us. An adult can easily convince young people to join a flawed cause. The lack of maturity and discernment of children, especially younger ones and their fragility are the reason why a specific treaty is devoted to them. In several countries, we have recently seen candidates for elective offices manipulating groups of street children.

Like any other human activity, it requires some learning, a respectful and gradual learning, which allows taking initiatives and responsibilities commensurate to the age and abilities of each child. Both strong and flexible support should come from pedagogues or activists committed to the cause of children.

### **In conclusion, what will be Bice priorities for its future commitment, what challenges will it face in the coming years in Africa?**

The experience gained throughout the last 20 years suggests that a holistic approach gives results. It is the backbone of the projects developed so far. It is therefore appropriate to maintain such approach. In addition, Bice specificity as stated in our Charter, adopted just one year ago clearly indicates that our action is in the long term. Following this logic, Bice will thus contribute to strengthening a protective environment for children, while engaging directly with those who are most in need. Actions will take into account the best interests of the child, participation and non-discrimination, the three cornerstones for his/her survival and development.

- **Advocate without complacency and provide support to State structures**

At the political level, Bice will continue to contribute in view of strengthening the legal and institutional framework, as it has already done by signing partnership agreements with key ministries in countries where it operates.

Specifically this means:

-- Further dissemination of the Convention and, in particular, of the African Charter in all environments and in vernacular languages, analyzing and interpreting those instruments in the specific cultural contexts and formulating action-oriented recommendations in view of a not fragmented, but flexible and responsive application.

-- If they have not yet done so, to continue supporting States' reform process of harmonizing their national legislation with international ratified standards and conventions. Then, popularize these texts, train officers for their implementation and find with them "Best Practices".

-- Advocate for the effective implementation of laws and protection measures for children. Call on States to allocate adequate financial resources to the departments in charge of child protection. Participate in the development of social policies.

We know that States cannot meet all needs and certainly not in the immediate future. Civil society must therefore play an important protection role.

### **Sensitize civil society to civic conscience and to child rights**

Civil society can play an innovative role in terms of protection. This axis represents then another major challenge for Bice. To this end, our projects will focus on mobilizing communities towards children in difficulty. Action will be even more oriented towards awareness raising and training for parents, and to support them namely when they are involved in a violation of the rights of their own child: street children, child victims of human trafficking, child victims of any form of abuse.

### **Restoring family as the first place of protection is fundamental**

Many associations and groups are also there. Form their members on child rights but also on the understanding of their environment and more widely to citizenship is an important protective factor. For example, we can refer to the formation of associations of parents to help eliminating violence in school, school dropping and promote girls' education. Bice is heavily investing in the mobilization and support of these groups or communities. **Working in synergy with the media and other partners is of paramount importance** because the challenge is to create a dynamic implementation of child rights. Attempts already made in this direction have shown the difficulty of developing synergies, and networks are still relatively efficient. Working in this direction and succeed in achieving our objective is truly a challenge. Working in isolation cannot be productive; networks constitute an asset, and that is why this aspect is at the heart of Bice vision.

Bice commitment to the cause of children finds its meaning in our direct work with children in danger.

### **Conduct innovative actions, explore and popularize "Best Practices"**

Children victims of all forms of violence, exploitation and violations of their rights should

receive immediate help and support to allow them to be out of danger and restored into their dignity and their fundamental rights. Interventions should be flexible, responsive, and innovative to adapt as much as possible to the realities and needs on the ground. We know that it is not necessarily useful to deploy substantial resources to improve a situation; changes are more a matter of political will, competence and commitment of human resources. Indeed, goodwill is not enough. Motivated and experienced professionals should lead initiatives in favor of children.

Bice should therefore be careful not to replace States or civil society actors, but to strengthen their capacity of intervention. Thus, concerned children will find the joy of living, the possibility of being fully fledged children and think about their future.

Finally, children themselves are factors of hope for the future. The initiatives they have been able to conduct so far in their respective groups testify it. They are still few in number, but it is up to us, the adults, to offer them this chance, not stifle their desire for a better future, and not manipulate them. It is through their participation in groups that they learn democracy and good governance. Let us encourage their genuine participation.

## **Africa Expert group**

▪ Yao Agbetse - French-speaking Africa

Specialist in Human Rights, doctoral candidate in International Law and International Human Rights Law. He also obtained a Professional Master degree and a Master degree in Human Rights Research. He is the coordinator of the Africa Program at Franciscans International in Geneva. Through the organization of field trainings, he empowers human rights defenders to use instruments and mechanisms related to human rights in order to increase their advocacy capabilities. He is author of several articles on the protection of migrants' human rights, the fight against trafficking in human beings, including children and women, as well as other contemporary forms of slavery.

