

DRC *in Focus*

**Behind the scenes
at MONUSCO**

In this issue

Dossier: UN Volunteers assisting peacekeepers to be ready to engage for peace

Interview with the Chief of UNV Peace and Development Division

UNV : Strategic framework for peace and development

Edito

Dear readers and UN Volunteers,

I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation for the warm welcome I received upon my arrival. As you know, I have been temporarily assigned by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to replace Marc Spurling, my predecessor, while waiting for the deployment of the next UNV Programme Manager.

In the meantime, I feel very happy to write the editorial of this DRC in Focus, which emphasizes the contributions of the United Nations Volunteers (UN Volunteers) to the peacekeeping mandate of the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). Indeed, 29 May is International Peacekeepers Day. On this day, it is equally important to recognize the work of UN Volunteers who have been integral to peacekeeping operations worldwide and who have been paying tribute through their commitment to maintaining peace and security for 22 years.

Before concluding, I have to mention how proud I am of our UN Volunteers who, in spite of the harsh working and living conditions, bring an effective peace and security to millions of people living in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) such as the UN Volunteers working in the Contingent Owned Equipment (COE) Section who travel to and work in the most physically and politically difficult environments to create a pathway for peacekeepers to engage in peacekeeping at any time!

Enjoy the reading!

Fabrizio Damiani
UNV Programme Manager, ai



Being ready to fight means two distinctive things: the first one includes the knowledge and the know-how of soldiers and officers; it is the result of a high level training. The second concerns the capacity to fight at any time and in all the conditions. To this end, contingent of MONUSCO must be able to mobilize quickly all their material, assets and resources. In the Eastern DRC, this second element of the preparation is mainly under the responsibility of three UN Volunteers of the MONUSCO COE section.

The three UN Volunteers of COE are moving in Rutshuru (North-Kivu) at the phlegmatic pace of MONUSCO escorts. They ramble in this area, starting just a couple of kilometers North of Goma and controlled by different armed groups, to verify the capacity and readiness to engage of MONUSCO bases in Katale,



Are MONUSCO peacekeepers well prepared?

Three UN Volunteers in North-Kivu are here to control that “Yes, they are”!

Tongo, Kiwanja, Nyamilima and Ishasha.

Being ready at any time is a daily job

Dr. Ashkan, Daniel and Dennis are the guarantors of the respect of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the contributing member states (troops and equipment) and the UN. How do they do that? Four times a year, they visit all MONUSCO bases in North-Kivu to check that the contingents are ready to take action; that they are ready to do it at any time, in any circumstances and in good conditions.

On one hand, the objective is to verify the presence and serviceability of the material promised by the member states for their Blue Helmets. The atmosphere is always a little bit strange in an inspected base. It smells like the first day of school; a chalk that one rubs on the blackboard and attentively ironed shirts. Only the tools differ: machine-guns, mortars, jeeps, shovels, and assault chars are perfectly aligned and dazzling. The inspectors are hard-nosed; every single piece must be working adequately. Indeed, night vision goggles or positioning equipments can be considered as non serviceable if the platoon does not possess enough batteries to make them work during lengthy field operations. Everything is tested with a disconcerting meticulousness. Peacekeepers must be ready for any kind of event or intervention and at any time; thanks

On the other hand, it is important to ensure that the material capacities are duly accompanied by the complete mental and physical aptitudes of all the soldiers of MONUSCO. Here as well, every little detail contributing to the health and well-being of the soldiers are of major importance: a bedside table, enough washing products to maintain clean clothes and rooms, healthy water and food, a good Internet connection, all the medical equipment required to prevent current diseases, heal minor injuries and stabilize the more lethal wounds.

These inspections are directly influencing the outputs of the mission

COE's role within MONUSCO is essential, "without our presence and support, most of the military bases would just fall apart by themselves", explains José Luis Medina, Deputy Chief of the section. "We have to make sure, for their own safety as well as for the security of the local population and UN staff, that they work in good conditions with properly functioning equipments."

The Deputy Chief is very proud of the UN Volunteers of his section "The the decisions taken by UN Volunteers have major positive impact; they have huge implications for the contributing countries. The reliability of my team is reflecting all over the mission."

