

DRC *in focus*

UNHCR Volunteers in the field

In this issue

Feature: The contribution of UN Volunteers to the United Nations Refugee Agency mandate in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Yolanda Mapula Sibiyá: First lady of the Cargo Unit

Volunteerism: The role of young people in promoting peace in the Great Lakes region

A train engine draped with the High Commissioner for Refugees flag at the launch of a repatriation operation. © UNHCR/B. Sokol

Dear readers and UN Volunteers,

As of March 2015, there is a total of 31 volunteers from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which accounts for nearly half of the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) staff currently deployed within United Nations (UN) agencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The majority of them are performing support roles in 10 different duty stations, mainly in eastern DRC. The areas in which they support programmes include: support programmes for refugees, for community services, for the fight against sexual and gender-based violence, for repatriation/reintegration, medical coordination mission, WASH, and cluster coordination. We should also point out that nearly a quarter of them are involved in supporting operations as logisticians, computer scientists, database managers, GIS specialists and even in flight operations.

UN Volunteers are often required to perform under harsh conditions in remote duty stations but are rewarded at the same time by the opportunity to directly assess the fruits of their labors. They also, for the most part, take great pride in the work they are implementing on the field.

In this issue, we would like to thank our UN Volunteers for their commitment in working by our side and the UNHCR for their continued support and trust in the UNV programme.

To mark Women's Month, DRC in Focus is also honoring women who dedicated themselves as UN Volunteers in the DRC, whether for the UNHCR, the other UN agencies or in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC (MONUSCO). We thank them for their commitment and contribution to the efforts for peace and development in this country.

Happy reading,

Marc Lalanne
UNV Programme Officer



What is the mandate of UNHCR in eastern DRC?

Fafa Olivier Attidzah: UNHCR's mandate is the protection of refugees of various nationalities, their repatriation to their countries of origin or resettlement in third countries. UNHCR also coordinates the Protection Cluster and the Working Group on the Coordination and Management of Sites for Internally Displaced People (IDP).

With the help of its network of protection monitors and of partners, UNHCR launches alerts and tracks protection threats incidents faced by civilians. The incidents concern violations of the right to freedom, to property, physical threats and sexual violence.

UNHCR refers cases of violations to agencies and partners who have the role of

Interview with Fafa Olivier Attidzah
Coordinator East /DRC
UNHCR, Goma

Former Angolan refugees pack their bags after living for 40 years in the DRC.



“UN Volunteers play a key role in UNHCR response systems in North Kivu.”

Fafa Olivier Attidzah, Head of the UNHCR office in Goma and coordinator of the Eastern Region, gave an interview to DRC in Focus to discuss the role of UN Volunteers in UNHCR. He answered our questions.

providing support to victims. In addition, UNHCR advocates with provincial and national authorities in its efforts to protect civilians and formulate a strategy for sustainable solutions to displacement.

In your opinion, what is the contribution of UN Volunteers to UNHCR’s mandate in eastern DRC?

The UN Volunteers are an integral part of UNHCR staff and execute essential functions towards achieving our mandate in the DRC. They contribute to the formulation of strategies and the implementation of our activities, and you can find UN Volunteers in all types of positions, for example in charge of the management of IDP camps in North Kivu or of the coordination of the Protection Cluster, etc. Their contribution is highly appreciated. UN Volunteers bring new

blood to the UNHCR family. They are motivated and put their hearts into their work.

You too have been a UN Volunteer...

Yes, indeed. I was UN Volunteer for UNHCR in Djibouti from 1992 to 1994. I worked as Associate Programme Officer. Among other things, I was in charge of following the multi-sector assistance programme in Somali and Ethiopian refugee camps. This was a very rewarding experience that prepared me for my first emergency mission for UNHCR in Burundi in 1994.

Would you want to be UN Volunteer again?

Maybe after my retirement, if I still have enough energy ... (laughs)

Three UN Volunteers' VOICES, THREE WOMEN VOICE

ALIMATA OUATTARA



Since arriving in Kalemie in May 2014, Alimata Ouattara worked in the field of legal protection of individuals within the mandate of UNHCR in Katanga, which includes asylum seekers, refugees, returnees and IDP. Her role is to ensure that their rights are respected and at the same time to find sustainable solutions to their problems. In this way, she contributed in launching the local integration operation: "Local integration is a sustainable solution to forced displacement of population. IPD should be able to choose voluntarily to integrate into the social structure of their place of displacement. This choice puts an end to the displaced status of the individual but needs to be accompanied by state monitoring measures through its agents and humanitarian actors," says Alimata.



Before becoming an international UN Volunteer, Alimata worked for UNHCR as a national UN Volunteer and then as a local staff member in protection monitoring in Ivory Coast. On the subject of her UNV experience, she states: "For me, being a UN volunteer is to serve the poorest people and the reward is the gratitude we read on the faces of these people. Every time a displaced person, a refugee or even a member of a host family thanks us, it's significant, and the combination of all these moments makes the volunteer's salary."

BIA ALBERNAZ



Bia Albernaz, from Brazil, was recently deployed in Goma as an Associate Protection Officer. She works on protection monitoring. Her mission is to identify and report human rights violations, including those committed by armed groups against the civilian population, and to keep track of incidents in North Kivu province. In this context, she writes regular reports that contribute to the planning of humanitarian interventions based on the needs on the ground. In the coming months, Bia will be sent to the field to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders and monitor the activities of UNHCR partners on site. "I look forward to providing a meaningful contribution to the UNHCR and the activities of the humanitarian community in North Kivu through reports and monitoring activities related to protection that I will carry out," she said.

