

Portrait of Clémence DOAMBA : an “iron lady” in charge of MONUSCO-Uvira Police

Hardworking and exacting, feared by some but admired by all, this lady does not hesitate to roll up her sleeves to set a good example. Endowed with great human qualities and active in the voluntary sector, she wears several hats besides being the chief of the MONUSCO-Uvira UNPOL Sector. Portrait of a woman like no other...



Clémence Sawadogo, Mr. Doamba's wife, was born in Burkina-Faso (formerly Upper Volta) a few winters ago. As her young girl she developed a taste for uniforms and rifles, and understandably so because her father was a police officer.

She tells us that the year 1976 will be forever etched in my memory. For, that was the year which saw the launch of the first national

competitive examination to recruit fifteen women into the National Police Force of Burkina Faso. *“As I observed, with great interest, these pioneering female officers at work in the field, I saw how much respect and admiration they commanded from the population for the firmness and rigor they showed in enforcing the country's laws and regulations,”* she says with a tinge of nostalgia. And she adds *“road users back then would prefer to deal with male police officers rather than with their female counterparts. Yet, these female officers were simply doing their job faithfully and according to the rules, because the motto in my country at the time was ‘to serve and not be served’. Aware that an increase in the number of women in the Police Force depended on their behavior, they would discharge their duties with respect and dignity.”* Feeling thus attracted to this profession and full of admiration for these elders, Clémence managed, the following year, to convince her father to let her interrupt her first-grade

secondary education and take the recruitment test for the second group of female police officers in her country.

Her attempt proved successful as she found herself shortlisted for the contest in 1977. Once recruited as a police agent, she gradually rose through the ranks thanks to her success in various professional skills competitions and training programs at the Ouagadougou Police Academy. Since 2015, following her graduation as senior police officer from the Burkina-Faso Police Academy, she has served as Police Commander (chief inspector). Clémence now has a total of 39 years' professional experience acquired in fields as diverse as the judiciary police, the fight against child trafficking, cybercrime investigations in Western African countries and crimes against children respectively in Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Benin and France.

At the national level, Clémence Doamba is proud to have served in various positions of responsibility in the city of Ouagadougou, including as Chief of the Vice and Juvenile Squad, Chief of the economic and financial Brigade of the Judicial Police at the Central Police Station, Deputy Director of the Vice and Narcotics Squad, Deputy Officer in charge of the Interpol Central National Bureau reporting to the General Directorate of National Police.



With this rich and vast experience under her belt, Clémence Doamba felt encouraged to apply for a position with the United Nations. And so, on 15 November 2007, she arrived in the DR Congo for the first time to join the then MONUC, United Nations Organization Mission in the Congo. This lady, lover of sports, reading and music, is now on her third assignment in the DRC (still with the UN Mission renamed MONUSCO). She says her reason for serving in Peacekeeping Operations is because she wanted ***“to share experience with other colleagues as part of the effort to build the operational capacity of the Congolese National Police Force.”*** The least we can say of Clémence is that she isn't one to sit idle, twiddling her thumbs. Nicknamed *“iron lady”*, she is also a workaholic who never leaves her office on the bank of Lake Tanganyika before 7 pm or even 8 pm sometimes, whether it be a weekday or a weekend ! Clémence is a member of the team

Division de l'Information Publique – Publications

Aissatou Laba TOURE, Chef des Publications : tourea@un.org, +243 822 28 7603 / +243 997 06 8064, Ext. 175-6650

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tasked to implement the mandate entrusted to the Police component of MONUSCO, the fundamental pillar of which is the protection of civilians. As such, she conducts counselling and technical assistance activities in police stations to enhance the operational capacity of the Congolese National Police (PNC) through the monitoring of case files handled by Judiciary Police Officers, to comply with the procedural rules and ensure respect for human rights.

Before being posted to Uvira in South-Kivu province in April 2016, Clémence Doamba worked in Kananga (2 years, November 2007 to November 2009), Mbuji-Mayi (7 months, May 2012 to December 2012), Goma (for few weeks, between February and April 2016) and Kisangani, in the former Oriental Province, where, as UNPOL Sector chief. She led a 33-member team. With flying colors, notes one of her former aids, she organized two training sessions at the KAPALATA Police Academy for 785 members of the Congolese National Police (PNC), as part of efforts for capacity building and professionalization of the PNC. This experience left its marks on her, she says. ***"Given the low level of women's representation in the Police Force in Oriental Province (3%), I developed an audio-visual medium on the impact of female police officers' contribution in reinforcing PNC protection activities. The medium was made available to the provincial Government to serve as a basis for conducting public awareness campaigns on the provincial television with a view to securing women's increased interest and contribution to community Policing activities"***. With a smile on her face and apparently satisfied, Clémence Doamba proudly concludes that this awareness activity helped to markedly increase the level of women's representation, from 3% to over 13%, in the training course on community policing at the KAPALATA Police Academy! Wherever Clémence Doamba has been posted in the DRC, she has made the Gender mainstreaming approach within the PNC her top priority.