A job for incorruptible inspectors: the contingents will do their best to hide the potential defect of their material. Indeed, if the equipment does not perfectly correspond to the contract signed with MONUSCO, the missing or not serviceable equipments will not be paid to the contributing country.

“COE WORK IS NOT EASY: IT IS NECESSARY TO TRAVEL TO DIFFERENT PLACES, SOMETIMES DANGEROUS PLACES AND UNDER DIFFICULT LIVING CONDITIONS AND PRESSURE. OUR UN VOLUNTEERS PLAY AN IMPORTANTROLE IN THE UNIT.”

José Luis Medina, Deputy COE Section Chief.



VOLUNTEERS' VOICE

Dr ASHKAN ALIZADEH
RAHBAR



Doctor Ashkan arrived in Congo on June 6, 2013. Previously he served for four years in Trinidad and Tobago as a UN Volunteer for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). As a Pediatrician, he was in charge of a clinic.

"What surprised me the most in Trinidad and Tobago was to see how welcoming they were with me. The country had a huge lack of physician specialists; the UN was there to fill the gaps left by a brusque change in the health system. The idea of being a UN Volunteer or working in any kind of development context has always been quite strong in me. I have always wanted to do any kind of humanitarian work, and I think volunteering is always the best way to do so. To be honest, I am very happy to have been called for another assignment after Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed I really wanted to be back on the field."

Ashkan spent his life working to help others, sometimes in very difficult situations.

"In Haiti I worked as an Emergency Medical Coordinator for International Medical Corps, where I was in charge of the Cholera Treatment Center. In Libya I was also doing medical coordination, but it was a different story, health needs during war time were just crazy. We were in a boat to pick-up wounded people in Misurata and bring them back to the closest hospital to be healed. My job was essentially to keep them alive during the journey.

Within COE, the job is completely different, but as a team we all work with the same willingness to do a good job and improve the situation here."



COE INSPECTION?

- **66 MILITARY CONTINGENTS** in DRC
- Around **20 500 TROOPS**
- **11 000 ITEMS**, including medical, aircraft, armement, observation equipment, accommodation, and so on.
- inspected **4 TIMES A YEAR**

DENNIS MARTINEZ



Dennis always come to you with a big and straight smile full of the sweetness of a father and the frankness of a soldier. Impossible for him to spend a day without thinking of his daughters waiting for him in the Philippines, impossible as well to forget the seventeen years spent in the army of his country. "For me, working in the army was already a way to do some volunteerism. An experience I deepened a few years later when I became peacekeeper for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)". Working as a Logistic Officer, he used to work with UN Volunteers. He saw the quality and the necessity of their work as well as the beauty of their gesture. Beautiful because free, without expecting anything back.

Repeating this sentence that fits him perfectly, "We only live once", he immediately apply to become a UN Volunteer and was quickly recruited within MONUSCO. "I love what I am doing here and I already know that I'd like to stay as long as possible. I have a lot of freedom in my current job; it obviously comes with great expectations from my supervisors. It's this combination of freedom and expectations that gives me the possibility to give the best of myself."



This passion for the job-well-done explains itself and reminds us the words of Charles Péguy. "The chair stick had to be properly done. It was a prerequisite. It should not be well done for the salary, or for money. It shouldn't be well done for the boss or for the connoisseur, not even for the customers of the boss. It had to be well done itself, in itself, for itself, for its very self."

DANIEL AMOYAW ASAMOAH



Daniel started working for COE on April 15, 2012. It is not his first experience within peacekeeping operations; indeed he worked in the missions in Liberia, Lebanon, Sierra-Leone and DRC as a peacekeeper in the Ghanaian Battalions. For him, volunteerism was an intimate and absolute need.

"I have a passion for humanity. As a UN Volunteer I try to see beyond my job as an inspector and look at the people we serve. I personally try, as much as possible, to help the population we meet on the road. It is directly linked to our main objective which is to make sure that peace will prevail. As a UN Volunteer, we are here for the sake of the people. I also believe, deeply in my heart, that the role I am playing helps, even if very marginally, to make the world a better place."

KEVIN GILROY

“I INITIATED THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UNV AND THE DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS.”

