



INAC in Focus

The Power of Voluntary Action



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Editorial

Celebrating volunteerism

Dear Readers,

This first edition of the DRC in Focus 2014 is dedicated to the International Volunteer Day (IVD), celebrated worldwide last December 5. The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV programme) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) marked this day with a series of demonstrations highlighting citizen's commitment to building a better world. These demonstrations included a drawing contest on volunteerism, tree planting, street cleaning, a concert for peace, a volunteer forum and a run for solidarity, which took place between November 22 and December 7 in Goma and Kinshasa. There were also many initiatives coming from United Nations Volunteers (UN Volunteers) celebrated the day all over DRC.

Why celebrate volunteerism? The answer is simple. IVD provides an opportunity to recognize and promote the voluntary contributions of thousands of people committed to improve living conditions in their communities, to fight for a good cause or to participate in peace and development efforts around the world. So why celebrate vo-

lunteers? The answer is even simpler! Volunteers, through their actions, carry with them a set of values such as solidarity, commitment, participation and citizenship. The application of these values leads to a society which feels good to live in and where justice is a reality. By recognizing the work of volunteers on this day, we celebrate the values of volunteerism and the vision that we can make change happen with our own actions. By celebrating volunteerism, we also thank all the volunteers for their invaluable contributions and encourage them to continue along this path.

It would be important to remember that IVD celebrations is symbolic and regroup the everyday actions undertaken by each and every one of us throughout the year. The sum of all these actions bring about changes which make us realize that we can make a difference for a better world.

We hope that this spirit of volunteerism and commitment will inspire you throughout 2014.



“I’m a volunteer!” Volunteerism drawing by children

Promoting civic engagement among children and adolescents through a drawing contest

It is with pencil lines and multicolored brush strokes that IVD was inaugurated in the DRC. As a prelude to the day, on November 22 and 23, volunteer-based associations (VBO) of Goma organized a drawing contest on the topic “I am a Volunteer”. Up to eighty-five participants from ten primary and secondary schools were invited to put down on paper their ideas and experiences in terms of volunteering, citizenship and solidarity.

“Volunteering is an act of your own will and made from the goodness of your heart, with the aim to help others, says Auguste, 16, one of the ten winners, who was asked to express his vision about volunteerism. Volunteerism is important for peace consolidation and community recovery because it conveys core social values. And calling this to the minds of young people through drawing and art helps us to think about

what we can do for the community to live better together.”

The winners were rewarded with the reproduction of their drawings on a wall. By winning, the laureates also offered to their school mates in need the payment of school fees for the next semester. “I welcome this initiative. It is good to make these kids aware that their actions count and will contribute to a good cause. Indeed they have mostly known only conflict and violence for years, commented the Director of one of the participating schools. We need to raise awareness of the values of solidarity and engagement, we must prepare tomorrow’s generation to act as citizens and take responsibility for social welfare. Volunteerism can be a tool which works towards this.”



The cleanup took place in the main street in Goma, from Epaigo school to the Youth Cultural Center of Goma.

Youth action for peace and development in Nord Kivu

On 30 November 2013, 300 young volunteers and UN Volunteers got together in Goma to mark youth commitment for positive change in the Kivu through a series of activities.

On Saturday morning, bystanders looked on questioningly at the crew of 300 volunteers, equipped with spades, brooms and wheelbarrows, busy moving up and down the main street and cleaning up. As a kick-off for the day, volunteers helped plant 50 trees and painted a wall painting on environmental protection in the yard of Epaigo school, to encourage the young generation to take care of their environment.

"Years of conflict have had a negative impact on our ecosystem and have prevented the populations to think about the protection of their environment: soils were contaminated, infrastructure damaged, agricultural cycles destabilized, etc which in turn has led to famine and displacement of the population, says Sam, President of the Rastafaris

Association. There are many things we can and need to do to ensure peace recovery, considering environmental issues is part of this process and calling the citizens, particularly children and youth, to respect and protect the environment is within our reach."

After the clean-up, volunteers went to the Youth Cultural Center where the day ended with music and dancing. "We are tired of war! We want a peaceful society where we can grow up and live in peace and happiness," sang a seven-year-old volunteer holding sign in her hand: "Volunteer and put your weapons on the floor!". A concert for peace featured local, young artists and volunteers: Congolese rappers, break dancers, hip hop artists, reggae singers, traditional artists and dancer, joined their voice to raise awareness

of their shared culture and identity, despite their diversity. Among the singing stars was Innocent Balume, a popular young Congolese artist who also sang for a sustainable peace in the region.

More than 300 volunteers from nine associations took part in all the IVD activities in Goma, namely the guides, scouts, the Association of Volunteers of Congo, Kivu UJAPD Arts young artists associations, the Rastafaris, Collywood, IJEDI youth association for Integral Development, Volunteers Association for Development.

