PeaceWomen Across the Globe
FriedensFrauen Weltweit
نساء من أجل السلام عبر العالم
Femmes de Paix Autour du Monde
Женщины мира за мир на земле
Mujeres de Paz en el Mundo
Mulheres pela Paz ao redor do Mundo
Donne di Pace nel Mondo
ピースウーマン―国境を越え平和をつくる女たち
全球和平妇女



## 1982

Born in Bunia, the capital city of Ituri Province, DRC, Georgine's mother is Hema and her father Lendu.

## 1982-2007

She grows up with her mother and uncles in a Hema community, but is rejected and marginalised by them.



She works throughout her childhood – weaving mats, fetching water and working in the fields.



## 2002-2010

She works in the offices of several political parties, first as a cleaner, then taking notes during meetings and gradually provides analyses and strategic input.



## 2009

When she is 27, her father returns and she reclaims her Lendu tribal identity.



## 2019

Her father, a Lendu community leader, is beaten to death by Zaïre militia (a Hema armed group). Georgine starts to work in mediation and community dialogue.



## 2016-2024

In secret, she passes the state diploma and then earns a degree in political science and administration.



## Since 2019

Today she is the founder and coordinator of FADEM.* She participates in the provincial peace process, aiming to disarm and demobilise the armed groups.



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MEET THE NETWORK

# Georgine

## CONTEXT

In the Djugu Territory (Ituri) of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the rival militias CODECO and Zaïre clash under the pretext of protecting their respective Lendu and Hema communities. The conflict stems from decades (some say centuries) of marginalisation, fights over land and power, exacerbated by political instrumentalisation and illegal extraction of mineral resources (mostly gold). Hundreds of civilians are being killed monthly, thousands are being displaced and children are being recruited daily in armed groups. Women and children are the first victims of sexual violence: 27,000 cases were reported in 2025 in Ituri according to the Congolese Association of Women Lawyers.

Georgine's activism started with the murder of her father, a Lendu community leader, who was beaten to death by Zaïre militia. At that point, her brothers and the Lendu community were plotting revenge, planning attacks and massacres. While the body was still at the morgue, Georgine, as his daughter, was asked to "validate these attacks." **At this precise moment, using her mixed heritage — Hema on her mother's side and Lendu on her father's — Georgine started walking towards the frontline, with the objective of putting in place dialogue instead of weapons and mediation and peace instead of massacres and death.**

## "As a child, I felt invisible."

The roots of Georgine's resilience lie in her early life. "I was born into two communities where I was not welcome. My mother suffered so much; we were both marginalised because of me. Every bad thing that happened was because of me, it was always my fault." Georgine grew up in Bambu, 120 km from Bunia. Segregated from her family, she was not welcome at family parties. She had to work from a very young age to feed herself and her family. She rarely attended school. When her aunt, a widow from Bunia, offered to take Georgine in, she saw the opportunity to study in the city. The plan was to become a teacher. "I had to stop, because the principal closed the school to young girls – I only knew how to read and write."

So she worked as a cleaner at different political parties' offices. Gradually, she was asked to do secretarial work, writing protocols. "Then I worked on analyses and I gave advice. People started to notice me. I was professional. I didn't ask for more money, I had no appropriate clothes and often walked barefoot but I was doing my job well." Georgine decided to continue her studies, in secret. "I passed the state diploma on the second attempt because my educational level was low – especially in French. Then I started university, encouraged by my father." He came back to "reclaim" her when she was 27. Georgine agreed to be "bought back" and decided to change her name (her previous name meant "something bad has entered the family.") She lived with him for ten years — until the day the Zaïre militia murdered him. Georgine was 37 years old.

## "I was ready to die for peace."

Since childhood, Georgine has lived in conflict, amidst the population who bore the brunt of the fighting between Zaïre and CODECO militias. For Georgine, something has always been clear: **"We must live together. Look at me – I am both, I cannot deny my mother and I cannot deny my father."**

After her father was killed, she realised that the cause of the conflict was the lack of contact between the two communities. "Between chiefdoms, for ten years, neither group ever spoke to the other. They were never cooperating, and I saw the danger. There were too many killings in this zone, we had to bring them closer."

So Georgine approached them; at first they refused. She shuttled back and forth between the two, realising each had lost loved ones, like her. "Everyone has done harm, let's find a climate of understanding, let's talk. I don't have solutions, but I questioned them and I facilitated, even though the climate was really not good. I was thinking, at least let's die for peace and not for conflict. My only goal on that first day was for them to see each other and say hello. I told them to empty out everything they had in their bellies and they finally spoke, and they greeted each other. I remember — it was really hot in the room."

## "Talking is good, but living it is always complicated. I started with no means, the means follow."

Her father had set up an organisation and had asked her to take over the reins. She realised what she could do with it after her father was killed and when she started engaging in community mediation and dialogue between armed groups. At first, the organisation had no financial support and was only relying on a few volunteer workers. "My husband was a great support in those years. He had faith in my vision, he constantly encouraged me." Today, FADEM is recognised beyond Ituri Province. Its list of successes and achievements is long, from opening roads to releasing hostages, to facilitating peace agreements and supporting the MONUSCO (the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC) by giving them a "community anchor."

Now Lendu and Hema communities meet and talk to each other. "We are trying to bring CODECO and Zaïre armed groups to the discussion table. But every day peace must be consolidated, because it is really fragile." She is now respected in both families: she is fully integrated among the Lendu and is still in contact with her uncles. "I am now a reference for these two communities. I didn't learn mediation, but life taught it to me. I am self-trained." Women have a major role to play in ensuring communication between the communities and in building social cohesion. This is why she is working with, training and accompanying women and young people from both communities to dialogue with armed groups and put prevention mechanisms in place, to ultimately live together peacefully. "Now, people from the two communities warn each other when an attack is likely. This communication is really what can make us move towards peace."

* FADEM (Femmes en Action pour le Développement Multisectoriel) is often called upon to secure the release of hostages and to help humanitarian organisations and the UN gain access to Djugu territory. The NGO has been called upon by the military governor and provincial authorities to seek dialogue with the armed groups. The organisation also works with women and young people and builds inclusive local committees to prevent resurgence of violence and the community-wide escalation of conflict.

**Georgine is a member of the Feminists Connecting for Peace network.**

**For more information please visit: 1000peacewomen.org/en**

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