▪ Antoine Akplogan - Mali

37 years-old, Malian nationality.

Administrator and militant of the Catholic Action as well as other youth groups in Mali.

President of the movement of Christian young workers.

He has been coordinating Bice's projects in Mali since the last 4 years, and he is national coordinator since 2008.

Proficiency in the field of « domestic girls », « unmarried mothers in distress » and rural exodus of girls.

▪ Abraham Bengaly - Mali

35 years-old, Malian nationality.

Jurist, preparing a PhD in Law, professor of Higher Education.

Proficiency in the field of human rights, the rule of law and good governance as well as in the field of the rights of the child. Advisor and trainer in his areas of competence for Malian institutions and civil society.

He is the President of the Advisory Committee of CEPROCIDE (Study Centre for the Promotion of Citizenship for Sustainable Grassroots Development) and deputy Secretary-General of the national bureau of AMDH (Association Malienne des Droits de l'Homme /Malian Association for Human Rights).

▪ Horst Buchmann

MPH, 60 years-old, German nationality.

He is Bice 's delegate for Africa since 1995, Executive Director of Bice Deutschland e.V.

Specialist in public health and international cooperation.

36 years of experience in Africa ; grassroots work in Togo and Sudan ; planning, management, follow-up and project assessment in Kenya, Ruanda, Cameroun, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Liberia, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Guinea (Conakry), D. R. Congo, Somalia and Egypt.

Specific experience in the field of the rights of children deprived of liberty/in conflict with the law, of children victims of armed conflicts and street children /family break-up.

▪ Soumana Coulibaly - Mali

Malian nationality.

Director of ENDA Third World in Mali (Environmental Development Organization in the Third World, created as a joint program of the United Nations Environment Program, the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and the Swedish Organization for International Development). Mr. Soumana has a deep knowledge on the rights of the child as well as on children deprived of liberty, street children, child labour and talibé children.

▪ Enyo Gbédémah - Togo

36 years-old, from Togo.

Jurist. National coordinator of Bice in Togo since 2002.

He has 10 years of experience in implementing the rights of the child in Togo.

Member of the group of experts who drafted the Code on childhood in Togo as well as of other Togolese coalitions focused on the protection of the rights of the child.

High-level legal competence in the field of human rights and the rights of the child in Togo and in Africa.

Several years of militancy in youth groups (UCJG).

▪ Robert Guei - Ivory Coast

60 years old, from Ivory Coast.

Long experience as Director of the Penitentiary Administration in Ivory Coast, specialist in the field of juvenile justice, long-time partner of Bice, at present, he is Human Rights Director at the Ministry of Justice. Promoter of a justice system respectful of the dignity and the rights of the child.

▪ Chantal Koffi - Ivory Coast

From Ivory Coast.

Magistrate, Deputy Director in charge of the Judiciary Youth Protection at the Ministry of Justice, member of the African Union Committee on the Rights of the Child. Author of several analytical and comparative works on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child and national laws.

▪ Koffi Kouakou – Ivory Coast

From Ivory Coast.

Lawyer, permanent advisor to UNICEF in the field of the rights of the child in Ivory Coast and French-speaking African countries. High-level competence in juvenile justice, human trafficking and other forms of children's exploitation.

▪ Désiré Koukoui - Ivory Coast

55 years-old, from France and Benin

Historian and social worker.

Director of Bice's activities and programs in Ivory Coast since 1995.

25 years of experience on youth issues and, then on the rights of the child.

Expert in all aspects related to the rights of the child in Ivory Coast. Member of several coalitions for the defence of the rights of the child; technical advisor to some Ivorian institutions dealing with childhood.

▪ Natacha Manet

36 years-old, French nationality.

Graduate of EM Lyon, specialist in international and multicultural communication, 6 months research studies at the Erasmus Universiteit of Rotterdam on technical support to development.

8 years of experience as responsible of the communication and then of human development at Decathlon Germany. Since the last 4 years, she is communication manager at Bice Africa delegation.

Good experience in community life, expert on youth issues and pedagogy for young people : moderator of working groups and workshops with young people since 1997.

▪ Marie-Thérèse Mulanga – D.R. Congo

65 years old. Congolese.

