

06 February 2013



"I cannot forget it (...) Despite the passage of years, I feel great emptiness inside me" - Silu Dj'ni'ba (50), mutilated at age of 15. This picture from the photo essay "Broken pots" was awarded at two of the most prestigious professional photojournalist competitions in Poland (BZ WBK Press Foto and Grand Press Photo). (Photo: Agnieszka Napierala, 2012).

## Broken pots, Côte d'Ivoire 2012: A photo essay on Female Genital Mutilation

During the eight months Agnieszka Napierala was working as an election advisor for the Peacekeeping Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) as a UN Volunteer, she managed to talk with victims of female genital mutilation (FGM). The result of her meetings with 10 women came in the shape of a photo essay on FGM, and with one of her pictures being awarded at two of the most prestigious professional photojournalist competitions in Poland (BZ WBK Press Foto and Grand Press Photo). Read more about Agnieszka's experience and view her photo essay below.

The International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is on 6 February. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 120 to 140 million women have been subject to this harmful and dangerous practice and 3

million girls continue to be at risk each year. Although in many countries this practice has been radically prohibited, there are places where genital ablation is still practiced, as it is considered an ancient ritual linked to cultural, religious and social factors within families and communities. FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

Agnieszka Napierala is a UN Volunteer who worked as an Electoral Advisor for the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI). Upon her arrival to Bouake, as a lifetime active member of human rights organizations (mainly Amnesty International) she joined a local NGO CIDEF (Centre Ivoirien pour le Droit de la Femme et de l'Enfant) providing help to victims of violence and women and children living with HIV/AIDS. Besides her work on the development of the centre and of its activities, during the eight months Agnieszka also focused on a photo project on Female Genital Mutilation, consisting of portraits and testimonies.

"One of the main *raison-d'être* of this essay is to increase awareness of this still persistent phenomenon of FGM and inspire to action, both the general public and policy makers."

Last year, one of the pictures from the essay was awarded at two of the most prestigious professional photojournalist competitions in Poland (BZ WBK Press Foto and Grand Press Photo). Thanks to the touring exhibitions and accompanying publications hundreds of thousands of people were reached and could learn about the FGM practice. Agnieszka has received personal congratulations from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) of ONUCI.

In December 2012 the UN General Assembly voted a resolution banning FGM. "I do hope that governments of the countries where FGM is still carried out will develop and strengthen their policies and apply the recommendations. No doubt, in Côte d'Ivoire, where at least 30% of women are mutilated, ONUCI also has its role to play. It is time to stop it now." Agnieszka continues her efforts to back CIDEF's activities and to contribute to FGM fight.

A few days ago her essay was a finalist at the Photo Philanthropy Activist Awards and in February the same essay will be used to support "STOP FGM NOW!" - a combined international anti-FGM campaign, launched in 2010 by Waris Dirie (former UN Special Ambassador for the Elimination of FGM) and uniting associations, companies and private persons.

You can find Agnieszka Napierala's photo essay in the December 2012 issue of DocPhotoMagazine (<https://blowuppress.eu/>)

Agnieszka's photos can also be found on UNV's Flickr account  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unvolunteers/sets/72157632659803147/>

More information on the "STOP FGM NOW!" campaign:

<http://www.stop-fgm-now.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/stopfgmnow>

---

West and Central Africa

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 3: Good health and well-being](#) [SDG 5: Gender equality](#)  
[SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)