

DRC

in Focus



SONG OF THE VOLUNTEERS



Some people imagine volunteers perched on a huge pile of illusions, carrying their idealism over the shoulder and looking at their colorful dreams dancing as kites in a sweet summer wind. Others think that they spend so much time dreaming about a better world that they manage to build one, virtual, far from tough realities in which they collectively nourish individual utopias.

Well, there is nothing more inaccurate than this representation of volunteerism. Volunteers and United Nations (UN) Volunteers in particular, are the workmen of a daily reality. When they tell you that they want a better future, understand that they want tomorrow to be a better day than today; when they claim to make this world a better place, comprehend simply that they want more equality; when they speak about promising days, accept that they are just making a promise to you. This particular feature is unique to volunteers and makes all their value.

This is why in May 2013 the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) called UN Volunteers to participate to the first *Volunteer Initiatives for Peace and Development* (VIPD) project. The objective of these actions is to raise awareness about the values of volunteerism and civic engagement as a tool for peace and development.

After the call for proposals, seven projects (which two are featured in this issue of the *DRC in Focus*) were selected and implemented in July all over the country. Despite their diversity, these projects have a common goal as simple as sincere improving the quality of life. Indeed, they have yielded modest but tangible results in areas as diverse as women's access to education, awareness to conflict resolution mechanisms, the provision of school materials, etc.

Enjoy the reading!

The UNV programme in DRC



Dufina Tabu
ASVOCO President
Goma



Photo Sylvain Liechi

“Volunteerism can save a nation”

Twenty-eight years ago, Dufinu Tabu created the *Association de Volontaires du Congo (ASVOCO)*. He is now chairing this association with passion and determination. It is by looking at his eyes that we can imagine what eternal youth looks like. Indeed, this man is, somehow, an alchemist. With his marveling smile, his charisma, he changes the energy and enthusiasm of disorientated youth in concrete and sustainable actions. All this in the true spirit of volunteerism.

DRC In Focus - As ASVOCO president, what does volunteerism mean for you?

Dufina Tabu - Volunteerism means “helping for free”. It suggests more than “not being paid”, it means that we expect nothing else in return than an improvement of the life of our brothers and sisters. It is as easy as that... which obviously means that it is very complex in the real life.

I was wondering why, in a country rich like DRC, in which we can find all that humans need, people still die starving? Why the environment is in such a bad shape? I understood that what the population was missing was will power. With the desire to accomplish something, we can do everything, especially in a country such as the DRC. I then decided to start by myself. I took

five or six men with me and we started cleaning and sanitizing the city of Goma. After that we went looking for young and courageous people in order to do more and better. This is how we created the ASVOCO on June 26, 1985.

How did you come to volunteerism?

Volunteerism is a state of mind; but a state of mind which has concrete implications in the real world. It is in hard and painful moments that we recognize volunteers.

It seems that the people of Goma came only to volunteerism because of the war. Ten years after the birth of ASVOCO, the first Congo war started. The city of Goma was abandoned to itself, no legal authority remained. Only ASVOCO continued its activity. We were

actually handling the administration of the entire province. We first had to bury the dead, we organized groups to collect the bodies lying in the streets. We had to sanitize the entire city. I also called on the radio all the medical staff in Goma, asking them to come at the general hospital to heal hundreds of victims. During a couple of days, it's the ASVOCO which, literally, ran the hospital.

We even went out of Goma, all over the Province of North Kivu, organizing sanitization campaigns to persuade the villagers to take their responsibilities and clean their localities from the smell of death. It's during this very difficult period that people understood what volunteerism can bring to the society and the general good.

Today, in our daily activities, we mix sensitization to volunteerism and training on Human Rights to pave the way toward a sustainable peace in this part of the world ravaged by continuous wars.

You are in partnership with the UNV programme, what does it mean for you?

The partnership started in 2003 and we carry on with great enthusiasm. Among other things, I remember an activity we realized in on December 5, 2006, for the International Volunteer Day. We first shared a nice lunch with some kids on the lake shore before planting trees on Mont Goma. I remember telling them: "this tree that you're planting today; it is like your children. Every time you come back, you will have to visit it." This symbolic act materialized a strong and permanent link between UN Volunteers and the ASVOCO.

What are the future plans for the ASVOCO?

The ASVOCO is looking overseas. We are going to launch some youth (service) camps; so volunteers from all over the world can come to us.