Psychologist (graduated in Toulouse). Director of the Research department of Aide à l'Enfance défavorisée (AED); Trainer at the AED Training Centre for specialized educators, Coordinator of the Association Grandissons Ensemble, Member and President of the National Association of Social Educators (ANES-Congo), Bice Vice-President and member of Bice Board; Third Vice-President of the National Council for Childhood (CNE); during 6 years Second Vice-President of the Council of the Catholic Laity Apostolate of Congo (CALCC); Member of the Observatory of the National Bishop Conference of Congo (CENCO). Treasurer of the National Sovereign Conference from 1991 to 1992 and member of the Transition Parliament from 1993 to 1997.

▪ Crispin Mulumba Luambua - D.R. Congo

57 years old, Congolese.

Psychologist and educator, national coordinator of Bice in Congo since 2005.

13 years of experience in implementing the rights of the child in the D. R. of the Congo.

Good knowledge of the different forms of violations of child's rights as well as of the institutions operating in the D. R. C.

Expert in psychosocial approaches, advocacy, the DDR process towards children (disarming, demobilization, rehabilitation of child soldiers); involvement in the reforming process aiming at harmonizing the Congolese legislation with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

▪ Elisabeth Munsch

52 years-old, French nationality.

Project manager at Bice delegation for Africa since 1999: elaboration, implementation, support, follow-up and assessment of projects aimed at promoting the rights of the child.

Various experiences in the field of social work in France, in development and the rights of the child in Africa during the last 20 years: Niger, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, D R of Congo, Mali, Senegal, Togo.

Particular experience on the rights of children deprived of liberty / in conflict with the law, children victims of armed conflicts and street children/family break-up, child labour and children victims of violence.

▪ Jean Muzama - D.R. Congo

Unit of Child Protection, MONUC (UN Mission in the D. R. of Congo)

During the last 8 years, he has been practising as a lawyer at the bureau of « Child Protection » at MONUC.

Expert in child rights' violations in the two Kasai provinces; in particular concerning the issue of child soldiers and girls victims of sexual violence.

▪ Susanne Souaré-Michel

45 years-old, German nationality.

Responsible of Bice Africa program since August 2006; monitoring of projects in Togo and Ivory Coast.

Experiences: management of projects, elaboration, follow-up & assessment, organizational support, reinforcement of NGOs' capacities, communication.

Experience in Western Africa: 10 years of grassroots work in Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo; 7 years of projects' monitoring in Africa for other organizations in Senegal, Togo, Benin, Mali, Niger, Ghana.

Experience on the rights of the child: street children /family break-up, domestic and porter girls, violence and sexual abuse of girls.

▪ Rita Félicité Sodjiedo - Benin

52 years-old, from Benin.

Magistrate, jurist, advisor, specialist in Human Rights, including the rights of the child and women's rights.

Former director of the Childhood and Youth Judiciary Protection in Benin, permanent secretary of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child and Professor at the Protestant University of Western Africa and at the National School for Administration and Magistracy. She has also been in charge of coordinating the activities of the National Observatory for Child Protection against Trafficking in Children and Exploitation at Work.

▪ Peter Stingl

67 years-old, German nationality.

General medical practitioner and specialist in tropical medicine.

4 years of experience as Head of Clinics at the National Integrated Program to fight against leprosy and tuberculosis in Sierra Leone. 2 years of experience as Head of Clinics at the National Training Center to fight against leprosy in Sudan.

Since 2000, Professor at the University of Munich and invited Professor at the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center of Tanzania.

Multiple researches on leprosy, filariasis, dermatosis and malaria in cooperation with WHO. Several missions to Africa as technical medical advisor.

Co-Founder and President and, since March 2008, Honorary President of Bice Deutschland, vice president of BICE since 2005.

▪ Raouf Tchagnao - Togo

Born in Sokodé (Togo) on November 22, 1962; married and father of 4 children.

Jurist in Fundamental Law - Advisor on children's and women's rights – Educators' trainer on gender and development, children's and women's rights – Current activity: national expert in training and juridical dissemination at the National Justice Reform Program – Former President of the National Committee on the Rights of the Child - Former Director of women's juridical statute.

▪ Katja Zug

32 years-old, German nationality.

Jurist and project manager at Bice since 2004: technical support to Bice local teams, monitoring of projects related to the promotion of the rights of the child in Africa, staff manager of Bice in Africa.

Experiences: management and monitoring of projects in Ivory Coast, work with the German Embassy in Togo.