

DRC *in Focus*



**As close as possible to
populations under threat**

In this issue

Dossier: The contribution of United Nations Volunteers to Joint Protection Teams

Volunteerism: Solidarity within the community

A day in DRC: The Berlin Conference

Editorial

During the financial year 2012-2013, the United Nations (UN) Volunteers participated in 55 joint missions of protection. The Joint Protection Teams (JPTs) are protection keytools in the implementation of the protection mandate of the Mission of the United Nations Organisation for the Stabilization of the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in remote and isolated, conflict-driven areas.

It is worth stressing the invaluable contribution of UN Volunteers in the implementation and application of this mechanism, such as Kristen Petillon, who actively contributed to its creation or Alexandra Knezevic who frequently takes part in these JPTs.

Then we will make a detour through the poverty-stricken neighborhood of Masina where a local volunteer-based organization is deeply involved in the development of its community.

We will finish this issue by looking back 130 years ago at the time of the Berlin Conference, which marked a turning point in the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Enjoy the reading!

By Marc Spurling
UNV Programme Manager



You have to wait the clouds to be silent and let the sun opening a square mouth on the volcanic floor of the hut to distinguish the faces of the thirteen participants to the first meeting of the JPT to Kitchanga. The walls are white, the unfortunately famous white of the tarpaulins flourishing on the hills of Masisi. Three pink bows of bright paper garnish the twelve square meters' living room. Some participants pile-up on wooden chairs, others have to crash on velvet sofas. At the entrance, a disproportionate cupboard – surprisingly furnished of white plates and German wine glasses – eat the daylight; on the other side of the room, potatoes not bigger than walnuts sprout in the shade.

It is only thanks to some rare sunny spells that Alexandra Knezevic and her colleagues can fully appreciate the vacillating look of the villagers present during this meeting. Alexandra and her colleagues from the Human Rights Section, the United Nations Police (UNPOL) and the United

Alexandra Knezevic
Civil Affairs Officer
Goma

Assessing the security and humanitarian needs of residents and internally displaced people.

Feed the MONUSCO with the complex lights of Kitchanga

Alexandra Knezevic, UN Volunteer, explaining civil affairs activities during a joint protection mission in North Kivu.

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have only few minutes to create a propitious atmosphere to a continuous and productive conversation flow; these few minutes decide of the potential gain of a two hours meeting with the population of Kilolirwe; listening to their stories, fears and hopes. First commiserate with, and then understand.

The devil is in the details and Alexandra is well aware of that. With a great sincerity she tries to understand the situations in which the villagers are living. How many cows stolen ? Whom did they belong to? Where did they go ? The women left; did they go with the kids ? Have you been threatened? Is the school working properly? Did the tensions recently increased?

It is necessary to understand the events in the details to grasp the broader picture.

If her shirt is full of doubts – the buttons seem to be joined by haphazard more than by the rules – her voice is frank and confident. Team-leader of the JPT, the young Scandinavian stays flexible on the destination but does not put a foot out of the path. She will never close a door. It does not mean that she is waiting for the information to come to her; on the contrary she enters each room and scrutinizes them with great professionalism. With her, apparently natural, mix of firmness and comprehensiveness she coordinates with great talent a heteroclite team toward a twofold objective: the evaluation of the needs in terms of security and humanitarian support for locals and Internally Displaced Peoples.

To please the requirements of Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement (DDR/RR), Public Information, Human Rights, UNHCR, Civil Affairs, North-Kivu Brigade (NKB) and UNPOL, you need as much imagination and conviction as Daedalus had to flee from the labyrinth guarded by the Minotaur.

During all her meetings with the Chiefdom, the Government Army (FARDC), the civil society, the national police (PNC), the NGOs and the youth association, Alexandra adopts the same attitude: a smart mix of empathy and methodic doubt in an exercise of express maieutic. Indeed, she has to maneuver swiftly: extract the most complete and accurate information without pushing the interviewee to deliver the content that the JPT is looking for. Since they come to verify allegations, or to understand the causes of effects observed from Goma (like movements of population), MONUSCO staff has to be very careful about its

own tendency – as well as the projected desire of the interlocutors – to distort the truth to push it in the framework drawn by anticipation.