All the volunteers belong to the same family, a family without border. I can go in Uganda, in Tanzania, in France, in Italy; and the other way around, volunteers from Europe, America, Africa or any other continent are most welcome here in Goma: it is home for them. We will welcome them like cousins, and they will stay with their family.

Doing so, we will win the fight against racism, tribalism, or ethnic nationalism. These international voluntary work camps break down mental barriers.


VNU
RDC

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<http://monusco.unmissions.org/UNVolunteers>



Maurice Mukenge (on the left) with local volunteers during the cassava weeding.

Weeding, baking and pacifying Maurice's panopticon

Maurice Mukenge, national UN Volunteer, has got a talent; he sees the world in three dimensions. Actually, Maurice himself would be more humble than that; it is not a talent, it is only a pertinent methodology associated to a tenured will, not only to do good, but to do it well. He would never pretend to fully understand a situation without having a detailed analysis of all the possible angles. It's the kind of guy who, when he sees the profile of an elephant, will tell you that to its current knowledge, this animal is only on its left side. He is right, it is grey from observing an issue by all the viewpoints that we can hope to understand and resolve it.

When Maurice read the call for volunteer initiatives from the UNV Support Office in DRC named "Volunteer Initiative for Peace and Development" (VIPD), he did not neglect any aspect of the call. The activity organized combined peace and development, theory and practice, self-giving and trust in others, formation and information, body and brain, lectures and debates, women and men, young and elders, modernity and tradition, dreams and reality... If we were showing

this list to Maurice, he would probably just answer that this is nothing unusual since these terms are not antinomic but work in association and are feeding each other. They do it in such a way that, at the end of two days, Maurice naturally helped us circling the situation. A feeling of satisfaction and smart satiety flew over the seventy participants. An activity round like a planet.

Cassava ça va !

What a coincidence! "Planet Junior. The friends of Peace" is the name of the volunteer association with which Maurice implemented a two day set of activities under the VIPD. On Friday morning, volunteers from all over Gemena territory (some of them travelled more than 100 km) gathered to think about the social and individual gains brought by volunteerism. This reflection time was followed by a training in conflict management through mediation or negotiation.

The following day, they grabbed their machetes and hoes to weed the cassava field belonging to five widows. After a couple of

hours of intense and joyful work, all the participants (men and women, young and old) were trained on modern and fast techniques to make cassava flour. With these new techniques, the merchants can improve the added value of their product and thus increase their benefits. It has also a lot of advantages for a non-commercial use by families. Indeed, with this method one can have a product of better quality for a reduced price. In Gemena, we all had the chance to appreciate its quality with doughnuts and lemon cakes made out of this new cassava flour. The author of these lines can testify of the great taste and lightness of these pastries; to our knowledge, the best in the country.

Flooding conflicts

A public speech by Maurice is something like the Congo River: it seems big and deep until we find out that we were actually navigating on a small and distant inlet.

Then, we discover its immensity. We sail with great pleasure on Maurice's words. He makes them roll on a riverbed, sentence after sentence, depending on the audience. Their subtle reactions push him to other places of this huge territory: his thoughts. Everything is so vast that it is impossible for us to know if we reached the riverside or if we just reached a giant island. And the stream of words restarts: we were not at destination; super, we'll go even further. The barge made by Maurice transports us serenely and pleasantly to the shore. Once arrived at the port; the passengers look each other; we know – because we feel it profoundly – that we have all acquired a concrete knowledge on the techniques of conflict resolution. At this moment we know that we are more able than before to deal with future conflicts we'll doubtlessly encounter on more turbulent rivers...



Thanks to this training, the participants will be able to make cassava flour for fougou (ugali) in three days instead of thirteen. This will allow them to have a better quality product in less time. If you are interested in replicating this experience, you can contact Madame Paola (Tel: 08 11 84 18 26) who will explain you the cassava transformation method and give you tasty cassava flour-based recipes.

Doughnuts

List of ingredients

150 grams of sugar
 1 tea spoon of salt
 1 tea spoon of traditional yeast
 2 kgs of flour (1 kg of bread-making Cassava flour and 1kg of wheat flour)
 1 liter of water



Volunteers in the kitchen!

Mix all the dry ingredients in a big cooking pot. Add the water slowly and mix actively.

Wrap the mixture in a plastic bag and put it on the sun so the yeast can do its job (approximately 4 hours when the weather is good).

Then, you just have to fry dough's balls (the size of a small egg) in hot vegetable oil.

Enjoy!

How can you make your own bread-making cassava flour?