During all the afternoon, the concert for peace mesmerized a large audience of 800 children and young Gomatradians, who offered their cheerful applause and motivational clapping.



IVD 2013: Youth volunteering for a better world

There are more than 1.2 billion youth in the world today, the largest group of young people in history with incredible power and potential, and volunteerism has an important role to play in harnessing this potential.

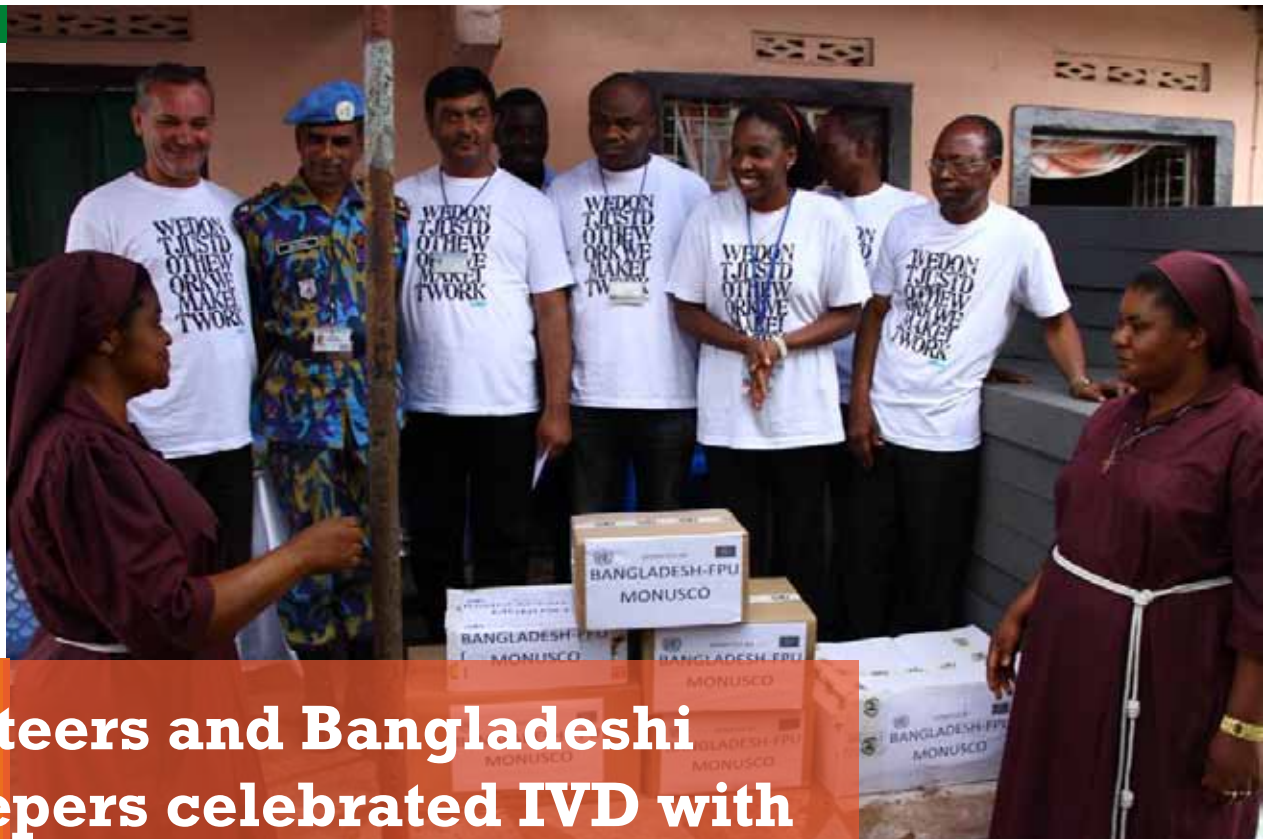
IVD 2013 paid special tribute to the contribution of youth volunteers in global peace and sustainable human development, and particularly celebrated the young people acting as agents of change in their communities.

Since the Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon called the UNV programme to create a youth volunteers programme in his Five-Years Action Agenda, the UNV programme has been engaging with youth-led networks, international volunteer sending organizations, national volunteering and civil society organizations, UN Agencies to develop the UN Youth Volunteers Programme.

**YOUNG.
GLOBAL.
ACTIVE.**

The UNV Youth Volunteering Strategy was launched in september 2013 with the aim to facilitate the engagement of youth in global peace and sustainable human development through volunteerism, bringing the voice of youth into the development discourse and helping young people to realize their full social, economic and human potential.

To read the UNV Youth Volunteering Strategy, click [here!](#)



UN Volunteers of Mbuji Mayi donating food items to Betu Bena orphanage.