Members of the JPT have to possess an excellent knowledge of the area and however go there virgin of any certitude.

The maps of Masisi are eternal palimpsests. Conscious of the plasticity of North-Kivu, Alexandra embraces an attitude between encyclopedic knowledge and Cartesian doubt. After having gathered kilometers of notes, she will draft a four pages report with a complete analyze of the situation and a set of propositions transmitted, *in fine*, to the NKB.

JPT in a nutshell

Initiated in North Kivu in 2009, the JPTs fall within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1856 which places the protection of the civilians at the heart of MONUSCO mandate. JPTs represent an innovative model based on the collaboration between the military and civilian staffs. It has been since adapted and replicated in other contexts of conflict and stabilization.

JPTs are designed as a protection tool aimed at reinforcing protection mechanisms of local populations living in remote and inaccessible areas. The purpose of these teams is, on the one hand, to improve interaction and establish a relationship of trust between peacekeepers, local communities and key stakeholders. On the other hand, JPTs make possible to bring civilian expertise to sensitive zones as to clearly identify needs for protection and establish an appropriate response mechanism.



The JPT are deployed to remote and isolated areas as to meet the protection needs of the civilians on the ground. (Credit K.Pétillon)

Those teams are multidisciplinary and are constituted by representatives of the substantive divisions of MONUSCO, Military and UNPOL component as well as partners who are considered for the protection needs and the vulnerability status of local communities.

Kristen Petillon
Former UN Volunteer



“I was part of the team who initiated the JPTs in Goma!”

Photo: K. Petillon

Former UN Volunteer Kristen Petillon was deployed in Goma from December 2008 to June 2011. During his assignment within the Civil Affairs Section, he contributed to the initiation and implementation of the JPT concept.

DRC In Focus: What were the steps in the implementation of the JPT?

Kristen Pétillon: The JPT concept is the result of a collaborative work among all protection actors operating in North Kivu : all MONUSCO sections and military component, the UN Agencies, the Protection Cluster¹ and the local authorities. It was a long process with several changes and adaptations, so the mechanism can be accepted by all party in order to respond quickly to the field requirements. In 2010, UN Security Council Resolution 1925 has consecrated JPTs as effective major protection tools. This allowed us to get more support, logistics and human resources for new deployments, mainly in remote areas.

How does JPT constitute an innovative tool to protect civilians?

The protection of civilians is a complex and sensitive area. Coordination of actors, the

¹The protection cluster brings together, under the coordination of UNHCR, all humanitarian actors, operating in the field of the protection of civilians. Its main objective is to increase the protection of civilians in conflict-driven areas. <http://www.cd.undp.org/mediafile/Unis%20dans%20l'action-Un%20Brochure.pdf>.

ability to provide appropriate and quick responses are major assets of JPTs. Contrary to what we think, the protection of civilians is not only the responsibility of the Force, but a shared one between the Civilian and Military components of the Mission. This complementary and convergent action of civilian and military actors is necessary to obtain significant results in terms of protection. The protection of civilians is not only limited to physical protection but extends to a set of essential elements to ensure a wide and multiform protective environment.

How did you contributed to the establishment of the JPTs?

My work within the Civil Affairs Section was primarily focused on “protection of civilians”; one of the four section’s pillars. In this context, I contributed to the development of some protection tools such as the JPTs, the Community Liaison Interpreters and the Community Alert Networks. Regarding my contribution to the JPT concept, I worked on its design and implementation during my three years of service. Among other

things, I participated in the coordination and deployment of the teams, analysis and identification of intervention areas and finally the monitoring of recommendations to the deployment of peacekeepers, etc.

What was your career path since you left the DRC in 2011?

After my UNV assignment, I have been recruited by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); my first assignment was in Ivory Coast and then Somalia, Mogadishu, where I am currently in charge of civil and military coordination. As part of my current job, I play the role of coordinator between all humanitarian and other actors working for protection purpose in Somalia as well as the National army and other armed groups.