- ☞ Peel and wash cassava roots. Grate them (if you need a rasp, take a sardine's tin and make a lot of holes at the bottom, it works admirably well) and then put the grated manioc in a strong bag to press it.
- ☞ To press it, at each end of the bag, insert a big stick in quincunx. Turn each stick on itself and in opposite directions (as you would do to wring a piece of clothes). This step is important as it takes the hydrocyanic acid out of the cassava.
- ☞ Spread the cassava powder on a clean tarpaulin and let it under the sun dry for four hours.
- ☞ Sift the flour. It is now ready to be used in cakes and breads.





UN Volunteers are supporting Kamina's prisoners through income generating activities

Pulling some few strings in the good rhythm and at the good time can do a lot to start a perennial and efficient project. This is exactly what the UN Volunteers in Kamina (Katanga Province) did: they gave the necessary impulsion to have a properly functioning soap-making micro-factory within the prison, to help improve the prisoners' quality of life.

The team of volunteers initiated by UN Volunteer Claire Chantale Woksuu and nourished by her joyful and endless energy (in partnership with MONUSCO Corrections Unit) started to help Kamina's prison in June 2013. The idea behind this group is simple: each team member put a minimum of a 100 Congolese Francs per day in the pot. After a month, the group gathered enough money to buy buckets and washing products to the women of the detention center. A quick answer to an immediate need.

But Claire and her fellow volunteers wanted to do more than offering short-term solutions. The jail's population needs long-lasting solutions. This is what they have been working on these last weeks. With the financial support of the UNV programme in DRC, the Volunteers' team supported the

implementation of an income generating activity aiming at the improvement of prisoners's quality of life. As Julien Ouédraogo explained in a public address during the inauguration ceremony, this micro-factory has three main objectives: develop prisoners' competencies and capacities by helping their economic and social reintegration after their time in jail; generate incomes which will (among other things) improve the production of the prison's garden and improve prisoners' health and hygiene.

The volunteers' contribution

So, the volunteers funded the required material to start the adventure, trained the prisoners on soap fabrication and advised the steering committee (including prison's management personnel, local religious

leaders, and two prisoners). The micro-factory progressively gaining in autonomy, the volunteers will let the committee drive the project independently. This is Claire's trumpeted cause, "Our wish, she indicated to the prisoners, is that, once the project on track, it will go on without our support; you are the key elements of this soap factory. You are at the same time the engine, the drivers and the beneficiary passengers. If you only act as passengers, the vehicle will stop and you will have to start hitchhiking. If, in the long run, this activity works, it will be your success, not ours."

Back in her office Claire comes back on the subject, "you know, these prisoners will eventually go out one day. But this activity has to continue despite the structural turnover. This is why it is fundamental to have a well-functioning transmission of the techniques among prisoners themselves."



Two participants to the workshop mix water, oil and caustic soda, which are the chemical components of soap.



"MY World" : The United Nations global survey for a better world

MY World is a global survey for citizens led by the UN and partners. It aims to capture people's voices, priorities and views, so that global leaders can be informed as they begin the process of defining the new development agenda for the world.

From now until 2015, the UN want as many people in as many countries as possible to be involved with MY World: citizens of all ages, gender and backgrounds, and particularly the world's poor and marginalized communities.

MY World asks citizens which six of sixteen possible issues they think would make the most difference to their lives. The sixteen issues cover the existing Millenium Development Goals,

plus issues of sustainability, security, governance and transparency.

Yoo too participate to MY World Global Survey by filling the form at the Volunteers' stand or by clicking this link www.myworld.org.

Priorities

- Better job opportunities
- A good education
- Better healthcare
- Affordable and nutritious food
- Support for people who can't work
- Phone and internet access
- Access to clean water and sanitation
- Reliable energy at home
- Protecting forests, rivers and oceans
- Action taken on climate change
- An honest and responsive government
- Political freedoms



Contributions of the “*Secrétariat National du Volontariat*” to peace and development

Placed under the Ministry of Planning, the *Secrétariat National du Volontariat (SNV)* is the government body which promotes volunteerism, supervises and supports voluntary-based associations in DRC.

Volunteerism in the Congolese society

Traditionally, the society in DRC is a society of mutual help and solidarity. These characteristics persist, making Congo a place in which the modern definition of volunteerism can flourish. Unfortunately, following a long-lasting socio-economic crisis and long years of conflict, these practices of mutual help and solidarity gradually disappeared for individualism.