UN Volunteers and Bangladeshi peacekeepers celebrated IVD with the orphans of Betu Bana

By Esther Ndalafina
Radio Okapi

Betu Bana Center is home to more than 120 children between 0 and 17 years old. These children are street children, abandoned children, “sorcerers” or vulnerable children. At Betu Bana’s, they have been given the opportunity to keep up their schooling, benefit from socioeconomic reintegration, and receive comfort and attentive listening from the Sisters.

As part of the IVD commemoration, the UN Volunteers of Mbuji-Mayi and Kananga, as well as MONUSCO staff raised funds with the aim to improve the quality of life of children of Betu Bana orphanage. The fund, which amounted to 2000 USD, contributed to buy food items such as biscuits, beans, maize and cassava flour, tea and sugar. This amount also allowed to purchase twenty mattresses so that children who slept on the floor, could sleep in better conditions and be protected from the cold and cold-related sicknesses.

During the ceremony, Bangladeshi UN Police offered free health care to sick and wounded children. The Bangladeshi commander, as to express his friendship and support to the orphanage, stated that the Bangladeshi contingent will continue providing free consultations to the children of Betu Bana.

The orphanage sincerely thanked the MONUSCO delegation for this initiative which contributes to the well-being of Betu Bana children.

“I’m very happy. When I grow up, I want to be a volunteer for peace. But I am going to start right now with small and simple daily life actions within my reach such as taking care of the other orphans”, said an orphan of the center about the activity.



The Volunteers' Fair gathered more than 150 volunteers coming from 12 associations of Kinshasa to showcase their actions.

A new vision on volunteerism in DRC

By Aimé-Cyprien Dionzo
National Secretary of Volunteering

The IVD official ceremony was held on December 5th in the presence of Minister of Planning, Célestin Vunabandi, the National Secretary of Volunteerism, Flavien Munzuluba Kinier, the UNDP Country Director, Adama Coulibaly, and the UNV Programme Manager, Marc Spurling.

The day began at the Higher Institute of Commerce by a Volunteers' Fair consisting of various stands run by volunteer-based associations of Kinshasa. The objective of the fair was to promote volunteerism and raise awareness about the contribution of volunteer action for peace and development. In his address to the students, the National Secretary of Volunteerism said "It is possible to build a better world simply with the free commitment of everyone," and encouraged them to get involved.

The IVD celebration was not only an opportunity to highlight volunteers contributions, it also brought a wind of change for volunteerism in DRC with the announcement of a national policy on volunteerism and the establishment of a national volunteer service

for the youth. Indeed, in the second part of the celebration, which took place at the Halle de la Gombe, the Minister of Planning announced the upcoming national policy on volunteerism and reaffirmed "the strong commitment of the Government to give a new impetus to volunteerism and to implement a national policy on volunteerism towards a better and emerging Congo by 2030." He said he was convinced that "the prospect of an emerging Congo in 2030 will become a reality if we mobilize our people, young or adult, male or female, to be committed on volunteer basis to help realize this vision".

The national policy on volunteerism will act as a legislative and regulatory framework that defines volunteer's rights and duties, as well as directives to include volunteer assignments in the private and public sector. The policy will enable better recognition of the contributions of volunteers to development, the integration of volunteer actions in national, provincial and local programmes and more effective support to volunteers and volunteer-based associations.



Placed under the solidarity banners, the race gathered 127 runners, including 27 living with disabilities

Run for Solidarity Break barriers, open doors!

Three, two, one, GO! So started the first run for solidarity held in Kinshasa on 7th December 2013. What was important on this day was not to be the fastest runner, but to show a sense of solidarity and togetherness and make a pledge for an inclusive society. Beyond the sporting challenge, exchange and friendliness were the keywords of the day.

On Saturday, early in the morning, despite the pouring rain, no less than 127 runners were on the starting line at MONUSCO Headquarters, transformed for the occasion into a sports field. Being the first event of this kind in Kinshasa, the race gathered able bodied runners and runners living with disabilities, amateurs and athletes, to run 8 km side by side. Under the disability category were sixteen runners in wheel chairs, seven blind and four deaf. Participants not only ran for fun, but also for helping children living with a disability. Their challenge: To raise enough funds to rehabilitate school infrastructures, suitable for children living with disabilities, in poverty-striven areas of Kinshasa.

Besides calling for solidarity, the intention of the race was to make a pledge for an inclusive society, a society where everybody has equal opportunities in life. "The race was a time of exchange and sharing between able bodied runners and runners living with disabilities, said Robert Dizakolele, President of the Congolese Paralympic Federation. This is good! This makes me think that volunteerism and sport share common values. Those are solidarity, mutual aid and social cohesion. Like volunteerism, sport can be a vehicle to promote social inclusion, integration and equal participation."

