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SNAPSHOT

Youth training promotes non-violence and participation in municipal elections.



Awareness campaign on a non-violent approaches to promoting good governance.

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*-- Ibrahim
Workshop participant
and ex-combatant*

Telling Our Story
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Youth Training Promotes Non-Violence

December 2013 - After 10 years of socio-political crises that led to an increase in youth unemployment, youth engaged in April 2013 elections at levels much higher than in previous elections. Their participation rate was on par with that of adults. The increase drove candidates and campaign teams in Bouaké to develop outreach strategies directed at young voters.

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) supported positive engagement of a group that was historically associated with electoral violence to promote their positive involvement in political processes. With support from OTI, Alliance des Jeunes pour la Paix (AJP) organized a series of activities including: workshops on non-violent techniques of political conflict resolution, an awareness campaign on a non-violent approach, and discussions with local politicians.

These activities provided Bouaké youth from different political affiliations a platform to constructively discuss their participation in the democratic process. Youth from President Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front party, women's associations, and other affiliations participated in these activities. The youth were able to challenge the norms and structures that exclude them from electoral processes, engage with the local government, and demand accountability. The activities gave a young voters and ex-combatants, previously barred from voting in municipal elections, a unique opportunity to engage in discussions with their newly elected officials. “This is the first time ever that I am involved in a meeting with such important local officials. I felt they listen to what I have to say, and that makes me happy” said Ibrahim an ex-combatant and workshop participant.

Three weeks after these activities ended, some of the youth associations adopted the principles of non-violence and non-violent methods of political participation in their organizations' by-laws to prevent violence. As of December 2013, no violence has been recorded among Bouaké's diverse youth groups. As one of the training participants said, “We mingled with other youth and we learned how to settle our differences without resorting to violence.”

The members of AJP are being solicited to strengthen the capacities of other youth groups. USAID/OTI continues to work with AJP to promote and develop its capacity to deliver expertise on principles and methods of non-violent political participation.

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