With a wealth of experience coming from her work at the non-governmental organization Nonviolent Peaceforce in Kenya and UN-HABITAT in South Sudan, Bia has acquired solid skills in the field of civilian protection: "I worked in the field with IDPs who had fled persecution. It was a very rewarding experience that allowed me to better understand how civilians are affected by conflict and the needs of the IDPs," said Bia.

JOSSELINE COHOUN



Josseline Emma Cohoun, Associate Community Services Officer, coordinates activities that contribute to the welfare of persons under UNHCR's mandate in the Oriental Province, including activities against sexual violence and promoting access to education for refugees. "The education of children is a priority in our projects. I have made every effort to regularize the situation so that the education authorities get involved in teacher training and facilitate the process of implementing the Congolese curricula to enable refugees to continue their education without difficulty and enable them to acquire the skills they will need throughout their lives. Amongst the difficulties of living in exile for refugees who have lost everything, we must at all costs ensure the future of children," she said.

Since taking office in September 2013, Josseline has also monitored empowerment activities for refugees, contributed to the training of partners in the management of protection activities and helped the community create their own coping mechanisms: "I try to orient the refugees to take interest in their lives and to organize themselves through income-generating activities," says Josseline.

Beyond the social significance of her work, Josseline enjoys being in the field, which allows her to see the impact of her actions and to be closer to the beneficiaries she is committed to. "We do not choose to be a volunteer by chance. It is a choice that I made on the basis of a personal commitment to the values that I hold, which are humanism, solidarity, sharing and exchange," adds the native of Benin.



UN Volunteers in UNHCR?

- **31 UN Volunteers**
- **14** different nationalities
- Average age: **38 years**
- **47%** are deployed in **UN Agencies in the DRC**
- **29% WOMEN**
- **71%** based in the **EAST**
- Deployed in **10 DUTY STATIONS**

Yolanda M. Sibiya
MOVCON Assistant
Goma

Yolanda supports MONUSCO sections with the delivery of cargos and the preparation of freight at Goma airport.



“I am proud to be the first woman in the Cargo Unit”

In November 2013, Yolanda Mapula Sibiya was deployed to MONUSCO as a UN Volunteer. She joined the Movement Control Section and was assigned to the Goma airport Cargo Unit warehouse as a MovCon Assistant. With her team, Yolanda has orchestrated the movements of both MONUSCO’s civilian and military cargo: “We supervise the packing, loading, and unloading, as well as the transport of goods to and from the aircraft and to the final destination,” she says. Yolanda’s duties include ground support, packaging inspection, identification of dangerous goods – explosives, weapons, ammunition, and so on.

At work, Yolanda is regarded as hard-working; a woman of action. “I lead by example,” she says. “By doing the same thing as my colleagues, I can better supervise and teach them what I know. It is also a way to earn their respect and my place on the team as a supervisor.” So if Yolanda has to drive the forklift to move a 3-7 ton load of cargo, she would never consider delegating the task to her colleagues. She does it herself.

The first woman to join the Cargo Unit warehouse, she is also the first woman

to be the Head of the Unit Cargo Team for all sectors of MONUSCO and more, the first South African woman to join the UNV family in the DRC. On this subject, Yolanda says, “As a woman, I think I have a role to play in opening the way for other women to take on jobs traditionally seen as for men. I want to show other women that we have the skills and abilities required for this kind of work, that women can assume these responsibilities, and that it does not detract from our femininity.”

Before becoming a UN Volunteer, Yolanda worked for 17 years in the South African army. During those years of service, she worked as a cabin crew member on flights for senior South African officials. In 2010, she began working in flight operations with the Air Force and became Head of the Cargo Unit Team for MONUSCO. “This first assignment allowed me to come to know the reality of the DRC, which I had visited regularly when I was still working as a flight attendant. This is what made me decide to come back as a UN Volunteer,” says Yolanda.

The future of the Great Lakes region is in the hands of the young actors of peace and development. The workshop took place in Goma from 5 to 26 March 2015.



Youth volunteers and the promotion of Peace in the Great Lakes

The Erika Union of Young Artists' project JIKO aims to bring together the youth of the Great Lakes region through a youth art camp. The UNV programme, that supported the initiative, held a workshop on the contribution of volunteers to peace and development efforts in the Great Lakes.

Twenty-four young people from Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC participated for three weeks in the JIKO project in Goma. The objective of the project is to promote collaboration and peaceful coexistence between the youth of these three countries. "With the recent history of the region, particularly the Rwandan genocide and conflict in the DRC and Burundi, it is important to develop links between young people in the region to prepare them to live together in peace," said Junior Alimasi, Executive Secretary of JIKO.

The JIKO project is part of the programme 'Young Volunteers for Peace and Reconstruction of the Great Lakes Countries' run by the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGL). ECGL, in partnership with the governments of the three countries and with the support of the French cooperation, has established this programme to consolidate peace by encouraging mobility and the development of joint projects of interest for the community between

18-25 years old youth of the Great Lakes region. The project also aims at introducing young people to artistic creation as an income-generating activity to enable them to earn a living and become actors in the development of their community. "Among other things, the young people are taught how to make better stoves and biodegradable briquettes," adds Junior.

"The JIKO workshop leads us to become aware of the importance of overcoming conflicts and prejudices that we have with each other. Artistic exchanges allow us to reflect on the value of working together for development and peace in the region: we can share and interact with the Burundians and Rwandans on artistic creation, on common issues and on Peace Building. For me, peace is the result of the willingness of each of us to work for the benefit of others in order to build peace in the region together," commented Félicien, a Congolese participant.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



MONUSCO staff members join together, in spite of their cultural diversity, to mark the International Day for the elimination of Racial Discrimination.
Photo MONUSCO/Abel Kavanagh, UNV Photographer