On 29 May, we celebrate International Peacekeeping Day and the contributions of UN Volunteers to advance peace in the world. For this occasion, DRC in Focus met, Kevin Gilroy, Chief of Peace and Development Division, UNV, on the eve of his departure from UNV in May of 2014. After many years spent with the UNV programme at headquarters (HQ) and in the field, he shares with us his experience and thoughts especially given his key in building the 22-year long partnership between UNV and UN Peacekeeping Operations (DFS/DPKO,) and insight about the critical role UN Volunteers play in in peacekeeping!

DRC in Focus - How did you join the UNV Programme ?

Kevin Gilroy - I joined the UNV programme in 1985 as a UN Volunteer. At that time, I was serving as the UNV Programme Officer at the UNDP Office in Sri Lanka. The war broke out in 1987 and the situation got very bad, and all the UN Volunteers were repatriated in 1989. Soon after I joined the team at UNV HQ.

The partnership between the UNV programme and DPKO dates back to the UN Mission in Cambodia, where you were the UNV Programme Manager. Could you tell us something about it and how it evolved?

Before the 1990's, the UNV programme was mainly involved in long-term development, with our volunteers serving two-year contractual family assignments and longer. The year 1990 was critical for the the UN and the UNV programme: the Berlin Wall had fallen down, the world had changed, and post-Cold War peace agreements spawned, but so did many new civil wars. As a result, peacekeeping and humanitarian work grew dramatically. For the first time, the UNV programme was asked to set up an emergency humanitarian response team for the post-war in Irak. That was 1991, and I was sent down there to set up an office and recruit short-term volunteers – which was a first for UNV where we volunteers serving for 3 months doing humanitarian work with UN Agencies for Refugees, UNDP, UNICEF and other agencies. This exercise was very successful, and consequently, UNV established it's first emergency response unit, and that led to more humanitarian work, and ultimately, peace keeping.

The first time the UNV programme ever got involved in peacekeeping work and putting UN Volunteers into a fragile security environment, was in Cambodia in 1992 in support of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) mission. That was the first multi-dimensional large mission following the Cold War, and the UN wasn't used to dealing with that on several

fronts, including getting the vast number of civilian personnel needed to support the mission. Initially they called on UNV for 450 Electoral Officers, but as the mission grew, the UN needed more people, such as experts in IT, logistics, and in all functions related to modern peacekeeping. The UNV programme agreed to provide more UN Volunteers and around 850 UN Volunteers were ultimately sent to Cambodia. The UNV programme hadn't done that before – such large numbers, new functions, etc. We learned a lot in Cambodia, both the UN and UNV, and afterwards, as other missions took off, the UNV programme had to decide whether it wanted to continue in this area, and luckily it did so. Over the years, the UNV partnership with DPKO, DPA, and DFS in peace keeping and political missions, has become a main stay, and a very important part of our global peace and development work.

There are currently 501 UN Volunteers assigned within MONUSCO. What is their added value to peacekeeping?

The DRC is key to maintaining peace in Central Africa: if the DRC falls apart, many of its neighboring countries are likely to do so. Despite the periodic outbreaks of fighting, throughout the years the UN has been committed to maintaining peace in the DRC and has been doing an incredible job; which has had a huge peace and socio-economic impact on Africa overall. Most importantly, the UN Volunteers have been part of it – and often at the very front lines. We should be very proud of our UN Volunteers serving in the DRC. – I can assure you Richard Dictus, UNV Executive Coordinator, and all of us here at UNV HQ, are very proud indeed! MONUSCO is home to the largest number of UN Volunteers globally, and if we look at the placement of UN Volunteers assigned to critical sections with huge responsibilities, such as logistics, human rights, security, and so on, they have been and continue to make a massive contribution to the UN mandate of maintaining peace in the DRC.



UNV STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2014 - 2017

UNV Strategic Framework 2014-2017 is the first of its kind, focusing on harnessing the power of volunteers and volunteerism to support the achievement of internationally agreed goals.

The Framework guides UNV's work over the coming four years and reflects a focus on working more systematically with UN partners to jointly deliver more impact in peace and development.

UNV seeks to effectively respond to the expanded mandate entrusted by the international community by: assisting UN entities to deliver more impact in peace and development; helping partner countries ensure that people are engaged in development processes; and committing to continuously improve its institutional efficiency and effectiveness.

The vision of UNV is a world where volunteerism is recognized, within societies, as a way for all people and countries to achieve peace and development through the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion.

Click [here](#) to read the UNV Strategic Framework!