Could you say that your UNV experience helped you in your career?

Yes, definitely! Being a UN Volunteer was one of the best professional experiences that I have ever had. It has been a very rewarding and exciting moment that has given me lot of opportunities: I had the chance to be on the ground in contact with

local community and key stakeholders. This experience also helped me to understand more the UN system and identify the type of work I wanted to do and where I could make a difference.

Do you have any advice to give to the UN Volunteers?

Yes, I have two recommendations for the UN Volunteers. First, do not hesitate to ask any advice to those who have more experience than you, and especially to your supervisors! Second, take this part of your life as a unique life experience! This could be also a springboard for some of you, a professional opportunity that can be part of a career plan. Make the most of it without going on forever as a UN Volunteer.

Is volunteering still part of your life?

Unfortunately no! My current lifestyle - mission life in Mogadishu - does not allow me to get involved in volunteering. However, when I go back to France, I do not miss the opportunity to share my experiences with students in different universities and give occasionally courses and trainings.



Kristen Petillon

Nationality : French
Age : 30

UNV Function: Civil Affairs Officer
Duty Station: Goma
Period: 2008-2011

Current job : Humanitarian Officer at OCHA in Mogadiscio (Somalia)

UNV experience: "One of the best experience I have ever had. Very rewarding and exciting. It helped me to understand the UN system and confirmed my career choice."



A bottom-up perspective on development

The faces of volunteerism are multiple and are expressed in different ways. In Masina, market gardening women have committed themselves to help vulnerable girls in the area.

Masina is one of the largest districts of Kinshasa. Nicknamed *Chine populaire*, Masina is also one of the most populated and poorest municipalities of the region with 70% of the population living in poverty. Unemployment, scant access to healthcare and education, poor sanitation and chronic hunger make life a continuous struggle. Here in Masina, solidarity and mutual assistance are survival values and community members are aware of it. Thus women of Masina came together to found the FEDEVIC, the “Virtuous Women for the Integral Development of the Congo” association. Their goal: cultivate together to meet the needs of all.

The initiative is paying off, and in 2011, FEDEVIC’s women open a tailoring and sewing training centre to help vulnerable girls in the area. Maman Sabine, FEDEVIC coordinator, explains: “These young girls spend the entire day in the street, many of them are already mothers, others are illiterate and some are disabled. We take care of them for nine months. During this period we give them an education that will help them in their future lives: they are taught to sew but also to read and write. At the end of the training, they

receive a sewing machine”. Maman Sabine continues: “Then, they can handle things for themselves. But above all they are aware that the community helped them at a difficult time in their lives and will be encouraged to do the same.”

Flavien Muzuluba Kinier, National Secretary of Volunteerism, is convinced of the potential of volunteers as actors of change and promoters of economic and social development in the DRC. “Volunteerism benefits to all: the society as a whole, communities and individuals. Volunteering promotes the participation of each of us, which is essential to the development that needs to be initiated from the bottom. Besides, volunteers are committed individuals or groups who are involved in addressing community problems or improving the quality of life of others. In this way, volunteerism inspires a mentality of development and empowerment based on self responsibility. Indeed, this mentality is based on respect for the common good as well as the personal and collective responsibility.”

A DAY IN DRC...

1885 : The Berlin Conference

Scrambling Africa

From 15 November 1884 to 26 February 1885, representatives of European nations met in Berlin to decide some colonization rules and drew the maps of a colonized Africa. With the backdrop of political competition between certain European powers and neutrality of others, the conference recognizes the partition of Africa between the colonial powers without consulting the Africans themselves.

A major beneficiary of the Berlin Conference is King Leopold II of Belgium (1835-1909), who managed to impose his colonial views and gets the Congo as his personal property. On 30 April 1885, he officially became sovereign of the Congo Free State.

On 15 November 1908, before his death, Leopold II bequeathed the Congo to Belgium, which became the Belgian Congo. This is the beginning of the Belgian colony, a territory which is over 75 times the size of Belgium. On 30 June 1960, the Congolese turned a page of their own History by declaring their independence and putting an end to the colonization. A new era began...