Under the initiative of the UNV programme in DRC, the Run for Solidarity was organized in partnership with the National Secretariat

of Volunteerism and the SubCluster Handicap on the occasion of two international days: IVD and International Day of People Living with Disabilities held on December 3d. The race raised up to 3085 USD. This amount has been handed over to the SubCluster Handicap who will manage the rehabilitation of two primary schools in Lemba and Ngaba.

According to estimates, there are over 9.1 million people with disabilities in DRC. This represents 11% of the worldwide population living with a disability. Despite the fact that the DRC recently ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of People Living with Disabilities, the situation remains challenging. Disability strikes mainly the poorest populations due to lack of resources and information. Disabled people are also more to face discrimination to gain access to education, health care, to get a job and to participate in politics and to fall into poverty.

Rosette, first woman to cross the finish line for the disability category

Hello, my name is Rosette. I am a Congolese Paralympic athlete. I was born in Goma 24 years ago. There are two major conflict-related events in eastern DRC that have shaped my life. The first is the death of my father and my older brother and the second is the amputation of my leg when I was 11. Following these events, my mother, my brother and sisters and I moved to Kinshasa to start a new life, not without difficulty. However, one day I got to meet Dedeline, who was a paralympic athlete and convinced me of the benefits of sport. I jumped in and joined the Congolese Paralympic Federation. This gave new hope to my life and now I hope that with the right coaching, I can be counted among the greatest athletes in the world.

The run for solidarity means a lot to me and also to all people living with disabilities in DRC. In Kinshasa, there are not many activities for able bodied and people living



with disabilities to mix together. They think we cannot participate because of our disability.

Yet disability cannot prevent us from participation. This race is a very good thing for us, because it brings a new perspective on disabilities and on our capacity to participate in daily activities. This contributes to bring change to the mentalities of others, which are needed to overcome the stigma and discrimination we are facing on a daily basis because of our handicap.

Before concluding these few lines, I would like to say thank you for this initiative and hope that this will not be the last one.



Group photo taken at the end of the first day training after participants received their certificates.

Strengthening local volunteers' capacities to promote volunteerism

“If volunteerism was an animal, it would be an ant”, explains a volunteer. “The ant has solidarity and team spirit. Ants are united and work together to carry their food and act for the good of their team.”

This was the beginning of the cycle of capacity building workshops on the promotion of volunteerism for VBO, which were held in Kinshasa on 4 and 5 November and in Goma on November 28. The workshop provided 140 participants with a discussion framework and tools on how to promote volunteerism within their community. Indeed, for many vulnerable communities, engagement of the community members through volunteerism and mutual assistance is a mean to ensure their livelihood, tackle community problems and improve overall well-being. In other words, volunteerism helps alleviating vulnerability, using resources sustainably and improving access to health and education. Volunteer engagement also creates links between community members and strengthens social cohesion and values, which are essential to the development of an healthy society.

Divided into three groups, volunteers discussed the leadership role volunteers have in their community and the impact of their actions on local development and community recovery. More specifically, the first group considered the pros and cons of volunteer actions and how to take advantage of the strengths to overcome resistance. A second group talked about the involvement of VBO in community dynamics and the third looked at potential tools to get community members involved in volunteer actions.

“The workshop was interactive and everyone was involved through the three focus groups. This enabled us to exchange views on volunteering and get concrete answers to our questions in a short time. I personally got a better understanding of the impact our actions may have and now I have the conviction that volunteerism can help rebuild our country and it is our duty, as citizens, to work on it”, said a participant.

The Power of Voluntary Action in DRC

This year the UNV programme in the DRC launched its second photo contest showcasing the Power of Voluntary Action in DRC. Photos illustrate positive actions for peace and development, their impact on peoples' life and values of volunteerism.



FIRST PRIZE

It is not what we can do for our country that matters, but rather what we can do for the whole of all mankind. By Rajeshkumar Subramanian/MONUSCO, Mwene Dity, January 2013.

Symbolic representation of volunteerism: everyone can make a voluntary action in his country and elsewhere, with the aim of helping each other without “pedaling” for them.

SECOND PRIZE

Bringing smile back to lost children.
By Benoit Almeiras/PNUD, Goma, 2013

Children affected by armed conflict are not only child soldiers, children are also separated from their families due to conflicts. A local association managed by journalist Passy Mubalaba takes care of children separated from their families. And despite all the difficulties, a simple voluntary action can help put a smile on a child's face.



THIRD PRIZE

FARDC military landmine victim in a cutting-sewing capacity building workshop. By Christophe Asukulu/ADIC ASBL, Kauwa, Bukavu, June 2013.





©Adrien Majourel/UN

Special prize “Youth as Agents of Change”

The voice of the child. By Adrien Majourel, Kanyaruchinya, 2012.

Children are tomorrow’s adults. Raising them with awareness of how to promote and defend their rights contributes to shape committed citizens in their society. On the picture, children reporters in Goma are making a report on children living with disabilities in an internal displaced people’s camp.