The above mentioned values, which used to be the main strength of traditional societies, recently made possible the survival of many families during violent wars and their consequences: poverty and misery. There is in these values a strong heritage that one must restore, enhance and integrate in national development plans.

Indeed, volunteerism is an effective mean to encourage people to tackle the challenges of economic and social development. It can change their rhythm and nature.

Volunteerism is conceived by the UN as an important element of any strategy aiming to fight poverty; sustain development and health; prevent and manage catastrophes; favor social integration and eliminate social exclusion and discrimination. This description of volunteerism as a pertinent and necessary element to construct peace has been voted by the General Assembly of the UN in January 2002 (resolution A/Res/56/38).

Supporting volunteerism

The SNV was created in 2002 to facilitate the materialization of these preoccupations. The creation of the SNV directly comes from the above mentioned resolution and follows the International Year of Volunteerism (2001). The SNV has two main objectives: develop and strengthen a tradition of civism, a culture of responsibility, service, respect and common good within Congolese populations and get popular support to the actions of national reconstruction, fight against poverty and the realization of a sustainable human development.

The objectives of the SNV are to promote and support volunteer engagement; liaise with associations, and the general public to promote volunteerism for the general good; facilitate associations' activities in their objectives to improve development, innovation and uphold social ties; bridge the gap between volunteer associations and the public administration.

In partnership with Congolese associations and the UNV programme, the SNV has already organized many activities and event such as: reforestation programmes,

hygiene campaigns (Martyrs' Stadium), fight against malaria (Kinshasa surroundings), initiation to environmental education in secondary schools, implementation of brigades of young volunteers for the sanitation of schools, AIDS screening test in universities, etc. SNV is currently working in tight collaboration with the UNV programme in DRC, to set up volunteer assignments for young people in order to involve them in the national efforts to build peace and development.

Flavia Pansieri: "UN Volunteers are always in my heart!"

Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Flavia Pansieri was in DRC for a six-days visit to assess the human rights situation in the country. She answered our questions.

DRC in Focus - You were the former Executive Coordinator of the UNV programme (from 2008 to 2013) before joining the High Commissioner for Human Rights. What contribution do you draw from this experience for your current position?

Flavia Pansieri - This was a very important experience which prepared me to my current position not only concerning the management, but above all on the protection and promotion of human rights and peace. Indeed, during the several missions I undertook as UNV Executive Coordinator, I had the opportunity to meet UN Volunteers and see directly the contribution they were making to the UN mandate in this field.

How do you see the contribution of UN Volunteers to the realization of the UN mandate in DRC?

First of all, UN Volunteers of MONUSCO are a fairly large effective and are deployed in almost every MONUSCO duty stations, and in the most remote places. More broadly speaking, we can say that in peacekeeping missions, the faces that people usually associate to the UN very often are the faces of volunteers. Secondly, the Security Council Resolution 2098 is foreseeing a gradual transfer of MONUSCO activities to the UN

Country Team.

It is essential that this process is accompanied by a continuing presence of volunteers.

Indeed, UN Volunteers carry two messages at the same time when they are in the field: the first one concerns their technical skills and the second, which is difficult to measure but very important, is the hope and confidence in the future of the country they express through their presence on a voluntary basis. Their personal commitment is, by itself, an important contribution to a lasting peace.

Would you have a message for our UN Volunteers in the DRC?

Yes, actually I have two. The first is that UN Volunteers are always in my heart. The second: continue your work, it is essential and very important for the communities and contexts in which you are working. You are indeed holders of the values which are at the foundation of the UN system.



The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide.

Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform its pace and nature. The energy and enthusiasm of volunteers are the best tool to make important changes possible. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation.

UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for recognition of volunteers, working with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced UN Volunteers, throughout the world. UNV embraces volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognizes volunteerism in its diversity as well as the values that sustain it: free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity.

UN Volunteers are active in around 140 countries every year. Within MONUSCO we can count up to 638 UN Volunteers to which we must add the almost 90 Volunteers of the UN Agencies. Currently, and despite a continue progression, only one quarter of the Un Volunteers are women. It is worth noting the wide cultural diversity of the UN Volunteers, and if half of them are Africans, in total they are coming from approximately 100 countries. They are highly skilled professionals (by the way, the average age of UN Volunteers in DRC is 41)

They spend the entire day working for the United Nations and as soon as they have a minute available: they give it to the community. They live of giving and they will always manage to put a smile upon your face...

For more information,
www.unv.org

