



APPLICATION FOR SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL PEACE PRIZE 2017

GÉGÉ KATANA

1. Union of Belgium

2. Gégé Katana– biography

- Gégé Katana Bukuru was born on 31st of December 1963 in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She is the eldest daughter of a traditional chief who has inspired her with a strong sense of responsibility for her people
- She is a graduate in Social Sciences at the Lumière University of Lyon II
- In 1983, she was trained in the "Pedro Freire" method, a method of Adult literacy
- In 1990, she was trained as a counsellor for “Village clusters and community structures “ at the IWACU Research Centre Cooperatives (a popular training centre for adults)
- In 1991, she participated in coaching seminars to train professionals in the field in order to optimize her development The Pan-African Institute for Development.
- Since 1998, she has been involved in various networks of women's associations: ”The Women’s Network for an Associative Development”, the "Nothing Without Women" movement, the network of partners of the “Global Fund for Women of Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC”
- She has carried out research and participatory training in the Rwandan Association for the Promotion of Integrated ARDI Development in Kigali
- She is active in IDEA / Africa, Institute for Development and Adult Education: an intergovernmental organization comprising member states from all continents, created in 1995
- In 2001, she founded the SOFAD Solidarity of Women Activists for the Defense of Human Rights of which she is the chairwoman
- In 2003, she became a member of the advisory team of the Global Fund for Women.
- She is the coordinator of the Synergy of Women Defenders of Human Rights of South Kivu
- On two occasions, in 2006 and 2014, she received the moral support of Amnesty International, whose activists sent thousands of postcards for the recognition of her work. Thanks to this action Maman Gégé is less often harassed or arrested.
- In 2007 she was awarded the Front Line Defenders Prize, a human rights award. The aim of this prize is to protect those defenders for their non-violent action and to uphold the rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She is the first woman to receive this award.

Gégé Katana Bukuru is known as the "Iron Lady" of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for her courageous commitment to the struggle for women's rights. She is a feminist who has been vigorously fighting for a quarter of a century for the rights of all women, regardless of race, political or religious affiliation, despite death threats and arrests. She has been through particularly difficult situations (theft, plundering of her possessions...). She was completely forbidden to travel between 1996 and 2003.



3. Description of activities:

It was in 2001 that Gégé Katana founded SOFAD (Solidarity of Activist Women for the Defence of Human Rights) in Uvira in South Kivu in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The aim of this organization is to strengthen women's contribution in the search for lasting peace and participation in the political affairs of the country. It encourages women to access the media, current information and communication technology to gain intellectual power. It supports women in their enterprise to gain economic and political power. SOFAD is fighting for the respect of economic, socio-cultural, civil and political rights. It supports and consolidates the process of securing and empowering "peace cells" in villages and neighbourhoods in order to create a strong and influential social movement.

In Uvira, in South Kivu, the rebels are a constant threat. The pacifist militants of SOFAD nevertheless manage to limit their reign and their power. One of the main priorities of SOFAD is the defence of women victims of rape. It is trying to obtain justice in a region where the military on all sides consider women, including very young girls and elderly women, to be part of their spoils of war. Crimes of sexual violence have direct, profound and overwhelming consequences for the women and girls who are being attacked and for their communities. A significant number of them are pregnant as a result of the rape they have suffered and struggle to ensure the survival of the children they have borne. These women and girls are rejected by their husbands and their families and are ostracized by the community because they have been raped or suspected of being infected with HIV / AIDS. They often have to flee, sometimes by joining communities far from their former homes.

In order to meet and support these women, Gégé Katana with SOFAD organizes workshops to train women's groups to become leaders in their village or neighbourhood and to establish "peace cells" wherever possible.

SOFAD works in collaboration with other institutions working for peace or the protection of human rights and with NGOs dedicated to local or international development.



4. Description of a particularly noteworthy project implemented by the nominee:

The “peace cells”

These peace units are women's communities, organized in villages, aimed at raising women's awareness of their rights and ending sexual, including conjugal, violence. Women victims of rape are given their first arms to enable them to take their destiny into their own hands.

Today, 625 activists trained by SOFAD have succeeded in establishing around fifty "peace cells" in the Uvira and Fizi regions. They offer psycho-social, intra-community and legal support to these victims of sexual violence.

The support offered depends on the trauma suffered. If needed, they are referred to the hospital for necessary care. Thanks to the protection provided, victims can report their sexual assault earlier. This will prevent pregnancy and the contamination of AIDS. They receive psycho-social assistance that assesses the risk of exclusion from their community. If possible, family mediation is carried out in order to allow the reintegration of the victim into his or her family. It is an approach very often doomed to failure because even if the husband or the family agrees to reintegrate her into the family group, it is very often neighbours who reject them. The women are stigmatized, "cursed" and banned from the community. Moreover, the rapist often lives in the same neighbourhood as the victim.

Abused women are invited to lodge a complaint. They get legal support from lawyers devoted to the cause despite the problem the protection of the victim and her defenders. Another approach is to bring these women together. Making them work together allows them to speak more freely. Small theatre plays are organized with their lived stories in order to allow a catharsis that can help relieve them of their trauma.

With SOFAD, Gégé Katana is fighting for prevention in order to fight against the ever-present risk of ethnic wars. "What gives me energy is succeeding in establishing centres for peace in the villages and to see our principles of non-violence in action." This solidarity helps create a strong movement to claim their rights. But today, the massive increase in membership of women in SOFAD has resulted in a critical lack of means to achieve their goals.



5. Further information

Introduction to the proposed nomination, by the Union of Belgium:

The Soroptimist Club of Marche-en-Famenne has the honour and pleasure to propose Gégé Katana as candidate for the European Soroptimist Prize for Peace, in order to help her in her fierce struggle against all forms of violence against women in South Kivu.

Gégé Katana, generally known as "Maman Gégé", has set up sustainable "peace cells" recognized by the United Nations and encouraged by Amnesty International. Her sense of responsibility and dedication has been unshakeable despite the frequent attacks made upon her. Her qualities of tolerance, altruism and selflessness are the strands of an exemplary life, lived in spite of the appalling conditions in this country. We want to make her actions known because it seems to us that we need women like Mother Gégé to serve as an example of humanity to us all.

To support this admirable woman and her development projects in South Kivu, our club is setting up a temporary workshop for the creation of "solidarity keyrings". These will be sent to the women in the development projects to serve as a model. We will then buy their wax keyrings which we can resell to support the actions of our club. It is a very good opportunity to give work to these excluded women who have no income. Undertaking similar work symbolizes our solidarity with them. We are thus in the deep sense of Soroptimist International, sisters for the best.

Articles and videos:

https://ungreatlakes.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/Field%20Monitoring%20of%20the%20Women's%20Platform%20Grantees%20-%20FR.pdf UN Report

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/profile/gégé-katana> Article about the Front Line peace prize

http://wikipeacewomen.org/wpworg/fr/?page_id=1516 Article on wikipeacewomen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndPZ0yUiHOo> Gégé Katana's reaction to winning the Front line Prize 2'43

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF4nW4ctFJI> Interview of Gégé Katana about her activities 5'42

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yAt_ezCqx0 Interview of students of the Alzon College 33'22 15 April 2010

<http://word.world-citizenship.org/wp-archive/2163> World People's Blog article from 2008