Her colleague and deputy-chief of MONUSCO Police Operations, Etienne Engon is full of praise for her. ***"In 2013, while serving as Sector Supervisor, I came to know her as the Sector Chief in Kisangani which was then my area of responsibility. An officer with impressive talents, Ms. Doamba carries out her duties brilliantly. Selflessness, dynamism, commitment and a keen sense of responsibility are the trademarks of her professionalism. Her keen sense of humanity helps her to easily foster good partnership networks for efficient and diligent monitoring of important events in her area of activities"***. Always in search for new ideas to help others improve, Clémence Doamba was able to instill a new dynamism to the Uvira sector thanks to her personal involvement in all activities, including the capacity building of the PNC through workshops, seminars, training programs and refresher courses. Straightforwardness, team spirit and an excellent sense of communication are also part of her qualities which are admired by all and which contribute in maintaining a good working atmosphere within the UNPOL Sector of MONUSCO-Uvira.

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Ould Mohamed El Hacen, Chief of the MONUSCO-Uvira sub-office who got to know her in Kananga, portrays her as ***"a woman who commands respect because of her action and the pertinence of her words. She knows how to keep control over her team and to meet her partners' needs, albeit through exercising a bit of authority but always on the basis of mutual respect. She is a hard-working person who does not rest until the work at hand is completed. She is a woman who knows how to impose herself in a group, a much need skill for keeping discipline and homogeneity in a team,"*** especially considering the composition of the UN Civilian Police units which include members from different cultural backgrounds, continents and countries...

In Uvira, her dynamism is appreciated by all. Upon her arrival there, each member of the MONUSCO Police in Uvira received a roadmap with clear assignments. ***"Following the Mission's reconfiguration and the priorities adopted by MONUSCO Police regarding the professionalization of the PNC for better protection of civilians"***, she says, ***"I set myself the objective of revisiting our work methods in order to give a new dynamism to the UNPOL sector's activities"***. When I mention that she has been nicknamed ***"Iron Lady,"*** she responds with a smile, saying ***"I believe this is due to my diligent work ethics and my insistence that the rules of United Nations be respected by the team that I lead"***. Obviously, this is something her colleagues are pleased with. For example, Lambert Constant Noudogbessi, of MONUSCO-Uvira Police, says: ***"Ms. Doamba Clémence is an exceptional lady who is the pride of the female gender. Her approach to leadership is a modern one, in the sense that she symbolizes the good example, the demonstrator of work well done, and accomplished conscientiously and with professionalism; she exhibits flexibility while in command, and not only does she know how to command, she also commands admiration through her know-how, good conduct and good manners. She does not only give orders, but personally takes part in the execution of police missions. Ms. Doamba works tirelessly and never puts work off till tomorrow. She is the first in the office and the last to leave"***.

Her workday starts at 6 am with an evaluation of the security situation in the Sector. In this way, she is able ***"to brief her superiors on the latest developments in the field and so allows them to take appropriate measures to respond to any contingency"***, she says. The day will then continue at a fast pace, and include meetings with local partners and other substantive sections of MONUSCO, submitting reports to superiors, attending parades of the Congolese Police, distributing MONUSCO magazines to refugees and partners, and so on. Partners describe her as ***"an articulate woman who masters her job"***. Gilbert Serushago, Senior Commissioner of the Congolese Police (Uvira) adds that she is ***"a brave woman who goes out into the field to participate and contribute to Congolese Police pep talks and to organize joint MONUSCO-FARDC-PNC patrols to secure people and their property... She struggled successfully to secure"***

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Aissatou Laba TOURE, Chef des Publications : tourea@un.org, +243 822 28 7603 / +243 997 06 8064, Ext. 175-6650**Peace it!**facebook.com/monusco.org | twitter.com/monusco | flickr.com/monusco | www.monusco.org

training and re-training sessions for our elements; we really appreciate her listening skills and willingness to help."

Her experience of participation in three missions, all in the DRC and with MONUC-MONUSCO, is certainly a source lasting memories. And one of these memories relates to the case of the Mbororo children. ***"Following a conversation with the military Command", she says, "I took on the case of 6 Mbororo children abandoned by their parents in the battlefield and found by the FARDC during a sweep operation by troops in the Gbangu forest, in the former Oriental Province. In the five months that followed, I organized several activities in collaboration with local authorities and the Red Cross (ICRC), aiming at: 1) removing those traumatized children from the military camp where they hosted and 2) identifying a safe environment where they could be properly cared for. After the children were handed over to the ICRC by MONUSCO through UNPOL, I conducted careful follow-up of the case, which helped the ICRC find their parents, leading eventually to family reunification at Zemio in the Central African Republic on 12 September 2014. To me this was an unforgettable achievement."***

Clémence Doamba's motherly side finds expression not just in this one memory... On top of her UNPOL activities, she has been the president of MONUSCO UNPOL/FPU Women's Committee since 18 February 2016. This is an organization of female staff of the Police component of MONUSCO, established in 2003, in line with the UNSC Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960. Its objective is to promote gender mainstreaming and gender equality as well as women's development and well-being; to create and optimize synergy at work in order to integrate it in the decision-making center. ***"It is therefore in keeping with our action plan that we decided to launch our activities by making a charitable donation to vulnerable persons (800 in total, including 200 children) at the MUNGOTE camp for displaced persons on 17 March 2016, on the occasion of International Women's Day"***. The delivery of the donation took place after the UN Secretary General's visit to this same camp on 24 February 2016.

Married, with four children who are now adults, she says with a little smile that is so familiar to all mothers and that suggests that "children in their mother's eyes will never grow old, or grow too big for the mother to hold in her arms." Yes, my dear Commander, being a mother is a lifelong commitment!

By Jean-Tobie Okala, translated from French by Yulu Kabamba